Trauma and Memory in Visuality

The Art of Nalini Malani and the Politics of Memory

Volume I

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To my parents and grandparents –
for raising me to believe that anything is possible,

and to my mother –
for all her support and love.

Dissertation abstract

For many decades, the Indian visual artist Nalini Malani (b. 1946, Karachi) has made a name for herself with her artworks, created in the context of by now "a worldwide culture of memory politics and memory art,"[1] spurred on by wars, oppression and violence. The interdisciplinary study *Trauma and Memory in Visuality: Art of Nalini Malani and the Politics of Memory* takes up two major concepts, those of trauma and memory, as a particularly apt analytical tool or lens through which to explore and analyse Malani's art in the context of her personal as well as broader—national and global—histories.

The foremost contention of this study is that the two key concepts—trauma and memory—are inextricably linked; both are marked by instability, transitoriness and structures of repetition, and both are located on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, transparency and obscurity. Any intimation of individual memories and trauma—in the visual arts or through other means—is embedded in a larger collective context, while there can be no direct representation of collective traumatic events that does not involve personal histories.

The aim is therefore to answer some of the following seminal questions: What intimations are there of the two concepts in the work of Nalini Malani? Which representational strategies does Malani use to recall the past in her visual art practice? What kind of memory-work do these works perform in the present, and how can we understand the hints of societal and politically inflicted trauma in the artist's work within the broader politics of memory and history making?

In this light, the study marks an entirely novel approach to the work of one of the foremost Indian artists. It builds a unique theoretical framework, drawing on theories formulated by trauma and memory scholars, historians and political theorists, to investigate the selected works of Malani in the light of the two headline concepts. It does so by tracing intimations of memory and trauma from her first pieces in the late 1960s to her mature works. It maps the wide range of *les lieux de mémoire*, ' the sites of memory',[2] in the artist's practice and examines the memory-work that these visual works perform in the present. By letting the medium and chronology lead the classification of works, this study positions Malani's multilayered opus in the wider context of the recovery of collective and personal traumatic memories within both national and global frameworks.

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[1] Andreas Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 46-59, p. 51.

[2] The term *lieux de mémoire* or 'sites of memory' (in singular *lieu de mémoire,* 'site of memory') was coined by the French historian Pierre Nora (b. 1931) in his work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (translated into English as *Realms of Memory*), originally a seven-volume work and project directed by Nora and published between 1984 and 1994. The work was originally published in French and has been only partially translated into English. For the French version, see Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Volumes I-VII), Paris: Gallimard Press, 1992; for the English version, see Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (Volumes I-III), New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The past and its shadows have been engaging me, both intellectually and emotionally, for as long as I can remember. My grandparents, survivors of World War II, who scarcely spoke about the events they experienced or about the wounds that those events left behind, passed on the shadows from their past to the next generations. The sense that the memories and wounds I inherited from them are part of my own past has haunted me from my earliest childhood. Later, when I was able to read, I discovered a vast and complex body of historical and cultural narratives, many of which seemed to relate to the legacy of haunted pasts, and all of which I started stitching together into a patchwork of past narratives—the narratives of my grandparents, those of my parents and my own. My later interest in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical thought gave me a deeper understanding of the realm of memory and trauma, and insight into the silences and denials that are their frequent companions.

The feeling of 'coming after' and inheriting other people's past and the accompanying shadows has certainly deeply influenced my interest in how memories and traumas have found their way into contemporary culture—including into the field of visual arts, which is of primary interest in this study. The space of memory and trauma, with their echoings between presence and absence, resonates with the field of visual art, in which individual, intimate memories and collective histories are brought to the surface. Researching the presence (or absence) of the two, trauma and memory, in the visual works of art of a contemporary artist, has exposed me to a broad range of artistic sensibilities of intimate memoried pasts activated by collective historical events and their shadows, and as such also entering the political arena of the present. For this I am profoundly grateful to the artist whose work I address in my study, the Indian artist Nalini Malani.

This research was conducted in several stages in the West, between Bonn, London and Ljubljana, and through several fieldwork periods in India. The bulk of the study was written during the Covid-19 pandemic and crisis in 2020 and 2021, when the world faced a crisis on an unprecedented scale. With many other endeavours put aside, this granted me an extraordinary two years, largely spent in London, between the British Library and Tate Library & Archives, both of which extensive collections I am most grateful to have

been granted access to. Alongside libraries and archives in London, I also used the library of the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History at the Institute for Oriental and Asian Sciences (IOA), at the University of Bonn, in Germany, and the National University Library of Ljubljana, in Slovenia. The former I largely used during the Autumn/Winter academic term in 2015/16 on the occasion of sponsorship received from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). My research greatly benefited from their extensive collection in the field of Asian art history. The National University Library of Ljubljana granted me access during a period of Covid-19 lockdown spent in Slovenia, when I used their collection in the field of political and social sciences as well as their inter-library loan services. I am deeply grateful to both.

During my fieldwork and archival periods in India, I was granted access to the library of the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA), an access which I obtained through the Vadehra Art Gallery and which I deeply appreciated. Alongside FICA in India, the sources for my research were also museum and gallery collections, amongst which were the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in New Delhi, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) in New Delhi and the Vadehra Art Gallery in New Delhi. I would like to express my thanks here for the generous grants received from the Maria von Linden Stiftung and the DAAD, both in Germany, which enabled me to conduct the extensive fieldwork abroad.

The pleasure of remembering and acknowledging the inspiration, advice and support is particularly keen in a work engaged with memory. To begin with, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor Julia A. B. Hegewald, for her engaged readings of my texts, for her unstinting advice and above all for accompanying me on this tumultuous journey between research and writing. Another close companion on this path was my good friend Ana Jelnikar, an avid Indologist, without whose insightful comments to my texts and her kind invigorating of my spirit when it waned, this path would have been much harder. Deepest thanks also goes to my father, who was always willing to comment and discuss the often abject chapters of history that this work entails, and who shed light at seemingly dead ends. I am also deeply grateful to my editor Abigail Graham, for her assiduous readings of my writings and her incisive editing. Others who have offered advice from their own respective academic disciplines or from their close familiarity with the subject, and whose comments or advice have made a difference are Nishat Khan, Benjamin Zacharias, Jennifer Sliwka, and Tina Košir. For their support, either emotional or

intellectual—both of which kinds are highly needed on such a journey—my warmest thanks goes to Vartivar Jaklian, Edward Smith, Andreas Phillippopolous, Nataša Vampelj-Suhadolnik, Vesna Markič, Raffaella Frascarelli, Jenn Wilson, Alja Kranjec, Tanja Koželj, Alja Lah, Natasa Babic, Ana Marija Kovač, and Mateja Drnovšek. For assistance during the process, my gratitude is also due to Tallulah Harper and Anousha Pawar.

In libraries and archives where I have been granted access, my deepest thanks goes to Tate Library and Archives' team at Tate Britain, and to the British Library team, both in London; in Bonn my sincere thanks goes to the outstanding team of the Department for Asian and Islamic Art History, headed by Julia A. B. Hegewald, at the University of Bonn; while in Ljubljana my gratitude goes to the National University Library and especially to Silvester Videtić, and to the library of Academy of Fine Arts and Design and especially to Petra Jager. In India, as well as being grateful for access to the libraries, museum and gallery collections already mentioned, I would also like to acknowledge and thank several individuals who assisted during my travels and research in their complex yet mesmerising country. My sincere thanks goes to Parul Dave Mukherjee, Vidya Shivadas, Parul Vadehra, and Gayatri Sinha.

The scope of this work was able to widen and unfold in the way it did during the global crisis of Covid-19 due to the extraordinary support and understanding of my employer, the Israeli/South African contemporary artist Beverly Barkat, who deserves a special acknowledgement for giving me space to finish writing and hence a sincere and deepest note of thanks.

This work is dedicated with unqualified love to my grandparents and parents, for raising me to believe that anything is possible and that any life is worth fighting for.

This study was submitted to the University of Bonn on February 28, 2022.

Introduction

The study *Trauma and Memory in Visuality: The Art of Nalini Malani and the Politics of Memory* draws on three contemporary fields or disciplines—memory and trauma studies, contemporary Indian art and political history—and relates them to the work of the Indian artist Nalini Malani. The focus of the study is on the two headline concepts, trauma and memory, and the ways in which they are inscribed, treated and represented in particular visual artworks. The politics of memory relates to the way collective memory is organised within the space of the *political*,[3] meaning how events are remembered or discarded as well as recorded in history. In this framework, the study examines the combined effect of the above on the selected visual artworks, particularly those that act forcefully as a medium of political memory.

The driving force for this study was my realisation that the opus of visual artworks created by this internationally acclaimed Indian contemporary artist in different media from the late 1960s onwards had never been considered in its entirety through the prism of memory and trauma. Through the various creative phases of her artistic path, Malani has shown a preoccupation with important subjects related to the two concepts, trauma and memory—a preoccupation seen in terms both of *thematic* attention in her works to remembered (or denied or suppressed) pasts, and of *how* these pasts are represented in the visual.

The increasingly prominent artist Nalini Malani was born in 1946 in Karachi, in what is today Pakistan. During the Partition of India in 1947,[4] Malani fled Karachi with her family, leaving first for Calcutta (today Kolkata) and later settling in Bombay (today Mumbai).[5] The Partition of India was one of the most traumatic events in Indian history of the

[3] The concept of 'political' in this study refers to the social domain within which a discussion, disagreement and differences are accepted. In this very sense, then, the 'political' is not the 'politics', thus the organisation of power structures, which functions upon a consensus that precludes and excludes. In this, I am following the Belgian political scientist Chantal Mouffe (b. 1943); see Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political,* London and New York: Routledge, 2005, particularly pp. 8-34.

[4] For e reference in this regard, see footnotes 267 and 776.

[5] This study uses the city name Bombay instead of Mumbai and Calcutta instead of Kolkata, as the cities are called in present official records. This decision has been taken at the artist's request. All major publications investigating or writing about Malani's work do likewise. Malani refuses to use the new name Mumbai, which the city was given in 1995 under the right-wing Shiv Sena government in the region of Maharashtra, arguing that the change was made for fundamentalist religious reasons and forms part of an attempt to erase chapters of the history of Bombay.

twentieth century; from the start of her personal history, therefore, Malani was in effect a witness to traumatic events. From early on, her art has been weighted with political implications, as she used her unique visual language to unveil personal, intimate memories and shared historical events, first of all in the films, photographs, and paintings that she created in the late 1960s and through the 1970s and 1980s, and then in the theatre plays, video plays, shadow plays and wall drawing/erasure performances that she has created since the 1990s. Investigating Malani's narratives in the visual with an eye to their relation to trauma and memory involves interesting possibilities. It invites one, first of all, to delve into the artist's varied media and inter-media hybridity,[6] and then to explore the form, content and contexts of her heterogeneous oeuvre. One can then start looking into *how* and *why* memory—often joined with trauma on this path—and the visual culture are conjoined in the present, and *how* and *why* certain types of visual objects enable us to bear witness to difficult past. A study of Malani's work through such a lens poses further questions about the ways in which she handles the concepts of trauma and memory, about the memory and trauma discourses that her visual narratives are disclosing, and about what kind of memory-work these artworks might be performing in the present.

On Trauma, Memory and the Visual Arts

In the past few decades, memory and trauma have become recurring themes in academia, with numerous contributions involving and investigating the two concepts.[7] The appearance of various landmark publications on trauma and memory in the 1990s[8] led to the formation of trauma and memory studies as independent academic disciplines

[6] The term 'inter-media hybridity' denotes the use by an artist of a combination of different elements and different media in their work and art practice.

[7] Chapter 1 of this study serves as a theoretical framework for further investigations into selected works created by Nalini Malani. The chapter presents the reader with important milestone events in the field of trauma and memory research, and discusses publications and accounts that are relevant for this study. It further presents the milestones in the field of trauma, memory and the visual arts, and supports these by relevant case studies.

[8] In the field of trauma, see, for instance, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*: *Trauma, Narrative and History,* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; and Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; in the field of memory, see, for instance, Anne Whitehead, *Memory,* Oxon: Routledge, 2009; and Susannah Radstone (ed.), *Memory and Methodology,* London and New York: Routledge, 2000. I present and discuss other written accounts in the field of both, trauma and memory, in Chapter 1.

across Western universities. In parallel, the two concepts started entering other academic disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, particularly in history, literature, postcolonial and cultural studies as well as the visual arts—all of which have posed pertinent questions relating to memory and trauma.

In the visual arts, works whose subjects related to trauma and memory first appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, were those of the German artists Anselm Kiefer (b. 1945) and Gerhard Richter (b. 1932).[9] The 1980s and 1990s saw further important elaborations in the visual of subjects closely related to the two headline concepts, with artists returning to or working from a space of trauma and memory in their art practice.[10] In 1998, the Australian scholar and contemporary art curator Jill Bennett (b. 1963) and her compatriot, the curator Jackie Dunn (b. 1963), co-curated the exhibition *Telling Tales* (1998),[11] inaugurated in Sydney, Australia. *Telling Tales* was one of the first group exhibitions featuring different contemporary positions of visual art created in the realm of trauma and individual and collective memory. This exhibition spawned one of the first academic endeavours and theoretical accounts in the field of trauma, memory and the visual arts: in 2005, Bennett published *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (2005). Continuing with research she started in *Telling Tales,* Bennett brought together in this book visual art produced in the context of conflict and trauma from a range of countries, including Colombia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and her native Australia. She focused on examining the complex dynamics between representation and affect in the selected artworks created in different media. Bennett tried to distance her research from concepts of trauma and memory in their narrow sense, focusing on affective operations in art, thus on the pathways which position art in a certain discourse with regards to memory and trauma. Bennett's study was followed by several theoretical accounts and critically acclaimed exhibitions examining subjects related to trauma and memory in the visual arts.[12] The work of the American art historian Lisa Saltzman (b. 1965) has been

[9] I contextualise the work of two German artists, Anselm Kiefer and Gerhard Richter, in Chapter 1.
[10] I discuss trauma and memory art in this regard with relevant case studies in Chapter 1.
[11] The exhibition *Telling Tales,* firstly exhibited at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, in Sydney, Australia, in 1998, brought together the visual art produced in the field of conflict, trauma and memory. In 1999, *Telling Tales* travelled to Neue Galerie, in Graz, Austria. I discuss the exhibition *Telling Tales* and particularly Bennett's work in this regard in Chapter 1.
[12] I present and discuss the relevant theoretical accounts, artworks and exhibitions in the field of trauma and memory art in Chapter 1.

particularly important for its investigations into the strategies of remembrance and the performance of memories[13] in the visual.[14]

Certain historical events in the twentieth century, those that have close links to conflicts and wars, oppression and violence, have been recognised as major drivers of developments in the field of trauma and memory, in both the individual and collective realms. The French historian Pierre Nora (b. 1931), who investigated the French national identity through the concept of *les lieux de mémoire,* 'the sites of memory',[15] focused on memory in the collective sphere, identifying collective places and objects as the repositories of a collective past "where memory crystallises and secretes itself."[16] Nora's work in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with a time of broader aims for the public memorialisation of difficult, traumatic events experienced on a collective level, and with the point at which increasing numbers of Holocaust survivors began to give testimonies about their experiences. As these memories were transferred and voiced in the public sphere, museums and sometimes entire parts of cities—as occurred, for instance, in Berlin (Germany)—became official sites of remembering, as the bearers of witness to a traumatic past.

A seminal work that stemmed from the memory of the Holocaust and which has informed much scholarly debate on memory and trauma is *Days and Memory* (*La Mémoire et les Jours,* 1985), by the French writer and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985). In this memoir, which was Delbo's final work, written decades after the war, she spoke about two different kinds of memories, the common, 'ordinary memory' and the

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[13] For a reference on the phrase 'performance of memories' and its use in this study, see footnote 374.

[14] See particularly Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Saltzman also co-edited a collection of essays on the subject of trauma in the visual arts; see Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg (eds.), *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity,* Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 2006. I discuss Saltzman's work alongside other relevant accounts in the field in Chapter 1.

[15] The term *lieu de mémoire* (translated into English as 'site of memory'; in plural *lieux de mémoire* or 'sites of memory') was coined by Pierre Nora in his work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (translated into English as *Realms of Memory*), originally a seven-volume work and project directed by Nora, and published between 1984 and 1994. The work was originally published in French and has been translated into English only partially. For the French version, see Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Volumes I-VII), Paris: Gallimard Press, 1992; for the English translation, see Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (Volumes I-III), New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. I present, discuss and contextualise Nora's work in Chapter 1.

[16] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations,* No. 26, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory* (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24, p. 7.

'deep-lying, sense memory',[17] which is intertwined with trauma. Delbo's work has inspired and fed the debates on trauma and memory from psychology and psychoanalysis to literary fiction and anthropology. I found her concepts of 'ordinary memory' and the 'deep-lying, sense memory' highly illuminating, particularly for my investigations of Malani's early works, created in the medium of painting.

Turning back to the field of visual arts, the past few decades have been marked by artists responding globally to events relating to historical traumas and collective memories, creating art in the context of what the German/American historian Andreas Huyssen (b. 1942) has called a "worldwide culture of memory politics and memory art."[18] This has given rise to a significant body of artworks in different media, to public monuments and memorial sites commemorating traumatic experiences from shared pasts. These places and objects have become *les lieux de mémoire,* the 'sites of memory' in the true sense of Nora's term, the silent witnesses to past traumatic events experienced collectively and intertwined with the personal, intimate memories of individuals.

On the Individual and the Collective in Trauma and Memory Art

All personal experience inevitably sits within a public or collective framework, and it is impossible to separate the personal from the broader social, cultural or political background within which it exists. As I will argue, Malani's works selected for the purpose of this study, as well as her oeuvre in general, focus more on politically and socially oriented memories from shared, collective past than on personal and intimate memories. The emphasis of this study is on investigating the selected artworks in the light of collective memories and trauma as they are seen to exist, and in the ways in which they are portrayed in these works. It is, however, important to note that individual experiences and intimate memories will inevitably be present as part of the wider collective contents that will be foregrounded. Some accounts preceding this study, those

[17] The terms 'ordinary memory' and the 'deep-lying, sense memory' were coined by Charlotte Delbo; see Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory* (translated from French by Rosette C. Lamont), Evanston, Illinois: The Marlboro Press/Northwestern University Press, 2001 (originally published in French, in 1985 as *La Mémoire et les Jours* by Berg, Paris).

[18] Andreas Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 46-59, p. 51.

that investigated the visual works of art in relation to the presence of trauma and memory in these works, took the route of tracing the very processes of memory and trauma as they were being unfolded. This meant that their focus was largely on personal, intimate traumas and memories as the direct experience of an individual artist. Such investigations have, of necessity, been closely connected with psychoanalytic thinking, and this begs the question of how helpful the psychoanalytic approach might be in studies examining the presence of trauma and memory.[19] With its links to the modern phenomenon of psychoanalysis, it is an approach that indeed may offer a language by which trauma and memory might be made apprehensible. Psychoanalysis argues that a person gains access to memory and trauma by means of developing theoretical and therapeutic knowledge about their own experiences. Such knowledge can also be passed on by means of the visual language. In this light, then, these contents in the visual could be considered as forms of traumatic inhabitations or encounters with suppressed memories. Investigating trauma and memory discourses in the visual works of art through such a lens involves understanding their existence as a version of the *real,* thus in accordance of the shaping of consciousness of an individual artist. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge accounts preceeding this study, those that investigated the presence of memory and trauma in visual objects through the psychoanalytic lens.[20] These studies are highly important in particular when trauma and memory originate from a specific experience, usually one that is suppressed. Saying this, however, this study approaches its principal concerns through a different lens and methodology.

The Present State of Research

Nalini Malani's work in the context of memory and trauma has so far scarcely been investigated. Historian Andreas Huyssen, who has written extensively about memory and history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries,[21] has examined some of Malani's

[19] I present and discuss the psychoanalytic approach in the context of trauma, memory and the visual art in Chapter 1.
[20] I present and briefly discuss the more important accounts in this field in Chapter 1, touching particularly on Bennett's and Saltzman's research and work in this respect.
[21] See, for instance, Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003; or Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia,* New York and London: Routledge, 1995. I present and contextualise Huyssen's work in this regard in Chapter 1.

artworks created in the shadow play medium[22] and discussed them in the context of history and political memory.[23] The Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal (b. 1946) published an extensive study titled *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays* (2016), in which she also focused on Malani's work created in the shadow play medium. Bal discussed five of Malani's shadow plays created between 1998 and 2012, embarking on a path where she also observed and theorised about the presence of trauma and memory in these works. However, much less attention has been paid to the intimations of trauma and memory in the works from Malani's earlier creative period, dated from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. These are the years when the artist mainly used more traditional media in her art practice, such as film, photography and the painting medium. The Dutch art historian Johan Pijnappel (b. 1958), who specialises in video art, has focused on Malani's work created in the medium of film and on the impact of her early use of this medium on her work created since the 1990s in an inter-media hybridity.[24] Pijnappel's examinations of Malani's work in this regard contributed towards the investigations of both Huyssen and Bal, who examined her later works. The Indian art historian Geeta Kapur (b. 1943) contributed important art historical and theoretical observations with regards to Malani's works created in the medium of painting, thus the medium in which Malani was primarily trained and which she deployed through most of the 1970s and 1980s. Kapur was also among the first, if not the first, to look at Malani's early depictions of women in her 1970s and 1980s paintings in the context of trauma.[25]

I am indebted to the accounts mentioned above, which have laid the foundations for this study, making it possible for me to research the ways in which Malani's work is relevant to contemporary concerns and practices. The present study appears to be the first to examine Malani's artworks and art practice in the context of both trauma and memory and their associated discourses, with regards to selected works from the full span of her oeuvre. Through the interdisciplinarity of three contemporary fields or disciplines—trauma and memory studies, contemporary Indian art, and political

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[22] I present and discuss the shadow play medium and the video/shadow play medium (with an element of video added) in Chapter 4. The term 'shadow play medium' is used here to refer to both the shadow play and the video/shadow play medium.

[23] Huyssen's contributions were in the form of different essays discussing Malani's work. See, for instance, the aforementioned Andreas Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* pp. 46-59; and Andreas Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,* Milan: Charta, 2013.

[24] I present, discuss and contextualise Pijnappel's work in this regard in Chapter 2.

[25] I discuss this aspect in depth, inclusive of theoretical accounts delivered by Geeta Kapur, in Chapter 2.

history—this study takes an entirely novel approach to investigating the work of this internationally acclaimed artist. It firstly builds a theoretical framework by drawing on theories by trauma and memory scholars, historians and political theorists, in order to investigate the selected works in the light of the two headline concepts, by tracing the intimations of memory and trauma from Malani's first pieces in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, using film, photography and painting, to her works created from the 1990s onwards, marked by her large-scale installations and international exposures of works created in an inter-media hybridity. The study maps the wide range of *les lieux de mémoire*, the 'sites of memory', in the artist's practice, it examines the memory-work that these visual artworks perform in the present, and the roles they might play in the wider politics of memory and history making.

Between Memory and History

At this point, and before going any further, I should like to draw attention to my use in this study of such closely related terms as 'memory' and 'history'. In academic historical research, past events are mostly of collective interest, which situates them within a logical framework of time and space. As the British historian Keith Jenkins (b. 1943) puts it, history depends on there having been the past with which we are acquainted and with the evidence to prove it.[26] Furthermore, Jenkins argues that the past can only be reconstructed to a certain degree and within the ideological frameworks of the present.[27] Today, we can see that there are many forms and versions of history, all shaped by the context in which they were produced.

The memory, however, does not necessarily follow these collective interests or even the precise chronology of the actual events. In distinguishing between history and memory, we therefore need to draw out the ways in which the two are related. Memory can, naturally, be seen as a less legitimate means than history for reflecting on or recalling the past. At the same time, however, history can be seen as "the destroyer of a more authentic, existentially rich, living memory."[28] In this regard, the American historian

[26] For a broader discussion of this subject, see Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History,* London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
[27] Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, particularly pp. 5-10; and pp. 20-26.
[28] Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998, p. 17.

Dominick LaCapra (b. 1939) argues that while memory is not identical to history, it is also not its opposite.[29] Memory itself, for LaCapra, is a pivotal source for history, while history, on the other side, provides the means by which a memory can be critically observed and surveyed.[30] The two are in a binding relationship, argues LaCapra, where history acts as a form of memory, interpreting and authenticating materials acknowledged as primary sources.[31] It is this understanding of the two terms, memory and history, which informs this study.

Hypotheses and Methodology

My initial examination of Malani's works in the context of trauma and memory led to my starting hypothesis that her works consistently display a significant preoccupation with subjects related to both trauma and memory, regardless of when they were created or in what media. I saw these subjects as largely existing within broader political and social contexts, rather than within a personal, intimate realm. However, a deeper investigation into the individual works from her oeuvre, and into their *thematic* orientations to remembered (or denied or suppressed) pasts, led me to consider an even more far-reaching hypothesis, namely that Malani's work has been inextricably bound up not only with memory and trauma, but also with the political *agendas* of remembering and forgetting. I have recognised references to these *agendas* in her work in relation to national as well as global contexts. In this light, then, this study also assumes that the works selected for the purpose of this research are recalling past traumatic events and related memories in order to invite a reflection on the on-going cycles of wars and conflicts, oppression and violence in the present. It is hence a presumption of this study that trauma and memory persist across these artworks in a variety of representational disguises and deserve to be analysed as such. At the same time, however, this study is informed by an awareness of the elusiveness of trauma and memory as visible—and as such, representable—concepts. While seeking to give an account of their existence and importance, I thus investigate their simultaneous presence as well as absence as structuring elements of representation.

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[29] LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, particularly pp. 16-18.
[30] Ibid. p. 21.
[31] Ibid. pp. 21-22.

This brings me to explain the criteria behind the selection of works. When I embarked on this study, my initial plan was to look at the works of a small number of Indian artists in the context of memory and trauma. During fieldwork periods in India, I encountered artworks created by different visual artists, which I observed in the context of memory and trauma, and met many of the artists concerned. These included Nalini Malani. After finding out more about her work, I noticed that not only her works but also her art practice could be seen and investigated in the context of trauma and memory, all which yielded fascinating insights. I watched her engaging with literary and scholarly sources of Indian and foreign origins, and inventing new—or re-inventing age-old—representational strategies in the visual, as pathways that enabled her to accommodate multiple voices and narrate memory and trauma discourses of multiple lives and time periods within national and global frameworks. The sheer scope and complexity of her work made me finally decide to devote this study exclusively to the work and art practice of Nalini Malani. Given that Malani has been an active artist since the late 1960s, with more than five decades of creation behind her, her oeuvre is extensive and narratives in her works are varied. She created her first works in the media of film and photography in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after which she continued to work mostly in the medium of painting through the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, she started looking towards alternative media, a search which, as I will argue, was inextricably linked to her interest in engaging on a deeper level with collective past for the purpose of communicating its effects and on-going destructive cycles in the present. The 1990s were a period when Malani explored a variety of media and created works of many different kinds: theatre plays and theatre/video plays,[32] followed by shadow plays and wall drawing/erasure performances.[33] By combining different elements and media in these works, she arrived at an inter-media hybridity, a character trait for which her work has been known from then onwards.

My decision to include and examine the works from Malani's early creative period, which can be dated between the late 1960s and late 1980s, may come as a surprise to some scholars familiar with her work. In that period, Malani was mostly using the more

[32] I present the differences betwen the two media, theatre and theatre/video play, in Malani's art practice, in Chapter 3.
[33] I present and discuss the wall drawing/erasure performance and its invention and use in Malani's art practice, in Chapters 3 and 4.

traditional media of film, photography and painting, creating several short films at the Vision Exchange Workshop (abbreviation VIEW) in Bombay, and a vast number of paintings in the 1970s and 1980s. My observations were that several of these visual artworks strongly communicate the elusive symptoms of trauma and memory, if less symptomatically than her later works. This led me to consider these works as early presentations of particularly female trauma in the visual. These insights, then, led to my decision to include in this study a selection of works from Malani's early creative period. I see that decision as an important one, because it meant I could not merely trace the intimations of memory and trauma in her earlier works, but also foreground her early creative period as an important milestone on a path where memory and trauma take on more persistent tones in her visual narratives, and examine her media inventions and re-inventions in the 1990s and beyond.

In Malani's individual works and installations from the 1990s onwards, I observed the visual objects and narratives that exhibited symptoms of memory and trauma incorporated into various media. Malani's works created over the past more than three decades are numerous, and the selection of works for the interests and aims of this study was led by the three elements, which I considered the most representative of memory and trauma discourses in her visual idiom: the *thematic* orientation of the visual narratives, the *political* and the *historical* attention discerned in these narratives, and the deployment of media in both contexts. Led by these three elements, the selected artworks here are, to my mind, the most original and representative in the framework of trauma and memory and their related discourses. While the selected works share a certain set of characteristics related to memory and trauma, these are shaped variously in each, and, as I will argue, perform different kinds of memory-work in the present. I believe that none of these choices will surprise those who are closely familiar with the artist's oeuvre. In general, the classification and the discussion of works in this study is led by the chronology of their creation and by the medium of their execution.

The actual investigation of works took two directions: the analysis of contents, focusing on a work's *thematic* attention, and the analysis of the representational strategies used, looking at the *means* by which the message is delivered in the present. The methodological approach of this study will perhaps seem novel to those who are more familiar with the methods applied in fields such as art history. Those who work with the

methodology of memory and trauma studies, however, will recognise my approach as akin to their own established practice. Because of its interdisciplinary nature and the elusive, transitory nature of the two concepts of primary concern, trauma and memory, this research aimed for a rigorous structure while drawing on theories and methods from different disciplines.

The Outline of the Study

In view of the interdisciplinary nature of this study, which draws on a theoretical background and research from a range of fields and disciplines, the first chapter provides a theoretical framework for the overall study. It gives both historical and theoretical frames of the two headline concepts, trauma and memory, and contextualises the two concepts in relation to contemporary culture and the visual arts, by presenting different perspectives and key developments in the field of trauma and memory studies. The most relevant milestones and theories in relation to trauma, memory and the visual arts are outlined, with reference to a selection of works termed as 'trauma and memory art'. The first chapter hence equips readers with the theories of noted trauma and memory scholars, historians and political theorists, which will underpin an investigation in later chapters of the selection of works by Malani, in the light of the two headline concepts.

With the expanding interest in trauma and memory studies, close connections have inevitably formed between trauma and memory theories and Holocaust studies. In the past few decades, the memory of the Holocaust has been transformed into a cipher of collective suffering and collective trauma *par excellence.* Starting in the 1960s and the 1970s, the trauma and memory of the Holocaust have gradually also found their ways into the visual arts, resulting in the very first representations of collective traumatic memory in the visual. The use of this specific traumatic memory—that of the Holocaust—initially in literary fiction and cinema, played a role of critical importance for other trauma and memory art originating from a place of collective suffering. In this light, then, I close the first chapter by presenting and discussing the Holocaust memory as it was first unveiled and later represented in the contemporary culture. I present major theoretical accounts and academic contributions in the field, while I also discuss a narrow selection of visual artworks in the framework of a recall and a representation of the *unrepresentable* in the visual.

The second chapter introduces Nalini Malani's major biographical events, which serve as a general framework of the artist's life and her career path. It further presents Malani's early works in the medium of film and photography, dated from 1969 to 1976, and created between Bombay and Paris. By discussing the artist's early work in the medium of film and photography, I bring to the fore Malani's early social and political interests, and her endeavours to communicate her political views through the visual language. I further discuss Malani's works in the medium of painting, dated between 1972 and 1990. A selection of works in what might be called the more traditional medium of painting opens up a debate about the artist's early introductions of specifically female trauma as the subject matter of her work. In particular, I examine Malani's depictions of female bodies in the light of Charlotte Delbo's 'deep-lying, sense memory' described in her final work, a memoir, *Days and Memory*.[34]

The chapter closes with a discussion along lines proposed by the American art historian and art critic Rosalind Krauss (b. 1941) of *transgressions*[35] into new media in the contemporary arts. The collapse of a more traditional media such as painting and sculpture at the onset of 1980s led Krauss to coin the phrases 'post-medium condition'[36] and 'the medium is the memory'.[37] Krauss spoke of the 'post-medium condition' in the visual arts, where artists were re-inventing old media or inventing new media as their expressive forms. Malani started making *transgressions* into new media in the early 1990s, on a path that took her through a re-invention of old and invention of new media, to embrace an inter-media hybridity in her work and art practice through her mature creative period. I will argue that the subject matter examined in her works, and closely connected to concepts of memory and trauma, became inextricably linked to the medium of their expression itself. In a discussion of three of Malani's works created in the early and mid-1990s, the final part of the second chapter examines the relationship between the subject matter and the medium in the circulation of expression, showing how the expressive form of the subject in a certain medium provides a possible site for memory.

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[34] For a reference on Delbo's work in this respect, see footnote 17.
[35] For a reference on the use of phrase '*transgressions* into new media' in this study, see footnote 271.
[36] The phrase 'post-medium condition' is part of the phrase "art in the age of the post-medium condition" coined by Rosalind Krauss; see Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000.
[37] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory,* Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2010, p. 19.

The third chapter presents three of Malani's theatre and theatre/video plays, created between 1993 and 2000: *Medeamaterial* (1993, theatre play), *Naukari* (1996, theatre play), and *Hamletmachine* (2000, theatre/video play). *Medeamaterial* built on the German playwright Heiner Müller's (1929-1995) play *Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts* (*Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten,* 1982); *Naukari* was a Hindi adaptation of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) short story *The Job or By the Sweat of the Brow Thou Shalt Fail to Earn Thy Bread* (*Der Arbeitsplatz, oder Im Schweisse deines Angesichts sollst du kein Brot essen*, dated to ca. 1933); while *Hamletmachine* was modelled on Heiner Müller's play *Hamletmachine* (*Die Hamletmaschine,* 1977). The two German playwrights, Müller and Brecht, have been of particular influence on Malani and her experimental work in the medium of theatre. Their plays and short stories, which took an activist stance against the distortion and repression of the past, as presented in the official discourses and narratives in their native Germany, were of particular interest to Malani. She encountered Brecht's and Müller's work in the 1980s, when India was politically aligned to the Eastern Bloc of the Soviet Union, enabling people in India to read works originating in East Berlin.

The three works considered in the third chapter are constructed, as I will argue, in what scholars have called the 'memory-theatre' idiom.[38] This relates to theatre texts, which are often concerned with those for whom "the great whole of history has proved to be the great hole of history,"[39] and which compulsively and often traumatically invoke past events. I present these memory discourses within the frames of Brecht's and Müller's theatre, which inform my discussion of Malani's theatre plays and theatre/video plays. I further outline several views of the memory, often in close connection with trauma, as represented in the theatre of the two German authors, many of which overlap and intertwine with each other. This incremental discussion of the three selected works gathers a comparative force as it progresses, shedding light on the vision of the theatrical practice in Malani's overall oeuvre, and emphasising the common effort of these plays to revisit and represent collective memories.

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[38] See, for instance, Jeanette Malkin, *Memory-Theater and Postmodern Drama,* United States: The University of Michigan Press, 1999; or Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage – The Theatre as Memory Machine,* United States: The University of Michigan Press, 2003.

[39] Suzan-Lori Parks quoted in Sanja Bahun-Radunović, "History in Postmodern Theatre: Heiner Müller, Caryl Churchill, and Suzan-Lori Parks," in *Comparative Literature Studies,* Vol. 45, No. 4 (2008), pp. 446-470, p. 447.

The fourth chapter shifts the emphasis from the memory-theatre to focus on Malani's work in the shadow play and video/shadow play media.[40] Malani turned to the age-old technique of the shadow play, or shadow theatre, in the late 1990s, re-inventing and implementing it into her art practice. The chapter discusses five of Malani's works created in the shadow play or video/shadow play media, as follows: *The Sacred and the Profane* (1998, shadow play medium), *Transgressions* (2001, video/shadow play medium), *Gamepieces* (2003, video/shadow play medium), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007, video/shadow play medium), and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012, video/shadow play medium). I investigate this medium in the light of its potential, as a visual strategy, to engage with historical subjects that touch on the *political*, in connection with the two headline concepts, trauma and memory. As well as looking at the shadow play and video/shadow play in terms of the artist's visual strategy and representational technique, this chapter also examines and pursues the *shadows* of history as they appear in the visual narratives of the selected works, aiming to map the *invisible* or *unrepresentable* that they invoke in the present.

By examining the memory-work that these selected works perform, the fourth chapter also maps the range of *les lieux de mémoire,* the 'sites of memory', in Malani's oeuvre, where the shadow play and the video/shadow play—by enabling a representation of collective memories—also acts as a medium that militates against forgetting.

The fifth and final chapter takes a somewhat different turn. It foregrounds the use of the *mythical* in Malani's work and art practice—or, more precisely, it brings to the fore Malani's use of the myth of Cassandra, in its retelling by the German writer Christa Wolf (1929-2011)—arguing that this myth—as interpreted by Wolf—acts as a medium of memory in the selected works.

I discuss five works from the artist's overall oeuvre, as follows: *The Tables Have Turned* (2008, shadow play installation), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007, video/shadow play medium), *Listening to the Shades* (2008, medium of painting, installation), *Cassandra* (2009, medium of painting, installation), and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012, video/shadow play medium). By this point, two of the five works will already be known

[40] I present and discuss the two media, shadow play and video/shadow play, in Chapter 4.

to the reader, from the previous chapter. In the fifth chapter, however, I examine these through a different lens. I look into Malani's interest in the myth of Cassandra, after its retelling by Wolf, in the context of its unveiling of collective chapters of history, that were often denied. I further examine the five selected works in the light of Malani's allegorical deployment of Cassandra's fate to denounce the rampant violence against women in India, which proliferated during Partition in 1947 and has continued ever since. In this light, the final chapter draws once again on Nora's notion of a *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of memory', examining five of Malani's works as repositories where the collective memory "secretes itself and resides."[41] In parallel and by analogy with the notion of a *lieu de mémoire*, the final chapter investigates how collective historical events co-exist with intimate memories of violence in these visual artworks, where these works act forcefully as the repositories of wounds, as the 'sites of wounds'[42] in the present.

Despite the apparent divisions and differences between the works selected here, there are many ways in which they overlap. Examining these, alongside discussions of the individual works, will be a key focus of this study. It will discuss the far-reaching political tenor of both trauma and memory in these works, and the demands they make on their audiences, insisting upon their collaboration, often through acts of recall. All of the works selected here exist at a sensitive intersection between the visual arts, the commands of a memoried consciousness and the politics of memory—which is also the intersection that this contribution undertakes to study.

[41] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations,* p. 7.
[42] The phrase 'sites of wounds' (also 'site of wounds') was coined by author of this study, by analogy with Pierre Nora's term *lieu de mémoire,* 'site of memory'.

1. On the Concepts of Trauma and Memory

> "What interests me is not so much the state of things but the relations between them. I've concerned myself with nothing but relations for my whole life."
> (Michel Serres)[43]

Any attempt to define or theorise any subject related to trauma and memory must necessarily look into past and current conceptualisations of the actual terms, ranging from the approaches of psychoanalytic thinking to theories in social, political and culture studies related to both concepts. The two concepts, trauma and memory, are inextricably linked; both are marked by instability, transitoriness and structures of repetition; both are located on the threshold between transparency and obstruction. Over the last few decades, trauma and memory have been widely researched in the social sciences, in postcolonial and cultural studies, and to a lesser extent in the field of visual arts. Trauma was considered originally in the field of medicine and later in those of psychology and psychiatry, while the study of memory originated in the field of psychology. In the 1990s, following various landmark publications,[44] trauma and memory emerged as key cultural categories and concerns; trauma and memory studies subsequently gained the status of new fields in the humanities. Today, the two concepts are omnipresent phenomena that are not confined to a single discipline or field. Many scholars are turning to trauma and memory in their search for answers within their own disciplines.

After the two concepts departed from their original frames within medicine and psychology and entered new disciplines and discourses, the references assigned to them became increasingly complex. Trauma and memory are inherently open, unstable and never static in character, which led Mieke Bal to name them 'travelling concepts'.[45] For Bal, trauma and memory are never stable or fixed, and they can travel between academic

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[43] Michel Serres quoted in Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art (Cultural Memory in the Present),* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 1. Michel Serres (1930-2019) was a French philosopher noted for discussing subjects such as time, death and humanism; for his key text on time and humanism, see Michel Serres, *Branches: A Philosophy of Time, Event and Advent,* London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 (originally published in French, in 2004 as *Rameaux* by Éditions Le Pommier, Paris).

[44] For references in this regard, see footnote 8.

[45] The term 'travelling concept' was coined by Mieke Bal. See Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide,* Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

disciplines and between historical periods; as they travel, their meanings may change and need to be reassessed.[46]

This chapter will therefore construct a theoretical and historical framework of the two headline concepts, trauma and memory, for later investigations into the selected works of Nalini Malani, by tracing the intimations of the two concepts in her work through the different phases of her creative practice. I firstly present the historical perspectives and key developments in the field of trauma and memory studies, in order to contextualise both concepts in relation to contemporary culture and visual arts further on in the chapter. This presentation of the historical perspectives of the two concepts and their milestones treats memory and trauma as 'travelling concepts', in line with Bal's argument. This is then followed by a contextualisation of the two concepts, trauma and memory, in relation to the field of visual arts, outlining the most relevant research developments in the field of trauma and memory art, presenting and discussing the more important theoretical approaches and investigating a selection of works labelled 'trauma and memory art'. In parallel, the chapter also presents and debates the main limitations of current approaches, and foregrounds those trajectories which will be followed in subsequent chapters in relation to the work of Nalini Malani.

As interest in trauma and memory studies grew, close links were inevitably formed between theories about trauma and memory and the Holocaust studies. In the past few decades, the memory of the Holocaust has been transformed into a cipher for approaching other collective traumas, and as such it has become the meaningful lens through which other experiences of conflicts and wars, oppression and violence have been observed and investigated.[47] Subsequently, these discourses also entered the field of visual arts. Malani started working at the very time when the memory of the Holocaust migrated into other historical contexts, among them Latin America, South Africa and Asia, as an *image reservoir*, the cipher of ultimate suffering.[48] For the present study and its

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[46] Bal, *Travelling Concepts,* p. 24.

[47] This very emergence of the Holocaust as a framework for other collective sufferings led the Israeli/American sociologist Daniel Levy (b. 1962) and the Israeli sociologist Natan Sznaider (b. 1954) to investigate the Holocaust in the context of initiating a new, global form of memory. In this regard, see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

[48] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, pp. 13-15; see also Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory – Remembering the Holocaust in The Age of Decolonization*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

aims, therefore, there is no escaping a discussion of trauma and memory in relation to the Holocaust, focusing on the representation of traumatic memories of the Holocaust in contemporary culture and on newly formed relationships between the two concepts—trauma and memory—and the arts in the decades after World War II (1939-1945). The Holocaust was important as the starting point for many of the founding figures of literary and cultural trauma theory in the 1990s.[49] Their initial focus was almost exclusively on trauma in its narrow context. However, the use of this specific traumatic memory first in literary fiction, and followed by cinema and the visual arts played a role of critical importance for other trauma and memory art originating from collective traumatic memories that has been produced globally from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. The final part of this chapter investigates the representation of the *unrepresentable*—the Holocaust—in contemporary culture and arts since the 1960s. In outlining a selection of theories and studies by scholars and writers from various disciplines active in the field, and discussing a selection of visual artworks produced in the second half of the twentieth century**,** I develop a platform that I will use in the course of this study to argue about Malani's selected works in the context of a larger, "worldwide culture of memory politics and memory art,"[50] where art is created in the context of collective memories and histories.

[49] Among the founding figures of literary and cultural trauma theory were the American comparative literature and trauma studies scholar Cathy Caruth (b. 1955), the American literary critic Shoshana Felman (b. 1942), the American Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer (b. 1929), the Israeli/American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Dori Laub (1937-2018), and the American historian Dominick LaCapra (b. 1939).
[50] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 51.

1.1. On Trauma and Its Milestones

> "Trauma unsettles and forces us to rethink our notions of experience."
> (Cathy Caruth)[51]

Historical Perspectives

Historical inquiries into our understanding of trauma are commonly structured as chronological sequences of milestone events. By their nature, these milestone events have attracted the attention of scholars and researchers across various disciplines to the concept of trauma.

Trauma, which derives from a Greek word meaning 'wound', was first used in the English language in the seventeenth century, to refer to a bodily injury caused by an external event or object.[52] For almost a century and a half, the term was confined to the field of medicine and associated purely with a physical injury or ailment. Apart from its first appearances in psychiatry and psychology in the nineteenth century, there are only a few early instances of trauma referring to anything other than a physical injury.[53]

The first milestone in the history of trauma studies dates from the 1853, when the British surgeon Sir John Erichsen (1818-1896) diagnosed a condition known as 'railway spine',[54] caused by railway accidents. The 'railway spine' symptoms that Erichsen observed shifted the focus from the organic and pathoanatomical towards a psychological and psychosomatic understanding of trauma. In the late 1890s, the German neurologist Hermann Oppenheim (1858-1919), who conducted further case studies related to railway and industrial accidents, argued that the symptoms described by Erichsen were the result of specific molecular changes in the nervous system.[55] At the same time,

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[51] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 3-12, p. 4.
[52] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 2.
[53] The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Vol X(i), *Ti to U*, 1926) explains the terms 'trauma', 'traumatic' and 'traumatism' exclusively in connection to physical wounds. An early non-physical usage occurs in the 1895 edition of the magazine *Popular Science Monthly,* where trauma is named as a morbid nervous condition (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 2).
[54] Sir John Erichsen was a Danish-born British surgeon. Erichsen coined and used the term 'railway spine' for the first time in his seminal work *The Science and Art of Surgery* (1853), which was a major medical text given to the surgical and medical staff at the time. See John Erichsen, *The Science and Art of Surgery,* London: Walton and Maberly, 1853.
[55] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 34.

Oppenheim recognised the emotional shock and claimed that the latter was responsible for the majority of the symptoms related to trauma. Thus, trauma emerged as a product of the railway age, closely linked with the birth of our technological society. The appearance of the notion of 'railway spine' was a key moment in the history of trauma studies and its shift towards psychology and psychiatry.

The pioneering works of the French psychologist Pierre Janet (1895-1947), the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), and the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) constitute the next milestone in the history of trauma studies.[56] The investigations of these scholars into the subject of hysteria, locating its roots in childhood sexual trauma, focused for the first time on trauma in the private and domestic realm. The beginning of the twentieth century has, however, been recognised as a period when general interest in trauma declined. It took another major historical event to reawaken interest in the subject, that of the World War I (1914-1918). The whole of society was affected and human suffering reached previously unknown dimensions. Many of those who fought in World War I were diagnosed with the 'shell shock' condition,[57] which was initially considered a merely physical condition resulting from the many explosions these soldiers had experienced. Gradually, however, with the rising number of cases, 'shell shock' came to be understood as a psychological state with serious and prolonged implications for all aspects of life. Freud's work in the field of hysteria and trauma also benefited from the 'shell shock' studies. As the number of cases of hysteria rose during and after World War I, it became impossible to insist on linking the condition purely to childhood sexual trauma.

After World War I and during the years of the Great Depression (August 1929 – March 1933) the subject of trauma was again neglected in science and practice[58] until

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[56] For a survey of Janet's, Charcot's and Freud's research on trauma and hysteria, see, for instance, Bessel A. van der Kolk, *Psychological Trauma,* Washington, D.C. and London: American Psychiatric Publishing Inc., 1987.

[57] 'Shell shock' is a term originally coined in 1915 by the British physician Charles Samuel Myers (1873-1946), amidst World War I, to describe the soldiers who were involuntarily shivering, crying and experiencing various intrusions of memory. This term later became known and adopted as a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (abbreviation PTSD) and used as such in psychiatric practice. For a general account of the subject of PTSD, see, for instance, the collection of essays published after the conference on PTSD in 1996 held by the New York Academy of Sciences; see Rachel Yehuda and Alexander C. McFarlane (eds.), *Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,* New York Academy of Sciences, 1997.

[58] According to the American psychiatrist Bessel A. van der Kolk (b. 1943), the work of the American psychiatrist Abram Kardiner (1891-1981) is an exception in this discourse. According to van der Kolk, Kardiner's work on the subject of trauma, *The Traumatic Neuroses of War* (1976), proved influential for the

after World War II. The Holocaust left millions of individuals suffering either from post-war neurosis or 'concentration camp syndrome',[59] but beyond this, it also came to play a role of critical importance for studies and discussions in the field of trauma. According to the Australian memory studies scholar Anne Whitehead (b. 1971), it was the Holocaust as "a universal trope for a traumatic history of the twentieth century,"[60] which opened new pathways for investigating both trauma and memory, and enabled the two concepts to enter new disciplines and discourses.[61]

The next milestone event was another twentieth century war, the Vietnam War (1955-1975). Here, too, the large number of suffering individuals, chiefly soldiers, raised awareness of traumatic stress and its heavy impact on the individual psyche. The Vietnam War played a crucial role in convincing medical, psychiatric and psychological circles to officially acknowledge the existence and the effects of trauma. In the 1980s, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (abbreviation PTSD) was first recognised in the main psychiatric handbook,[62] acting as a catalyst and opening the way for a wide range of publications on the subject. From that time onwards, the diagnosis of PTSD was given to individuals who, after a confrontation with serious injury, the threat of death, or a threat to the physical integrity of the self—all of which are considered to be outside the range of normal experience—presented certain clusters of symptoms.[63] We know today that individuals who are involved in wars, accidents, disasters or any other events with extreme stressors often present certain identifiable somatic and psycho-somatic symptoms.[64] The recognition of PTSD helped to consolidate the notion of trauma and was an important acknowledgement of subjectivity and personal experience in the industrial world.

The next milestone event was the emergence, in the 1990s, of trauma studies as a new field in the humanities, following various landmark publications. The collection of

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research conducted in the second half of the twentieth century; see van der Kolk, *Psychological Trauma,* particularly pp. 8-22.

[59] The term 'concentration camp syndrome' was coined by mental health professionals after World War II, to denote the psychopathologies which characterised the Holocaust survivors.

[60] Whitehead, *Memory*, p. 151.

[61] Ibid. pp. 150-151.

[62] In this respect, the main psychiatric handbook is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (abbreviation DSM), published quarterly by the American Psychiatric Association.

[63] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 1.

[64] The initial PTSD range has been expanded by each successive edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders;* to the individual victims suffering from symptoms were added secondary victims, such as witnesses, bystanders, rescue workers, to name but a few.

essays *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and a monograph *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) by the American comparative literature scholar and a pioneering author on trauma in literary fiction, Cathy Caruth (b. 1955), were followed by a number of studies on trauma in literary fiction, cinema and the visual arts. In response to the extensive research and many publications on the subject of trauma, various universities set up faculties of trauma studies, first in the United States and then in Europe.

These milestone events constitute the history of trauma and its research in a nutshell. It is important to establish an overview which gives an insight into how the historical events in the twentieth century, such as wars and conflicts, have been the major drivers behind the developments and research in the field of trauma, in both the individual and the collective spheres. While these milestone events triggered research in various disciplines, it is worth noting that it has taken much longer for private, individual traumas to be acknowledged. These traumas are, as is known today, of no lesser importance than the collective ones. It took time for these correlations between various forms of suffering, on a collective and individual level, to be recognised.

While the historical outline of trauma explained above serves as a point of reference within this study, I shall now depart from this trajectory and investigate several more recent trauma theories and approaches to the concept, focusing on those relevant for this study.

Approaching Trauma

According to present-day lay theory, trauma is a naturally occurring event which shatters the sense of well-being of an individual or a collective.[65] Reaction to such events is known as 'being traumatised'; Caruth describes this as "being possessed by an image or an event."[66] This is experienced as an unwanted response, beyond the subject's control. Human beings have needs, which include security, shelter and order. If an event in the outside world undermines any of these needs, we can say that a traumatic experience is

[65] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2012, p. 7.
[66] Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, pp. 4-5.

likely.[67] Such an experience, however, only occurs when traumatising events interact with human nature.[68]

When trauma does occur, there are different approaches towards understanding the actual event, both on the individual and the collective level (i.e. as a society or a certain group of people). One possible approach to trauma is a rational one. Here, the response to the events triggering trauma is seen as intelligible, so that it is usually linked to the search for a solution and to a progressive action. According to the rational approach, the response to traumas such as political scandals, wars, economic disasters (i.e. those in the collective sphere) or to violent assaults (i.e. those in the individual sphere), could result in efforts to alter the circumstances that caused them.[69]

Less universalising and more historically oriented approaches to trauma of collective dimensions can be found in the field of sociology. One such work is that of the American sociologist Kai T. Erikson (b. 1931) *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (1978), where Erikson convincingly shows the difference between the individual and the collective trauma, outlining the events which were the major triggers for traumas experienced on a collective level. In his investigations into the distinction between individual and collective trauma, Erikson argues that trauma for an individual is

> ”a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively.”[70]

He calls collective trauma, on the other hand,

> ”a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality.”[71]

The collective trauma, according to Erikson

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[67] Alexander, *Trauma,* pp. 7-8.
[68] Ibid. p. 8.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Kai T. Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood,* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976, p. 153.
[71] Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, p. 154.

> ”works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma'.”[72]

However, Erikson argues that it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realisation that the community which was known before does no longer exist as a source of support.[73] Erikson's many years of research of disasters and accompanying traumas resulted in four principal findings. Firstly, he singles out the individual and collective traumas that occur as a result of a disaster, whether a specific event, such as an act of violence, or a set of circumstances, such as the outbreak of a war. Secondly, he identifies those disasters that are caused by something unseen, for instance a disease, which makes the experience of trauma more painful. Thirdly, he argues that the experience of trauma is conditioned partially by whether or not the cause of the disaster is natural or humanmade. And finally, he suggests that a resulting sense of betrayal can lead to a traumatic worldview, which holds the world in suspicion and operates in ways over which an individual or a collective body has no control.[74] Erikson's case studies and findings have also enabled scholars to interpret the traumatic impact of collective policies or even political ideologies and systems, such as colonialism and Apartheid, in new ways. His insights have shown that the causes of trauma, whether individual or collective, are not necessarily distinctively event-based, specifiable, and coherent in effect.[75]

Thus, earlier theories were expanded and elaborated on in response to the twentieth century events; while on the other hand, it was the lay theory of trauma which further influenced contemporary thought about the Holocaust as well as other episodes of inflicted collective traumas in the second half of the twentieth century.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] For a wider discussion of Erikson’s work in this regard, see Ian Convery, Maggie Mort, Josephine Baxter, and Cathy Bailey, *Animal Disease and Human Trauma: Emotional Geographies of Disaster*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 5-12.
[75] One of the first scholars who recognised that trauma was not purely event-based was the French/Indian psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). Fanon recognized the reality of trauma in a response to an on-going experience of colonial war. For Fanon's work in this regard, see Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* London: Penguin Books, 2001 (originally published in French, in 1961 as *Les Damnés de la Terre* by François Maspero, Paris), and Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London: Pluto Press, 2008 (originally published in French, in 1952 as *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* by Editions du Seuil, Paris).

Psychoanalytic Approach

Since the mid-twentieth century, the name 'psychoanalytic approach' has been given to an approach to the understanding of trauma which locates unconscious emotional fears and cognitively distorting mechanisms of psychic defence between the outer triggering event and the inner response.[76] When an individual finds events in the outside world too overwhelming to comprehend, they switch off rational thought and response, and distort reality by turning to imagination and contorting the memory. This approach shows a more complex understanding of the human ability to consciously grasp actual events. The event is experienced and perceived, however only on an unconscious level, to the detriment of memory and the possibility of a rational response.[77]

The aim of the psychoanalytic approach to individual trauma is a full recovery of the truth, which is required for restoring of the psychological wellbeing. This, however, can only happen, as argued by the Israeli/American historian Saul Friedländer (b. 1932), when memory returns. Friedländer, the Holocaust historian and a Holocaust survivor, argues in his seminal work *When Memory Comes* (*Quand Vient le Souvenir,* 1978)[78] that the acceptance of a traumatic event on a conscious level can take place only after thorough psychological or psychoanalytic work, thus in a dialogue between the suffering individual and the therapist. The process of repeating and elaborating one's own interpretations of past events, a psychical work that allows an individual to acknowledge certain suppressed elements and to free themselves from the grip of mechanisms of repetition with the help of a therapist, was first introduced by Freud in 1914 and has since then been used in psychoanalytic psychotherapy[79] as a critical mode for

[76] For a reference on this subject, see, for instance, Caroline Garland, *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach,* London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
[77] Alexander, *Trauma*, p. 10.
[78] See Saul Friedländer, *When Memory Comes* (translated from the French by Helen R. Lane), New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979 (originally published in French, in 1978 as *Quand Vient le Souvenir* by Editions du Seuil, Paris). In *When Memory Comes,* Friedländer argues about the subject of traumatic memory through his personal and collective narratives, this way creating a memoir and a classic of the Holocaust literature.
[79] Psychoanalytic psychotherapy or psychodynamic psychotherapy is a form of therapy whose primary focus is to unveil the unconscious contents of the psyche in an effort to alleviate psychic tensions. For a general account of the theory and practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, see, for instance, Deborah L. Cabaniss, *Psychodynamic Psychotherapy: A Clinical Manual,* Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2007.

understanding the individual's experience of past events considered as traumatic.[80] Historian Dominick LaCapra, whose work is best known for his theoretical accounts in the field of trauma studies in relation to the Holocaust,[81] took these initially purely psychoanalytic terms away from a narrowly therapeutic framework and thus the individual sphere, and transferred it into a wider sphere by postulating the collective consciousness and collective trauma that haunts the nation.

In the years after World War II, scholars and researchers built on their thinking about the 'shell shock' condition to try to understand the aftermath of the war and the events accompanying the Holocaust, using both the lay theory of trauma, and hence the rational approach, as well as the psychoanalytic approach. They focused primarily on suffering individuals, and only later started to investigate the grasp of trauma on a collective level. However, every effort to investigate the subject of trauma in the twentieth century was made either through the rational approach or by means of the psychoanalytic approach.[82]

The aftermath of the Holocaust, with its unprecedented individual and collective human suffering, brought new insights into the space of trauma and the importance of 'working-through'[83] a traumatic experience. Subsequently, this became important not merely for the suffering individuals who survived the Holocaust and World War II, but for all who have, in one capacity or another, been subjected to a traumatic event. Further research in the field of both trauma and memory, resulted in new theories, all of which also drew attention to works in the field of arts. Initially, it was primarily literary fiction which engaged scholars and researchers in the field, who mostly focused on different forms of memoirs written by Holocaust survivors. Caruth and her contemporaries[84] played a crucial role in shaping the psychoanalytic approach in relation to tracing and investigating the concepts of trauma and memory—thus a traumatic memory—in

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[80] Freud argues about this subject in his essay ”Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis)” (originally published in German, in 1914 as ”Weitere Ratschläge zur Technik der Psychoanalyse: (II) Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten”). The essay was published in English under the above title in 1924.

[81] See, for instance, Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994; and Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

[82] Alexander, *Trauma,* p. 35.

[83] The term ‘working-through' was coined by Freud and has been widely used in the field of psychoanalysis.

[84] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 49.

literary fiction and poetry. This was followed by investigations and analyses of the two concepts in cinema and the visual arts.

In the post-Holocaust years, works of literature and poetry have often been understood to draw on the residues of traumatic memories, such as might surface in a psychoanalytic treatment. Memoirs, poems and literary fiction written by Holocaust survivors—i.e. the primary witnesses[85]—have contributed to research in this field. These works have been offered as the academic equivalent of traumatic memories retrieved through psychoanalysis. This resulted in new theoretical frames of the psychoanalytic approach being produced in different branches of the humanities, amongst which the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) played a significant role, in emphasising the importance of language in emotional formation.[86] In the 1990s, within the formation of trauma studies in the humanities, Caruth, LaCapra, Friedländer and their contemporaries mostly focused on different complex emotions residing in the unconscious of an individual after the experience of a traumatic event.[87] In parallel, they also emphasised the power that the initial traumatic event has over an individual (i.e. a writer of memoirs or an artist) who experienced it in reality. The event, according to Caruth, cannot be left behind because ”the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world is experienced too soon.”[88] Thus, this prevents the mind itself from a full rationalisation of the actual event. Buried somewhere in the unconscious, the traumatic event is experienced through dreams, nightmares and ”repetitive actions of the survivor.”[89] According to Caruth, this very experience shows that

> ”trauma [is not] locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on.”[90]

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[85] For a reference on the subject of primary and secondary witnesses, see LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* pp. 20-23.
[86] For an account of this subject and Lacan’s work in this regard, see Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative and Postcolonialism*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[87] In this regard, see again the collection of essays in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995).
[88] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* p. 4.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

On the subject of retrieving the truth and its objectivity, Caruth suggests that these events "tell us of the reality or truth that is not otherwise available."[91] The unveiling of the reality or truth in this regard—thus, the fragments or traces of past traumatic memories—were initially recognised in the medium of memoirs written by the primary witnesses. The very name of 'memoir' points us to the need to acknowledge memory and its important role in its connection with trauma. Often experienced as frail and accessible with difficulty, memory too became a subject of further independent investigations.

The present chapter will now touch on some milestone events in the field of memory studies. Those that are relevant for this study will be emphasised, in order to bridge the gap between the individual and collective spheres in the fields of both memory and trauma where necessary for the purpose of this study.

1.2. On the Milestones of Memory

> "Any act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence."
> (Andreas Huyssen)[92]

We live in an era when the topic of memory has entered public discourse and a range of academic disciplines. Memory has become not only a major element in the construction of identity, both individual and collective, but also a site of identification. Historian Andreas Huyssen argues that the emergence of memory has been one of the key concerns in the Western hemisphere[93] since the late twentieth century, calling it a cultural and political phenomenon.[94] According to Huyssen, this turning towards the past stands in sharp contrast to the privileging of the future, which was characteristic of the earlier decades of the twentieth century.[95] Whitehead, in turn, speaks of the memory boom in

[91] Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[92] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* p. 4.
[93] Given the problems attending the highly debatable terms the 'Western world', the 'West' or the 'Western hemisphere', this study primarily deploys the term as a geographical marker to refer to regions and nations consisting of Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and the United States, hence the Anglo-American and European conglomerate of countries and nations.
[94] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* p. 11.
[95] Ibid. pp. 11-12.

the 1990s, analysing the so-called obsessions with individual and collective memory in contemporary culture, including memory's close relationship with trauma.[96]

However, what is memory in the first place? It is something we are all intimately acquainted with; memory is central to our inner world and its presence is indisputable. The Canadian anthropologists Michael Lambek (b. 1950) and Paul Antze (b. 1950) argue in the introduction to their jointly edited work *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996) that memory is commonly thought of today as

> "a container, contents, information processor and elaborate architecture, but it is always objective and objectified; the relation to a self, an agent, or community that bears memory is omitted from the picture."[97]

Memories are limited temporal events and at the same time they are often very visual events residing in the mind. There is a strong interconnectedness between the memory and the experience—the former being a product of the latter while the latter reshapes the former.[98] In this way, then, memory begins when an experience itself is in the past, whereas the memory becomes a place one visits; if the memory is damaged, it may in certain circumstances be possible to restore it.[99]

And what about the relationship between memory and trauma? With respect to trauma, memory is always secondary, given that what occurs and is later termed as 'traumatic', is usually suppressed and does not form part of a person's normal grasp of experience.[100] Hence, the past event must be reconstructed from its effects, traces and fragments.[101] In this light, then, there is no immediate access to the actual difficult experience—the memory, which is now known as a traumatic memory, is inhibited and an individual can

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[96] In this regard, see Whitehead, *Memory,* particularly pp. 1-14.
[97] Michael Lambek and Paul Antze, "Introduction: Forecasting Memory," in Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* New York and London: Routledge, 1996, pp. xi-xxxiii, pp. xi-xii.
[98] Lambek and Antze, "Introduction," in *Tense Past,* p. xii.
[99] Ibid.
[100] LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* p. 21.
[101] Ibid. pp. 21-22.

gain access to it only by re-living the experience, or by means of a 'working-through' in narration or with the help of an analyst or a therapist.[102]

At the same time, memories are never only records of the past, but they are reconstructions of past events, and as such, they carry an imprint of certain past narratives, cultural assumptions, and political formations. When memories enter a domain of recalling past acts of violence against an individual or against a certain group of people, they bear an additional burden of a victimised identity, whether as allegations or confessions, or as mementos (i.e. thoughts kept as a reminder). In this regard, memory becomes inextricably linked to trauma. Once the traumatic character of a certain memory is acknowledged, the memory of the suffering individual and the memory of the secondary witnesses both become accessible.

Memory studies, which emerged as a separate field in the humanities less than a decade after trauma studies, benefited from the contributions of researchers from a broad range of disciplines. It was neuroscientists who first identified the cellular mechanisms of memory and the brain networks that support different pathways of memory processes; psychologists characterised the component processes of memories and developed models of their interactions, while historians and sociologists analysed how memory shapes the identity of groups, societies and nations.[103] One theme common to all is that memory is a dynamic construction which reflects the goals and biases of individuals and collective formations, rather than a static reproduction of past experiences.

Historical Perspectives

Initial debates about whether or not memory was a dynamic construction led the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett (1886-1969) to ask questions about the many functions of

[102] Ibid.

[103] Amongst the most noted psychologists working in the field were the French psychologist Pierre Janet, the Swiss neurologist and psychologist Edouard Claparède (1873-1940) and the American psychologist William James (1842-1910); while the most noted early historians and sociologists in the field were the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and the German art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929). I present and discuss their work, i.e. in the extent relevant for this study, later in Chapter 1.

memory.[104] Halbwachs' and Bartlett's work in the field of memory represents one of the first milestone events in its history. Halbwachs, who was a student of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941),[105] and was known for developing the concept of collective memory, discussed and analysed the concept of collective memory in his pioneering work on the subject, *On Collective Memory* (*Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*, 1925).[106] Halbwachs took issue with the understanding of memory proposed by Bergson, who, following Freud, placed all memory, collective and individual, within the domain of individual mind.[107] For Bergson, all past experiences resided in the domain of the ephemeral, situated in the individual's psyche.[108] Halbwachs, however, believed that individual memory is formed within the concrete spaces of a collectively shared world. For Halbwachs, individual memories are always linked to verbal conventions and traditions of thought within the collective. As such, he advanced the idea that a society can own a memory—hence the idea of collective memory, which relies on the framework within which a group is based in any given society. According to Halbwachs, every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. He has in mind here groups which conceive their unity and specifics through a shared image of their past.[109] For Halbwachs, then, there is a distinction between individual memory and group—i.e. collective—memory, which exists outside purely individual experience.

In parallel, and independently from Halbwachs, the third decade of the twentieth century saw another important contribution in the field of collective or social memory,

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104 For Halbwachs' pioneering study on collective memory, see Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, in *Travaux de L'Année Sociologique*, Paris, F. Alcan: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925; for Bartlett's classic monograph, see Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1932.
Halbwachs' research and work on the subject of collective memory was first published in French as *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, and translated into English in 1992 under the title *On Collective Memory*. Halbwachs published his second work on the subject of collective memory in French as *La mémoire collective* in 1950, again with Presses Universitaires de France. His second work on the subject was translated into English more than a decade earlier than his first work, in 1980, under the title *The Collective Memory*. For the English translation, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory (*edited and translated from French by Lewis A. Coser)*,* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

[105] For Bergson's seminal work on the subject of memory, see Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (translated from the fifth edition of 1908 in French, *Matière et Mémoire*, by Nancy Margaret Paul and William Scott Palmer)*,* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. and New York: The MacMillan Company, 1991 (originally published in French, in 1896 as *Matière et Mémoire* by Presses Universitaires de France, Paris).

[106] For Halbwachs' work in this regard, see footnote 104.

[107] In this regard, see Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* particularly pp. 86-105.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," in *New German Critique,* No. 65 (1995), pp. 125–133.

that of the German art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929).[110] Warburg's approach to the subject of memory was fundamentally different from that of Halbwachs, although both Warburg and Halbwachs shifted the discourse related to collective memory out of the biological frame and into a cultural dimension.[111]

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, new theories in the field were developed by Pierre Janet and the Swiss neurologist and psychologist Edouard Claparède (1873-1940) at the Salpêtrière University in Paris, and by the American psychologist William James (1842-1910) in the United States.[112] Janet, whose work on hysteria constitutes a milestone event in the history of trauma, also worked extensively in the field of dissociation and memory. He developed a theory of memory in which he notably assigned an increasing importance to society in the genesis and organisation of psychological functions. Janet proposed that in the usual course of developments, memories of an individual's past are processed through cognitive schemes where experiences are identified and interpreted into a narrative. However, when a traumatic event is experienced, the latter resists such processing, since its sensory character is perceived as hostile towards the thinking process, and the accompanying cognitive systems are therefore hostile towards the memory itself. Janet argues that an individual consequently becomes incapable of creating a narrative out of the experienced event, making it impossible to create a memory.[113] His successor, Claparède, known for performing an influential experiment demonstrating how the trauma originating from a past event could be retained even if the short-term memory of it was lost, classified traumatic memory as 'emotional memory'.[114] The latter—thus, the memory of an experience that evoked an emotional reaction in an individual—was at the heart of Claparède's research. His

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[110] For a definite account of Aby Warburg's life and work, see Ernest H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography,* London: The Warburg Institute, 1970.

[111] The concept of social memory appears for the first time in Warburg's work during his Kreuzlinger Lecture in 1923. Therein and related to the concept of social memory, Warburg turned to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). I return to the concept of collective memory in the context of culture and society later in Chapter 1.

[112] For an account of Janet's, Claparede's and James's research and work in the context of memory, see, for instance, Ruth Leys, "Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet and the Question of Memory," in Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* New York and London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 103-145.

[113] For an account of Janet's work in this regard, see Bessel A. van der Kolk and O. van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 158-182.

[114] For an account of Claparède's research in the field of emotional memory, see Leys, "Traumatic Cures," in *Tense Past,* pp. 103-145.

research led him to deny its very existence, which was partially influenced by an earlier work of his American contemporary James, who argued that an individual can recall going through certain emotions but cannot recall how these emotions felt.[115] Regardless of the fact that emotions are not retrievable from the memory, they can be revived, argues James.[116] By remembering the situation which produced certain emotions, an individual can generate new emotions relating to older memories.[117]

Janet, Claparède, and James recognised the flexibility of the mind, while also acknowledging that certain memories act as obstacles and prevent individuals from going on with their lives. They therefore shared an awareness that some memories are not evanescent and that some life events leave distressing memories, which the sufferer returns to continuously and experiences as 'traumatic'.[118] These memories may be remembered with particular vividness or they may completely resist integration, which is to say that they are stored differently and are not available for retrieval under normal conditions.[119] At the same time, Halbwachs and Warburg, each within their respective discipline, were talking about the collective or social memory, removing memory from a biological framework and adopting the concept of 'cultural memory',[120] thus memory which belongs not in the private and individual domain, but within the collective domain.

The term 'cultural memory', to which more recent studies of memory gravitate, was coined by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (b. 1938).[121] Assmann makes a distinction in the domain of collective memory between the 'communicative memory' and

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[115] For a discussion of James's work in relation to Claparède's research, see again Leys, "Traumatic Cures," in *Tense Past,* pp. 103-145.
[116] For James' work in this regard, see Leys, "Traumatic Cures," in *Tense Past,* pp. 103-145.
[117] Claparède's and James' research in the field of 'emotional memory' underpinned the scholarly work of Jill Bennett, the Australian art historian and contemporary art curator, who was one of the first to contribute with theoretical accounts in the field of trauma, memory, and the visual arts. I present and discuss Bennett's work in this regard later in Chapter 1.
[118] Van der Kolk and van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 158.
[119] Ibid. p. 160.
[120] The distinction between the 'communicative memory' and the 'cultural memory', both in the field of collective domain, was originally established, coined and used by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (b. 1938); see Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in Pál S. Varga, Karl Katschthaler, Donald E. Morse, Miklós Takács (eds.), *The Theoretical Foundations of Hungarian 'Lieux de Mémoire' Studies* (Loci Memoriae Hungaricae 1), Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2013, pp. 36-43; additionally see also Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006; and Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011 (originally published in German, in 1992 as *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in den frühen Hochkulturen* by Beck, München).
[121] For a reference in this regard, see the above footnote.

'cultural memory'. According to Assmann, the former are everyday communications about the meaning of the past. For him, these everyday communications within the collective have a limited temporal horizon, and they are strongly influenced by contemporary events.[122] By contrast, Assmann's 'cultural memory' consists of the body of reusable images, written materials, and rituals that are specific and unique to each individual society in each respective period of time; these materials together form and stabilise society's understanding of itself.[123] 'Cultural memory', then, consists of objectified culture—written materials, images, rituals, and monuments—all of which serve to recall important past collective events.

Assmann was one amongst several scholars who investigated the concept of collective memory in the period of decolonisation that followed World War II, influenced in part by the various social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In this period, the initial understanding and theories in the field of memory studies in the Western hemisphere were broadened and built upon.

Memory Discourses since the 1980s

In the 1980s, the new memory discourses that had emerged in the wake of decolonisation and with the new social movements across the Western hemisphere in the 1960s and 1970s accelerated in Europe and the United States in parallel to the broadening debate on the Holocaust.[124] With memory now given its own space in society, the late 1980s and 1990s were marked by important public commemoration events.[125] The many breaks with the conventions and traditions of the pre-war years made people think differently

[122] In addition to aforementioned works in footnote 120, see also Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective," in Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 210-224.
[123] Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *The Theoretical Foundations*, pp. 36-43.
[124] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* p. 12. The broadening debate on the Holocaust was accompanied by the testimony movement and series of politically loaded fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries relating to the history of the Third Reich, the conceit of power by the Nazi party in Germany. Amongst these were Adolf Hitler's (1889-1945) rise to power in 1933 and the burning of books by the German Nazi party, remembered in 1983; *Pogromnacht*, the nation wide pogroms of November 1938 against the German Jews, commemorated in 1988; the Wannsee Conference in 1942, initiating of the 'Final Solution', Nazis' plan to annihilate the Jewish people, commemorated in 1992 with the opening of a museum in the Wannsee Villa in Berlin where the conference took place (ibid. pp. 12-13).
[125] Alongside the various commemoration events mentioned above, another important event was the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. in 1993.

about the past, which inspired new questions regarding the place and the function of memory. According to the American historian Richard Terdiman (b. 1941), the upheavals provoked by political and economic changes, urbanisation and technological progress caused a massive disruption of previous, more traditional forms of memory.[126] The relationship between the altered present of a society, its heritage and its representation of the past was no longer straightforward. Consequently, a widespread sense of recollection of memories on one side coincided with a crisis of representation on the other—all of which shaped the newly evolving ideas about how to present or represent memories.

In the 1980s, the French historian Pierre Nora proposed a new, 'cartographic'[127] method for studying the past in his three volume work *Realms of Memory* (*Les Lieux de Mémoire,* published between 1984 and 1994).[128] In *Realms of Memory,* Nora coined the term of a *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of memory', to designate those places and artefacts where the collective memory "secretes itself and resides."[129] For Nora, a *lieu de mémoire* is any meaningful entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which through means of a human will or the passing of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of the community or a certain group of people.[130] Initially created by Nora to analyse the French context, the concept has since been widely adopted as a way of referring to any place or object vested with historical meaning within the framework of collective memory, such as sites and symbols, including monuments, museums, memorials, events and objects of art. Nora's project involved a rereading of the French past through symbolic and material remains, and an investigation of where memories converge, conflict and define relationships between past, present and future. Nora based

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[126] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory of Crisis*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 5. The term 'present past' was coined by Terdiman. I return to his work again in Chapter 1.

[127] The term 'cartographic' method in relation to research of the past has been coined by Pierre Nora.

[128] For Pierre Nora's work and coining of the term *lieu de mémoire* (in plural *les lieux de mémoire*), see footnote 15.

[129] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations*, p. 7.

[130] See particularly Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past,* Volume I, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996; and Pierre Nora, "The Era of Commemoration," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past,* Volume III, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996; for a discussion of Nora's project and methodology, see also Nancy Wood, "Memory's Remains: *Les lieux de mémoire*," in *History and Memory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1994), pp. 123-149; republished in Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe,* Oxford: Berg Press, 1999.

his concept of spatial mnemonics[131] and collective memory formations on Halbwachs' pioneering study on collective memory, developed in the 1920s.[132] Nora believed with Halbwachs that individual memory is formed within the concrete space of public and social life. He began his discussion in *Realms of Memory* by tracing the way in which collective memory had become replaced by an intellectual pursuit of history. The previous co-existence of memory and history was gone, according to Nora, as a result of the pressure of secularisation and the new ways of historical thinking, those that regarded the past as abstract and philosophical.[133] Through this new fracture in the relationship between memory and history, the previous understanding of the world disappeared, according to Nora. He wrote that the world had moved ”from the idea of the visible past to the invisible one,”[134] and furthermore

> ”from a solid and steady past to our fractured past; from a history sought in the continuity of memory to a memory cast in the discontinuity of history.”[135]

In Nora's view, the main concern of memory was not the individual experience, but the practices of remembrance defined and shaped by a person’s surrounding culture. This, he argues, is what makes up the collective memory. While his predecessor Halbwachs recognised the nation as a privileged locus of collective memory, for Nora there were other more restricted social groupings of greater importance for the forming of the collective memory.

In *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (1993),[136] Terdiman also investigated the collective memory and proposed thinking of the latter in two different modalities. In the first modality, the past is mastered and quiet, making memory a symbolic representation and available to consciousness, while the second carries a veiled reference to the past, perceived as threatening and restless.[137] This latter modality

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[131] I refer here to spatial and memory aids, such as a pattern of letters or associations, which assist in recalling certain memories from the past, in order to retain the meaning for longer within one's own memory.
[132] For Halbwachs' work in this regard, see footnote 104.
[133] Nora, ”Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*” in *Representations,* pp. 7-8.
[134] Ibid. p. 8.
[135] Nora, ”General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in *Realms of Memory,* p. 17.
[136] For a reference on Terdiman’s work in this regard, see footnote 126.
[137] Ibid.

resides in our unconscious, argues Terdiman, whereas he recognized mnemic traces of past experiences, as inaccessible to consciousness and persisting in the presence of something real and traumatic left over from the past.[138] These mnemic traces of past experiences are, then, brought into a complex interplay with each other, while they also form relationships with the present.

Migration of Trauma and Memory into Other Discourses and Contexts

Discussions and research of both concepts, trauma and memory, consequently became important tools in a range of discourses since the 1990s. Scholars started by engaging initially with trauma and followed by memory, firstly within the Holocaust discourse, then in the context of survivors' testimonies in Latin America and post-Apartheid South Africa. Trauma in particular was important in the AIDS discourses that emerged in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, and also in the context of domestic violence.

In the same period, there was a growing interest in both trauma and memory in the field of the arts. Scholars were particularly interested in the modernist literary texts and poetry written in the years after the Holocaust.[139] Many of these were initially conceived as testimonies or as war memories. The work of the French writer and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo[140] has been given much attention in relation to memory and trauma. Delbo wrote extensively about her traumatic memories of

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[138] In his research of collective memory, Terdiman turned to Freud's investigations into the mnemic traces of past experiences; in this respect, see particularly Richard Terdiman, "Mnemo-Analysis – Memory in Freud I. Maieutics," in Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory of Crisis*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 240-289.

[139] Amongst the most celebrated authors were the German writer Ruth Klüger (1931-2020), the Romanian/German poet Paul Celan (1920-1970), the Romanian/American writer Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), and the French writer Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985), to name but a few.

[140] Born and raised in France, Charlotte Delbo worked in theatre and in the Communist Youth organisation before World War II. In 1941, Delbo joined her partner Georges Dudach (birth and death dates unknown), a Communist activist, to organise the underground resistance against Nazis. On March 2, 1942 the French police arrested Delbo and Dudach, and seven months later, Dudach was executed by the state, while Delbo was deported from France with other women to the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. In July 1943, she was transported to another camp, Raisko, and then to Ravensbruck, in the beginning of 1944. Delbo was one of the very few women known to have survived and returned from concentration camps. Delbo's major work was the trilogy *Auschwitz and After* (*Auschwitz, et Après,*
1965), written immediately after World War II, and published in 1965. The late publishing date was due to Delbo's fear that it would not do justice to the tragedy of the Holocaust. Its final volumes were published as late as 1970 and 1971. Delbo's work *Days and Memory* (*La Mémoire et Les Jours,* 1985; translated and published in English in 1990) was her final work, written in the form of a memoir. A writer of short stories, plays, essays, literary texts and a memoir, Delbo's oeuvre bears witness to her life-long commitment to fighting against the inhumanity and brutality of oppression and violence.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camps, located in the present-day Poland. In her work *Days and Memory* (*La Mémoire et les Jours,* 1985), which was Delbo's final work and a memoir, written decades after the war, she spoke about two different kinds of memories, the common, 'ordinary memory' and the 'deep-lying, sense memory'.[141] She places the former in the framework of what is intelligible and communicable with the world and the self, while the latter memory, according to Delbo, registers the pain related to a traumatic event experienced in the past and of its residues, as a reminder of the past, in the present. For Delbo, the 'sense memory' communicates the level of effect that an event had on the physical and psychological body of an individual.[142] To delve deeper into how the 'sense memory' operates, Delbo wrote the following passage on Auschwitz:

> "Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self. [...] I feel that the one who was in the camp is not me, is not the person who is here, facing you. [...] And everything that happened to that other, the Auschwitz one, now has no bearing upon me, does not concern me, so separate from one another are this deep-lying memory and ordinary memory. I live within a twofold being."[143]

The 'deep-lying, sense memory' described by Delbo in her final work is the memory which Janet classified as outside the memory realm, not accessible by the memory proper.[144] Jill Bennett, the Australian art historian and a curator, calls this memory the 'affective memory', residing in the memory realm which many visual artists work from when touching on their own past traumatic experiences.[145] In this light, Delbo's work has informed much scholarly debates on memory and trauma since the 1990s, it contributed

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[141] For Delbo's coining of terms 'ordinary memory' and the 'deep-lying, sense memory', see footnote 17. For a discussion of Delbo's distinction between the two different kinds of memory in the context of traumatic memory of the Holocaust, see Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 156-177.
[142] Jill Bennett, "The Aesthetics of Sense-Memory: Theorising Trauma Through the Visual Arts," in Franz Kaltenbeck and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Trauma und Erinnerung (Trauma and Memory: Cross-Cultural Perspectives),* Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2000, pp. 81-95.
[143] Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory* (translated from the French by Rosette Lamont), Evanston, Illinois: The Marlboro Press/Northwestern University Press, 2001, pp. 2-3.
[144] Bennett, *Emphatic Vision*, pp. 22-26. I return to and discuss Bennett's work in this regard later in Chapter 1.
[145] Ibid. The term 'affective memory' in the context of the visual arts was coined by Jill Bennett.

to wider memory discourses, namely those that focused on individual experience such as testimonies and memoirs, while it also contributed to investigations about the presence of memory and trauma in the visual arts.

As interest in trauma and memory studies grew, historians also began to engage with the two concepts, developing new theories about the relationships between individual memory, collective memory and the understanding of historical trauma. One cannot discuss historical trauma without investigating memory as well. However, while it is true that in the past few decades, scholars worldwide have been applying trauma and memory discourses to investigate historical traumatic events, the ways these phenomena are understood has varied significantly. For instance, Huyssen argues that the focus on trauma in connection with memory and history is highly required

> "where nations and groups of people are trying to come to terms with a history of violence suffered or violence perpetrated."[146]

In his work *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009),[147] another American historian, Michael Rothberg (b. 1960), puts memory centre stage and makes compelling arguments about the exclusivity of the abject[148] past. In his work, Rothberg discusses different memory traditions, which seem to be autonomous, and which emerge in dialogue with each other. According to Rothberg, neither an individual nor a nation can really claim to own a memory of a particular historical event, as these are shared resources.[149] This led him to coin the term

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[146] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 9.

[147] See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory – Remembering the Holocaust in The Age of Decolonization,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. The term 'multidirectional memory' was coined by Michael Rothberg.

[148] The Bulgarian/French philosopher Julia Kristeva (b. 1941) investigated the 'abject' (i.e. the subject of 'abjection'), drawing on theories by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, to examine the horror experienced by an individual and having consequences within a collective sphere. See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1982 (originally published in French, in 1980 as *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur. Essai sur l'Abjection* by Le Seuil, Paris). This study uses the word 'abject' in this sense.
See also the excellent Martha J. Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives - Kristeva on Women and Violence,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

[149] For a discussion of this subject, see Michael Rothberg, "Introduction: Theorizing Multidirectional Memory in a Transnational Age," in Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory – Remembering the Holocaust in The Age of Decolonization,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 1-29.

'multidirectional memory'. Taking the opposing point of view, Huyssen adduced the historical traumas and memories of past events, which at heart remain tied to the particular history of specific nations. He argues that despite the differences between post-war Germany and, for instance, post-Partition India, post-Apartheid South Africa, Argentina, or Chile, "the *political* site of memory practices"[150] remains national and not post-national or global.[151]

The American historian and Holocaust scholar James E. Young (b. 1951) built on Rothberg's and Huyssen's investigations into the subject of historical trauma. Through his investigations into memory, trauma and the Holocaust, he has recognised the creation of objects, artworks, memorials and museums as ways to allow individuals and nations to escape from traumatic repetitions and traumatic pasts.[152] In his works *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (2016), *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (2000), and *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993), Young has extensively investigated memorial art in the aftermath of the Holocaust. He argues that the notion of the Holocaust, with its wide recognition as the universal trope of traumatic history of the twentieth century, has migrated into other unrelated contexts and public discourses, nationally and globally.

To recapitulate: in the past century there have been great advances in the ways in which both trauma and memory are understood. In the field of memory, a crucial distinction has been established between individual memory and collective memory, and important insights have been gained into both territories. In the field of collective memory, which is of particular importance for this study, the work of Halbwachs and Assmann is

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[150] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p. 16.

[151] Ibid. In relation to the two historical traumas of different national contexts, that of post-Apartheid South Africa and that of post-Partition India, Huyssen investigated the work of the South African artist William Kentridge (b. 1955) and that of Nalini Malani, when both artists' works were shown at dOCUMENTA (13), in Kassel, in 2012; see Andreas Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalani Malani. Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,* Milan: Charta, 2013. In *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory* Huyssen argues about the emerging new aesthetic practices in both artists' work, Kentridge's and Malani's, where the two openly address political conflicts and social divisions, by turning back to historical traumas of their nations.

[152] See James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between,* Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016; James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000; and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

particularly relevant. Halbwachs, known for developing the concept of collective memory, advanced the theory that a society can own a memory which exists outside the experience of an individual. Assmann took Halbwachs' ideas further, making a distinction in the domain of collective memory between the 'communicative memory'—everyday communications about the meaning of the past—and 'cultural memory'— objectified culture, such as reusable images, written materials, monuments and rituals that are specific and unique to every individual society in any given time period, and which serve to recall important past collective events.

The close connection between memory and trauma was emphasised by Janet, Claparède, and James. Their research showed that, in the individual realm, despite the flexibility of the mind, certain memories—those inextricably linked to traumatic experience—act as obstacles and prevent individuals from going on with their lives. The three scientists shared an awareness that some memories are not evanescent and that some experiences and past events leave distressing memories which the sufferer returns to continuously and experiences as 'traumatic'.

Various events in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the emergence of new memory discourses across the Western hemisphere, accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s, in parallel to the broadening debate on the Holocaust. These events also led to the questioning of the relationship between memory and history, and invited into the field historians who engaged with both memory and trauma in different ways. Rothberg and Huyssen, who both put memory at the core of their research, engaged with the concept of memory in the collective sphere. Rothberg postulated different memory traditions which were autonomous, and which emerged in dialogue with each other; in his view, neither an individual nor a nation could really claim to own a memory of a particular historical event, as these are all shared resources. For this, he coined the term 'multidirectional memory'. On the other hand, his contemporary Huyssen investigated collective memory and its relation to trauma—hence, the historical traumas. He saw the memories of past collective events, observed globally, as tied to the particular history of specific nations. According to Huyssen, despite the differences between, for instance, post-war Germany and post-Partition India or post-Apartheid South Africa, the memory remains national and not global.

Of particular importance for the present study is also the work of another historian, Pierre Nora, who coined and developed the term of *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of

memory', in his work *Realms of Memory.* Nora used the term to designate those places and artefacts in the French history where the collective memory "secretes itself and resides."[153] For Nora, a *lieu de mémoire* is any meaningful entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which through the means of a human will or the passing of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of the community or certain group of people. The concept passed straight into general use as a way of referring to any place or object, in the context of any nation, vested with historical meaning within the framework of collective memory, including monuments, memorials, and objects of art. In this regard, Nora's *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of memory', will be of particular importance for this study.

The migration of the two concepts, trauma and memory, into other discourses and contexts has inevitably also reflected in the field of the arts. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the initial focus of scholarly circles was on the modernist literary texts and poetry written in the years following the Holocaust. The work of Charlotte Delbo, which was given much attention since the 1990s, as well as the works written by Caruth, LaCapra, Laub and others, will all be of a certain reference in this study. Of particular interest will be Delbo's work *Days and Memory,* written decades after the war. There, Delbo spoke about her traumatic memories from the time she was imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau. In her writings, she distinguished between two kinds of memories, the 'ordinary memory' and the 'deep-lying, sense memory'; she placed the former in the framework of what is intelligible and communicable with the world and the self, while describing the latter as a memory inextricably linked with trauma, registering the pain related to a traumatic event experienced in the past, and not accessible by ordinary means. In this respect, I will return to Delbo's work again in the following chapters in my discussions of Malani's selected works.

[153] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations,* p. 7.

1.3. Trauma and Memory in the Visual Arts

> "What are the words to say that which seems unspeakable, but still needs to be given voice, words?"
> (Okwui Enwezor)[154]

Since the 1990s, as various literary works linked to trauma and memory were gaining attention and recognition, developments in the field also took place in the visual arts. There emerged artworks originating in different parts of the world that told of the encounters with traumatic memories. As in the field of fiction, where these works came to be termed 'trauma fiction', works in the field of visual arts became known as 'trauma and memory art'. Where the literary imagination can fictionalise and symbolise, visual art has the capacity to translate an individual or collective experience, often one defying comprehension or verbalisation, and to explore it visually through an artistic medium of choice. While literature, with its fictional worlds, invites its audiences to engage or re-engage with a traumatic past, visual works of art offer an insight into a place of vulnerability and disquiet. Hence, an artwork that originates from past traumatic memories or addresses historical traumas, whether in literature, cinema or the visual arts, has the potential to engage or re-engage its audiences through emotional identification and empathy, as well as through a critical reflection.

The memory of past trauma unveils a place that resists being fully remembered, represented, and grasped; an artist, however, finds means to represent this very place in their work in a way that facilitates acknowledgment of that very past. The purpose of trauma fiction is not merely to make a frightening and alien experience more understandable, but also to serve as a witness for the history of trauma, whether individual or collective.[155] In the visual arts, the intimations of trauma and memory are closely connected to social, cultural and political contexts, whether they originate from individual or collective experience. As with trauma fiction, trauma or memory art is a

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[154] Okwui Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past. Memory and Archive," in Franz Kaltenbeck and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Trauma und Erinnerung (Trauma and Memory: Cross-Cultural Perspectives),* Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2000, pp. 19-34, p. 22.
[155] Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002, pp. 220-225.

form of re-engagement for artist and audience, interrogating the forgotten, denied or suppressed, and often serving as a testimony in the present.[156]

It is, however, more difficult to distinguish trauma and memory as thematic categories in the visual arts than in trauma fiction. It has, by now, been widely recognised that the visual narratives of trauma and memory usually do not follow any logic of representation to which one is accustomed in the usual art-historical discourse. Methods applied in art history that classify or recognise art in its representational function may not serve us in the case of art related to subjects of trauma and memory. In the visual arts, memory and trauma have been seen as engaged in a complex balancing act on the axes of speakable/unspeakable, depictable/undepictable, and often—particularly where individual trauma is concerned—comprehensible/incomprehensible. Although the various theoretical approaches and scholarly endeavours in the field have so far been significantly different, all have displayed an equally strong concern for these interrelations. Amongst the first to have investigated trauma and memory in the visual arts was Jill Bennett, who was also a pioneering author in the field of trauma and memory art.[157] In 1998, Bennett co-curated the exhibition *Telling Tales* (1998)[158] in Sydney, together with Australian curator Jackie Dunn, investigating the subject of traumatic memory in visual works of art executed in different media. *Telling Tales* featured contemporary Australian art, deeply intertwined with the subjects of trauma, individual and collective memory. Each of the fifteen artists[159] explored personal traumas of their

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[156] For a compelling discussion of the subject of testimony in the context of trauma and memory, see Esther Faye, "Impossible Memories and the History of Trauma," in Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 160-177, particularly pp. 160-165.

[157] For Bennett's pioneering study in the field of trauma, memory and the visual arts, see the aforementioned Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art (Cultural Memory in the Present)*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

[158] The exhibition *Telling Tales,* first shown at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, in Sydney, in 1998, travelled to the Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria, in 1999; see Jill Bennett and Jackie Dunn, *Telling Tales,* Sydney: Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 1998; and Graz: Neue Galerie, 1999 (exhibition catalogue). In connection with the exhibition *Telling Tales*, the Austrian psychoanalyst Franz Kaltenbeck (1944-2018) and the Austrian contemporary art critic and curator Peter Weibel (b. 1944) initiated an intercultural dialogue with the symposium titled *Trauma und Erinnerung.* The symposium enumerated the crimes of colonialism and racism, from the expropriation of the Aborigines in Australia to the genocides in North America and South Africa, and the Holocaust in Europe, investigating their common structural aspects, differences, and singularities. After the symposium, a publication consisting of contributing papers and essays was published; see Franz Kaltenbeck and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Trauma und Erinnerung (Trauma and Memory: Cross-Cultural Perspectives),* Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2000.

[159] Participating Australian artists were Ian Abdulla (1947-2011), Gordon Bennett (1955-2014), Pat Brassington (b. 1942), Anne Brennan (b. 1950), Jon Cattapan (b. 1956), Dennis del Favero (b. 1953), Deej

own childhood and collective memories of Australia's colonial past. In these works, the personal past was explored through intimate experiences and memories, whereas links were created to a collective traumatic past and hence to the history of the nation. In parallel, *Telling Tales* also investigated a link between the social and psychological aspects of remembering and the repression of memories, through the means of art practice in which the narrative processes structure the mechanisms of memory and repression. The focus of Bennett's scholarly work was thus not the depiction of past events, but rather the lived traumatic memory, and the processes of remembering itself as they display themselves in the visual. The exhibition was the catalyst for one of the first theoretical accounts in the field: less than a decade later, Bennett published *Emphatic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (2005). In *Emphatic Vision*, she brought together the visual art produced in the context of conflict and trauma from a range of countries, including Colombia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and her native Australia, while investigating the complex interaction between representation and affect in the visual arts. Bennett tried to distance her research from the concepts of trauma and memory in the narrow sense, focusing on affective operations in art, i.e. on the pathways which position art in a certain discourse in relation to memory and trauma. According to Bennett, many of the selected works exposed the essential paradox that characterises trauma and memory narratives in general, an attempt to communicate something beyond the scope of what is possible, that which resists ordinary processes of remembering and comprehension.[160] These works, then, in the artistic medium of choice, raise important questions about the possibility of depicting the *unspeakable,* representing the *unrepresentable,* and making sense of the *incomprehensible,* as observed in the visual. Just as past traumatic experience issues a challenge to language, narrative, and understanding, most visual works of art originating from a place of past trauma and intertwined with memory accessible with difficulty, speak of this very tension between comprehension, representation and depiction.

In 1999, *Telling Tales* moved to Neue Galerie Graz, a contemporary art gallery in the city of Graz, in Austria. It was soon followed by another large exhibition on trauma

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Fabyc (b. 1961), Julie Gough (b. 1965), Louise Hearman (b. 1963), Justin Kramer (b. 1960), Tracey Moffatt (b. 1960), Jill Orr (b. 1952), Mike Parr (b. 1945), Catherine Truman (b. 1957), and Ken Unsworth (b. 1931).

[160] Bennett, *Emphatic Vision*, pp. 2-6.

and memory art, *Trauma* (2001) at the Hayward Gallery, London.[161] The subject matter of traumatic memory was presented through the works of twelve international artists, many with already established portfolios.[162] The curators of the exhibition[163] presented the subject of traumatic memory through the visual works of art created in different media, in which artists were drawing from either their personal experiences or collective memories of their national pasts. According to the curators, several of the artists included in the exhibition, amongst which the Australian-born Tracy Moffatt (b. 1960), the Belgian-born Johan Grimonprez (b. 1962), and the Cuban-born Félix González-Torres (1957-1996), regarded trauma as "one of the key sites on which collective identity is established."[164] *Trauma* was one of the first large international exhibitions in the field of trauma and memory art, followed by *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (2006) at the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and *After Shock: Conflict, Violence, and Resolution* (2007) at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich. In the light of the attention that trauma and memory art had been gaining since the 1990s, the American art historian and art critic Hal Foster (b. 1955) became interested in the contemporary art world's fascination with the subject of trauma. In his work *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1996), Foster convincingly argues that for many visual artists

> "in contemporary art and culture the truth resides in the traumatic or abject subject, in the diseased or damaged body."[165]

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[161] Exhibition *Trauma* was envisaged as a touring exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery, London for Arts Council England. Between 2001 and 2002 *Trauma* travelled to the Dundee Contemporary Arts, Scotland; to the Firstsite Museum, Colchester; and to the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. See *Trauma,* London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2001 (exhibition catalogue).

[162] Artists included in the exhibition were Martin Boyce (b. 1967, Hamilton, Canada), Willie Doherty (b. 1959, Londonderry, Northern Ireland), Kendell Geers (b. 1968, Johannesburg, South Africa), Félix González-Torres (1957-1996, Cuba/United States), Johan Grimonprez (b. 1962, Roeselare, Belgium), Guillermo Kuitca (b. 1961, Buenos Aires, Argentina), Maria Lindberg (b. 1958, Ljushult, Sweden), Tracey Moffatt (b. 1960, Brisbane, Australia), Lucia Nogueira (1950-1998, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Anri Sala (b. 1974, Tirana, Albania), Ann-Sofi Siden (b. 1962, Stockholm, Sweden), and Christopher Wool (b. 1955, Chicago, United States).

[163] The exhibition *Trauma* at the Hayward Gallery was curated by Fiona Bradley, Katrina Brown and Andrew Nairne.

[164] *Trauma* (exhibition catalogue), p. 7.

[165] Hal Foster, *The Return of The Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 166; for Foster's discussion of contemporary art in the context of trauma and the abject, see particularly pp. 127-168.

This damaged, traumatised body is, for Foster,

> ”the evidentiary basis of important witnessing to truth, of necessary testimonials against power.”[166]

In parallel to a number of institutional exhibitions, various commercial art galleries were also exhibiting works that seemingly dealt with a traumatic memory. Amongst these were the artistic self-exposures of the British artist Tracey Emin (b. 1963),[167] the exhibition *Trauma and the Uncanny* (2000) by the British artist Gillian Wearing (b. 1963), the mixed media installations and writings on personal and collective trauma of the Tanzanian-born Everlyn Nicodemus (b. 1954), the photographic work of the American artist Nan Goldin (b. 1953), exposing the lives and deaths of those marginalised by sexuality, drug abuse and illness in the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s New York (Figure 1.1.),[168] and the intimate photographic work of the British-born Jo Spence (1934-1992), to name but a few.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there emerged alongside trauma art a growing number of memorials and works of memory-sculpture, where artists were invited into the space of collective memory and asked to create a memory site for the wider public. One of the first such large-scale projects was the American artist Maya Lin's (b. 1959) *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982) in Washington, D.C. (Figure 1.2.), conceived and received as a public architectural project of commemoration, honouring the memory of the American soldiers who fought in Vietnam War.[169] In the early twenty-first century, several more major memorials have been commissioned, including *The Memory Park* in Buenos Aires, Argentina (originally *El Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires,* 1998) (Figure 1.3.),[170]

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[166] Ibid. p. 166.

[167] One of the most widely known works by Tracey Emin in this regard is *My Bed* (1998, installation). For a discussion of Emin's work in the context of memory and autobiographical art practice, see Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance,* London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. Press, 2009, pp. 21-24.

[168] Nan Goldin's most noted work in this respect is *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986, series of photographs), a series of photographs exhibited in the cinematic medium as a slide show in 1985, shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and published as an artist book in 1986, by Aperture Foundation, New York. *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* is an autobiographical document of gay and heroin subculture in New York in the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s; for a discussion of Goldin's work in this regard, see Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory,* pp. 42-48.

[169] For a discussion of Maya Lin’s work in the context of memory and the public sphere, see Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, pp. 7-12.

[170] For a discussion of *El Parque de la Memoria* in this regard, see Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, pp. 94-109**;** and Silvia R. Tandeciarz, ”Citizens of Memory: Refiguring the Past in Post-dictatorship Argentina,” in *PMLA*, Vol. 122, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 151-169.

emerging from the intense and long-lasting political struggle about the fate of over thirty thousand victims of the military dictatorship, who disappeared between the years 1976 and 1983, and the *Holocaust Memorial* (2005) in Berlin, also known as the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (Figure 1.4.).[171] The memorials, then, as works of visual art, came to emblematise and influence the way that culture and society engage with traumatic collective memories in the present.

If we look specifically at memory art, we find that scholars have engaged theoretically in the field in a variety of ways, according to their academic disciplines. The work of the American art historian Lisa Saltzman has been important for her investigations into the strategies of remembrance and the performance of memory-work in the visual arts.[172] Saltzman has not only conducted investigations and made theoretical contributions related to individual artists who have been creating from the space of collective memory,[173] but she was also one of the first scholars to give an account of visual art in the aftermath of the Holocaust.[174] In the field of the post-Holocaust memorials and memory-sculpture, perhaps the most noted theoretical engagements were those of James E. Young.[175] In his work, Young traced and investigated the Holocaust museums and monuments in Europe, the United States and Israel, and examined how these memorials reflect where the collective abject past that these entities commemorate are situated in contemporary aesthetic and architectural discourses. Another important contribution in the field was the work of Huyssen, whose chief interest was the memorial culture and the phenomena of memory in contemporary culture since the 1990s onwards in the Western hemisphere. He has produced several theoretical contributions in the field of visual arts,[176] which include investigations of the works of individual artists creating from the space of memory and historical trauma. Amongst the artists whose works Huyssen

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[171] For a discussion of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in this regard, see Young, *At Memory's Edge,* pp. 184-223; and Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 49-71, and pp. 72-93.
[172] For a reference on Saltzman's work, see footnote 14.
[173] Perhaps the most comprehensive is Saltzman's account of the work of Anselm Kiefer; see Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* examines the legacy of the German/Jewish culture in the aftermath of the Holocaust, positioning Kiefer's work as mediating the relationship between a traumatic history and the post-Holocaust era, where his work bears witness to past events in the present.
[174] See the above footnote.
[175] For Young's work in this respect, see footnote 152.
[176] Huyssen's essays in the field of memory and contemporary culture were published under title *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003).

examined were the South African artist William Kentridge (b. 1955), the Colombian artist Doris Salcedo (b. 1958),[177] and, last but not least, Nalini Malani. More recently, the American art historian Joan Gibbons (b. 1950) made a contribution to the field with *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (2007), investigating the intimate and collective recollections of memories in the contemporary art of the past few decades.[178]

Representations of Traumatic Historical Events in the Visual

Since the late 1980s, the visual artists globally have been creating works in the context of historical traumas and collective memories of oppression, wars, and violence of national and global proportions, investigating and representing what has often been called the *unrepresentable* of their national pasts. They include William Kentridge, Doris Salcedo, the British-born Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963), the Polish artist Miroslav Balka (b. 1958), and the Ukrainian Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933), to name but a few. These artists have openly addressed political conflicts and social divisions by re-inventing already existing media or inventing new media to return to historical traumas of their national past, thereby developing new aesthetic practices. In these works, trauma and memory have been mediated both in content and through their medium.

Since the early 1990s, the issues of memory, historical trauma and their politically informed forgetting have emerged as key concerns in a number of countries across the world. They have informed political life in post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union since the fall of the Berlin Wall (built 1961) in 1989. They

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[177] For Huyssen's discussion of Salcedo's work in this regard, see Andreas Huyssen, "Doris Salcedo's Memory Sculpture: *Unland: The Orphan's Tunic,"* in Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 110-121. In addition, see also *Doris Salcedo: The Materiality of Mourning,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016 (artist monograph).

[178] Joan Gibbons' work *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (2007) was the very first scholarly survey of the subject of memory and the contemporary visual art. Looking at both, individual and collective memory, Gibbons investigated artworks and visual art objects created by different international artists in the contexts of autobiography, the memory as trace, the role of the archive, revisionist memory, and the absence of memory; see Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance,* London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Press, 2009. Additionally, for a collection of essays on the subject of memory in the contemporary arts, see also Ian Farr (ed.), *Memory – Documents of Contemporary Art,* London: Whitechapel Gallery, and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012.

have dominated the public discourses in post-Apartheid South Africa, whose 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (i.e. a court-like restorative justice body) was set up after the dismantling of Apartheid in the early 1990s and the formation of a democratic government in 1994, and have remained topical in several other African countries, including Rwanda and Nigeria. Issues of memory, trauma and their related amnesia and denial have also been crucial to the race debate in Australia that centres on the 'Stolen Generations' (i.e. also known as 'Stolen Children'), where children of the Australian/Aboriginal descent were removed from their families by the Australian government. They have also burdened the relationship between China, Japan and Korea in the Far East; they have been used politically in the Middle East; they have been continuously present in the countries of the former Yugoslavia since the end of the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001); they have remained current in India and Pakistan since the end of colonial era and after the 1947 Partition of India, and they have determined the cultural and political debates in Latin America, in relation to forced disappearances, *desaparecidos* (i.e. people secretly abducted and imprisoned by the state) and their offspring.

The geographic spread of what Huyssen calls the 'culture of memory'[179] is as wide as the political uses of memory are widespread and varied.[180] Such uses range from the mobilising of the mythic past in support of fundamentalist politics—for instance, in post-communist Serbia, or in India, where Hindu fundamentalism has become more extremist since the end of Nehruvian era (i.e. after the period when India was governed by its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)—to attempts to create public places of *real* memory to counter the politics of forgetting pursued by post-dictatorship regimes, often through the means of repressive silencing.[181]

In the field of visual arts, artists have searched for their own ways to respond to such attempts. Their works have performed a kind of memory-work that activates space and temporality, and speaks of presence as well as of absence of memories, all in a relationship with the past in the present. Foster argues that several of these works can be characterised in relation to the past as 'living-on', with an ability to restore the mnemonic

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[179] See Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* p. 15. The phrase 'culture of memory' was coined by Huyssen; for a discussion in this regard, see particularly Huyssen's essay "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia" in Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory,* pp. 11-29.
[180] Ibid. pp. 15-16.
[181] Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, pp. 18-20.

dimension of contemporary art.[182] For Foster, 'living-on' in visual art includes the unburied persistence of a traumatic collective past evoked and observed in the works of artists such as the German artist Hans Haacke (b. 1936), Gerhard Richter, the French artist Christian Boltanski (1944-2021), the Polish artist Christoph Wodiczko (b. 1943), and the American-born Robert Gober (b. 1954).[183] These works are never to be understood as purely material objects. Whatever medium is used—whether the work is an installation, a sculpture or created in an inter-media hybridity—these works themselves articulate memory by offering memory traces from historical chapters tainted by trauma, asking their audience to read, re-read and reflect critically in the present. The audience of these works is, therefore, challenged to travel in time and engage in the acts of recollecting memories of often abject, traumatic past. The artists often use old and discarded materials or they deploy the well-known myths, so that these visual works of art communicate an awareness that everything which belongs to memory is in fact a recollection and thus a representation of past events in the present. In this light, then, we can speak of 'present pasts'.[184] These visual artworks can, therefore, also be understood as works fighting the erasure and silencing of traumatic histories in the present.

One of the artists working in this context since the 1990s in Colombia is Doris Salcedo. Salcedo's work, mainly in the medium of sculpture, called 'memory sculpture',[185] has been produced in the context of the violent past of Colombia and the continuous cycles of violence there in the present. From early on, Salcedo's sculpture has been deeply intertwined with both trauma and memory, where its focus was never just the time and

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[182] Foster elaborates on this subject in Hal Foster, "This Funeral is for the Wrong Corpse," in Hal Foster, *Design and Crime and Other Diatribes,* London and New York: Verso, 2002, pp. 123-143; additionally, see also Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," in *October,* Vol. 110 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 3-22.
[183] Foster, "This Funeral is for the Wrong Corpse," in *Design and Crime*, pp. 123-143.
[184] The phrases 'present pasts' and 'pasts in the present' are used in this study following Huyssen's coining of the term 'present pasts' in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003). In this respect, Huyssen coined the term by analogy with the seminal work of the German historian Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006), *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (1985), while he was also influenced by the work of Richard Terdiman, who coined the term 'present past' in *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (1993).
[185] The term 'memory-sculpture' in relation to Salcedo's work and in the framework of memory and historical trauma was initially used as such by Huyssen; see the aforementioned essay "Doris Salcedo's Memory Sculpture," in Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 110-121. For a discussion of Salcedo's work in the context of memory and the reassembling of historical events, see also Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory,* pp. 58-64; for a rare collection of interviews with the artist, see Jill Bennett, "Interviews with Doris Salcedo," in *Doris Salcedo,* London: Camden Arts Centre, 2001 (exhibition catalogue).

the place of actual past events, but a dimension of localised memory itself. In this regard, Huyssen made a compelling distinction between the monuments and memorials, which articulate the officially accepted collective memories—the official historical records—and between the 'memory-sculpture', which carries a 'lived memory', thus a difficult experience located in individual bodies and remembered as such, even when it involves collective, political memory.[186] This is in fact the main context of Salcedo's art and has been the source for her creative work since the mid-1990s.

Her work *Unland: The Orphan's Tunic* (1997, installation) (Figures 1.5. and 1.6.) is one of the three that make up the series *Unland* (1997), first exhibited in 1998, at the New Museum in New York. *Unland: The Orphan's Tunic* is an *objet trouvé*, a kitchen table, on which are found material traces. It acts as a bearer of memories, as a silent witness. It initially appears as a simple and unassuming object, and only comes alive upon closer inspection. Its complexity is linked as much to what is not there, in its absence, as to what is in front of the viewer's eyes. Upon closer inspection one sees that there are actually two tables of different lengths, widths and heights, violently inserted into one another and trying to act as one single unit. At the first glance, the upper table looks grey and shining, while the longer, inner table looks dark and gives a sense of heavy usage. Both are mutilated and give a sense of pain caused and pain received. Upon closer observation, the viewer sees that what appeared to be a white shine is in fact a thin, silky cover—a tunic—used as a table runner and covering the two legs on one side. The silk is very thin, worn out, so that one sees through it the cracks on the table and its roughened surface. All at once, the table appears to be nothing more than a trace, a silenced trace, a memory fragment. A trace, however, to which Salcedo gave a powerful language, subtly political in character without resorting to any direct message.

A close-up detail of *Unland: The Orphan's Tunic* (Figure 1.6., detail) shows the many small holes with hundreds of human hairs threaded through them that seemingly hold the silk tunic close to the table surface. In this respect, the table hosts the silent presence of a deceased human body, a single orphan—or of the many orphaned children whose normal lives were taken from them. In this sense, the table also stands for the victims of violence in Salcedo's native land, its surface communicating silently the

[186] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 110-111.

memories of pain and loss in the context of violent Colombian history. With its silenced yet expressive power, *Unland: The Orphan's Tunic* grows slowly on its audience. Its artistic translation of the pathology of violence into an unusual visual art object makes it a 'memory-sculpture', which speaks of pain and loss and bears witness[187] to traumatic past events in the present. Salcedo's work is inextricably linked to memory and trauma in the most literal sense—it speaks of the traumatic memories of national violent acts against humans and speaks about the processes and the very structures of memory,[188] this way entering into a dialogue with its audiences.

In parallel to Salcedo's work since the 1990s, several of her contemporaries, amongst which Kentridge, Whiteread, and Balka, invented new or re-invented the old media for the purpose of recollecting abject memories in the present. The American art historian and contemporary art critic Rosalind Krauss has called these *transgressions* into new media "art in the age of the post-medium condition" in her work *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (2000).[189] Krauss argues that some artists were becoming wary of the postmodern fad of mimicking the "leeching of the aesthetic out into the social field,"[190] which led to their decision to not get engaged in installation and intermedia work, where art becomes complicit with a globalisation of artworks in the service of capital.[191]

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[187] In this regard, Salcedo's art can also be viewed in the context of 'postmemory' in the visual arts. The term 'postmemory' was coined by the Romanian/American comparative literature scholar Marianne Hirsch (b. 1949). For Hirsch, the 'postmemory' is a secondary memory which has been constructed by the second generation rather than by the primary witnesses of actual events. See Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory,* Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997; and Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
Micro studies have been conducted on the subject of past traumatic experience undergone by an earlier generation and the ways it continues to affect the second generation. These studies are principally concerned with the belated memories of children of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. They mainly use the tools of historiography with an aim of incorporating the disorienting temporal structure of traumatic time into the historical enterprise, and combine it with psychoanalysis. Tools from both disciplines have been used with an aim of understanding how children born during or after a traumatic event carry a life burden of their parents' traumatic memories. For a discussion in this regard, see Faye, "Impossible Memories and the History of Trauma," in *World Memory*, pp. 160-176.
[188] For a compelling discussion of Salcedo's work in the context of structures and processes of memory, see Bennett, *Empathic Vision,* pp. 46-69.
[189] See Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000.
[190] Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea,* p. 56.
[191] Ibid.

Another artist working in what Krauss called ”the age of the post-medium condition” and reframing age-old materials with newer technologies and images in motion is the South African William Kentridge. Kentridge, whose art shares certain formal and political aspects with that of Nalini Malani,[192] has made wide use of the charcoal drawing technique with animated films in his recalling of traumatic South African history. He has gained recognition globally for his art practice, working mostly with the subject of trauma of South African political history. His contemporary art practice includes prints, charcoal drawings,[193] animated films and performance.[194] His films are constructed through a variety of animation techniques, from hand drawing to the shadow play medium, and filmed using a meticulous stop-motion animation process.[195] Several of Kentridge's animated films produced in the 1990s[196] originate from his engagement with the historical trauma of his nation and its remembering in the present.

The animated film *Felix in Exile* (1994, 35mm film) (Figures 1.7., 1.8., and 1.9., video stills from *Felix in Exile*) communicates in mediated and indirect form the ”contradictions of narrative which have accompanied the long-wished-for moment of political change.”[197] *Felix in Exile*, made from forty charcoal drawings, with a soundtrack created by the two South African sound artists Phillip Miller and Motsumi Makhene, was Kentridge's fifth animated film in the series titled *Drawings for Projection.*[198] The basis

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[192] For Huyssen's account of both artists' work in this regard, see footnote 151.

[193] In the 1990s, Kentridge created several charcoal drawings, amongst which was also the charcoal and pastel on paper-work *Arc/Procession: Develop, Catch-up, Even Surpass* (1990, charcoal and pastel on paper). For an excellent discussion of *Arc/Procession: Develop, Catch-up, Even Surpass* in the context of transition from Apartheid to a nonracial democracy in South Africa, see Michael Rothberg, *”Progress, Progression, Procession: William Kentridge and the Narratology of Transitional Justice,”* in *Narrative,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (January, 2012), pp. 1-24.

[194] There are several comprehensive accounts and many essays written about Kentridge's work and art practice. For a general account of the artist's work, see, for instance, Lilian Tone (ed.), *William Kentridge: Fortuna,* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2013; for a collection of critical essays and interviews with the artist, see Rosalind Krauss (ed.), *William Kentridge (October Files),* Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2017.

[195] For a reference on the stop-motion animation technique, see footnote 309.

[196] Amongst Kentridge’s 1990s animated films are *Felix in Exile* (1994, 35mm film medium), *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (1989, 16mm film medium), *Sobriety, Obesity and Growing Old* (1991, 16mm video medium), and *Shadow Procession* (1999, 35mm video medium transferred to digital format).

[197] Rothberg, ”Progress, Progression, Procession,” in *Narrative,* pp. 8-9. Kentridge, South African and Jewish, was of interest to Rothberg for his art practice in relation to his personal history and his 'multilayered identity' (i.e. called as such by Rothberg), and the role this may have played in his art. In his essay ”Progress, Progression, Procession: William Kentridge and the Narratology of Transitional Justice” Rothberg focused on Kentridge's works produced in the 1990s, by investigating the visual narrative techniques whereas he convincingly argues that these ”provide a powerful alternative to the liberal story of transitional justice” (Rothberg, ”Progress, Progression, Procession,” in *Narrative*, p. 19).

[198] *Drawings for Projection* is a series of short animated films made from large-scale drawings in charcoal and pastel-on-paper medium. The films are usually shown as video projections with soundtrack.

for each scene is a single drawing, altered through the techniques of erasing and re-drawing, and photographed on either 16mm or 35mm film at each stage of its evolution. The remnants of successive stages remain on the paper, as a palimpsest, providing a metaphor for the multilayering and the traces of memories, this being one of the main themes in Kentridge's art. As with all films from his *Drawings for Projection* series, *Felix in Exile* is set in the devastated landscape south of the city of his birth, Johannesburg, where derelict mines, slime dams, mine dumps and industrial factories speak compellingly of a terrain of loss and pain. One of the characters in the film is Nandi, an African woman, who appears at the beginning of the film, making drawings of the landscape she is forced to inhabit (see Figure 1.9., detail). Nandi is deployed by the artist as an observer of the outside world, discerning the land and watching the black bodies, bleeding and with wounds, all melting into the landscape (see Figure 1.7., detail). She acts as a witness to violence and massacre which is part of South Africa's recent history. Another character in the film, Felix Teitelbaum, featured also in Kentridge's first and fourth films from the same series, is deployed as another observer, perhaps as an *alter ego* of the artist. Teitelbaum, who in earlier films is a ruthless capitalist and a white South African male, appears in *Felix in Exile* as a lonesome man who finds himself alone in a foreign hotel room. He is going through Nandi's drawings, and as he looks into the mirror, Nandi appears behind it. What initially seems to be a connection between the two lonely characters is suddenly broken after Nandi is shot and taken back to the other side, wounded and covered in blood (see Figure 1.8., detail), as were the bodies she witnessed earlier. The flood of blue water at the end of the film symbolises a recollection of memories and perhaps even serves as a warning against silence and forgetting. In *Felix in Exile* Kentridge

> ”innovates without fetishizing the advent of the new, and he accomplishes this at the level of a narrative discourse and the aesthetic medium as well as with his personal approach to political change.”[199]

[199] Rothberg, ”Progress, Progression, Procession,” in *Narrative,* p. 19.

Creating the work before the first general election in South Africa,[200] Kentridge referred to the *political* in his work by recalling the historical trauma of his nation, and expressed the need to "question the way in which the people who had died on a journey to this new dispensation would be remembered."[201] Instead of denial and the erasure of memories of a traumatic past, Kentridge's work can be read as an attempt to preserve in the South African present memories of the brutal, oppressive and racist past.

What the various investigations into the relationship between trauma, memory and the visual arts have in common is that they pose the question—in somewhat different ways—of what an image or a metaphor informed by trauma or a traumatic memory reveals about art, and hence about a certain artwork. However, these investigations often remain silent on the question's necessary counterpart: What can an art discourse or simply an artwork reveal about past trauma? How can it give testimony about a difficult past? It is only by taking into account both perspectives that we can do justice to the complex interrelations between trauma, memory and art as well as trauma, memory and history. In this light, then, artists such as Salcedo and Kentridge break this wall of silence often accompanied by the politically informed denial, by revealing their nation's tainted past through their visual expression. In this regard, such artworks become a testimony about the past, bearing witness to it in the present.

Memory, the Visual Arts and the Ethics of Representation

While the emergence of trauma and memory studies in the humanities has often been seen as closely linked with the ethical turn in humanities, the increasingly generalised use of the terms 'trauma' and 'traumatic memory' has, as justifiably stressed by the German historian Wulf Kansteiner (b. 1964), resulted in a tendency to abandon the historical and moral precision which the concept of trauma originally served to

[200] The first general elections in South Africa, hence the first in which the citizens of all races were allowed to take part, were held in April 1994. For an account of the history of South Africa from 1948 to the present-day, see, for instance, Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid,* London: Routledge, 2016 (3rd edition); for a discussion of the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' in South Africa, see Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the post-Apartheid State,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
[201] William Kentridge quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *William Kentridge,* Bruxelles: Societe des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles Press, 1999, p. 90 (exhibition catalogue).

promote.[202] The Spanish comparative literature scholars Dolores Herrero (b. 1948) and Sonia Baelo-Allué (b. 1965) argue, echoing Kansteiner, that ”trauma and ethics are two terms inextricably linked.”[203] According to Herrero and Baelo-Allué, it is ”difficult to deal with trauma without taking into account the relevance of ethical criticism.”[204] The latter takes us back to one of the founding impulses of trauma and memory studies, while, at the same time, it reconceptualises the subject and pushes the commitment to ethics even further. This is of no lesser importance in the field of visual arts.

With the growing exposure and recognition of trauma and memory art since the late twentieth century, critique in the field has also been gaining pace and attention.[205] The two concepts, trauma and memory, are namely deeply linked with ways of remembering and ways of listening as well as with ways of responding to traumatic stories and their related memories. When these experiences, whether memories from personal archives or events from national domain, are translated into visual language, they are in danger of losing their integrity. When depicted and presented in the visual, they can quickly become clichés or appear versions of the same story, this way also losing their impact. In this respect, the Nigerian contemporary art curator, art critic and scholar Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019) warns against the spectacularisation and aesthetisation of images of trauma in the visual arts. Enwezor observed many artists falling

> ”into this trap, and before long, that which is horrific becomes banalized and mundane simply by imposing on it certain standards of aesthetic position which in time delimits, anaesthetizes, and makes palatable the horrific.”[206]

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[202] See Wulf Kansteiner, “Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor,” in *Rethinking History*, Vol. 8, Issue 2 (2004), pp. 193-221. See also Richard Kearney, “Narrative and the Ethics of Remembrance,” in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (eds.), *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, London: Routledge Press, 1999, pp. 51-63.
[203] Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué, *Between the Urge to Know and the Need to Deny,* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter Heidelberg Press, 2011, p. 9.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Critical observations of the spectacularisation and aesthetisation of images of violence and related trauma in contemporary arts and culture have come from scholars working in various academic disciplines, including the Nigerian contemporary art curator, art critic and scholar Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019), and historians Andreas Huyssen and James E. Young.
[206] Enwezor, ”Remembrance of Things Past,” in *Trauma und Erinnerung,* pp. 21-22.

Enwezor justifiably argues that creating a visual spectacle in this respect works against both memory and remembering itself.[207] A visual artwork, in any given or chosen medium, can be taken as a tool for registering past experience, be it a traumatic one or not. As such, the visual work of art can constitute the means of capturing and transmitting any real experience, acting as a testimony in the present. Enwezor's insistence that visual art should take the role of a witness and act as a testimony to an abject and traumatic past was at the core of his scholarly work.[208] In his investigations of visual artworks originating from a place of historical trauma, Enwezor argues that these works share common ground in a place where collective identity, history and memory are complexly stitched together.[209] While warning against the spectacularisation and aesthetisation of images of trauma, Enwezor contends that traumatic memories and historical events, albeit often considered as *unrepresentable,* come with demands for representation and visibility in the present.[210] The two, however, need to derive from an honest approach towards past experiences, giving each an equal share of both—representation and visibility.[211] In this regard, the representation of traumatic past events in the visual arts is a way for artists to reach back into the place of collective space, memory and archive.[212] Enwezor called for those undertaking these acts to be mindful of their responsibility to depict past events of sensitive nature with precision and sincerity, particularly because of the role which art can play in illuminating aspects of culture and history as well as in the wider politics of memory.[213]

Another scholar who too engaged with this subject was Andreas Huyssen. Following the broadening of the Holocaust debate and its entry into other national and global contexts and discourses related to representations of historical traumas, Huyssen, on a similar note as Enwezor, warns against the spectacularising of difficult past events

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[207] Ibid. p. 22.
[208] Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019), who at the time of his untimely death served as director of Haus Der Kunst, modern and contemporary art museum in München, has been an ardent advocate for testimonial art, both of Western origins and from outside the Western art canon. Somebody who refused to shy away from complex politics and traumatic stories in art, Enwezor also advocated for placing non-Western art canons on an equal footing with the long-established narratives of European and North American art. Amongst his many important positions, Enwezor also served as Artistic Director of dOCUMENTA (11) in Kassel, in 2002, and as Chief Curator of the 56th Venice Biennial in 2015.
[209] Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung*, p. 23.
[210] Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung*, pp. 23-24.
[211] Ibid.
[212] For a compelling discussion of memory and archive as sites of temporal and spatial preservation, see Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 35-38.
[213] Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung*, p. 24.

in cinema,[214] literary fiction, visual arts, and museum culture. Huyssen argues that the representation of past events through any artistic means could not be

> "solved by simply opposing serious memory to trivial memory, the way historians sometimes oppose history to memory *tout court*, and to memory understood as the subjective and trivial stuff out of which the historian makes the real thing."[215]

According to Huyssen, this could in particular seriously undermine those representations of the often *unrepresentable* in arts and contemporary culture which combine the honesty and objectivity of testimonies to a difficult past.[216] In researching artworks and art objects of various origins, Huyssen reflects on the importance of acknowledging the constitutive gap between the reality and its representation in language (e.g. in fiction, poetry or memoirs) or image (e.g. in the visual arts, cinema or museum culture), where each work needs to be assessed individually in the context of representing the legitimate memories.[217] As Caruth contends, there is no single approach to listening to the many traumatic experiences that an individual or a nation encounters,[218] while the many traumatic stories will inevitably elicit a variety of responses, those of knowing and those of acting, including the many different representations of these traumatic encounters through the visual means.

Discourse on the relationship between trauma and ethics, and between trauma, memory and ethics in the visual arts, emerged following the research into the relationship

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[214] The subject of representation of trauma of the Holocaust has been known and discussed from the late 1980s onwards. There were several engagements with the Holocaust memory also in the medium of cinema, amongst which were a ten-hours long masterpiece *Shoah* (1985) by the French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann (1925-2018), the fairy tale film *La Vita è Bella* (*Life is Beautiful,* 1997) by the Italian filmmaker Roberto Benigni (b. 1952), and a Hollywood Oscar-winning film *Schindler's List* (1993), by the American filmmaker and film producer Stephen Spielberg (b. 1946). Benigni's and Spielberg's works have been criticised as commercial trivialisations of the Holocaust trauma. For a discussion in this regard, see, for instance, Claude Lanzmann, "The Obscenity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations of Memory,* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 200-218; or Miriam Bratu Hansen, "*Schindler's List* Is Not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Modernism," in Marcia Landy (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media,* London: The Athlone Press, 2001, pp. 201-217.
[215] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 18-19.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid. p. 19.
[218] Cathy Caruth, "Preface," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. vii-ix, p. ix.

between victims and perpetrators in parallel to the formation of the Holocaust studies.[219] In the Western hemisphere in the second half of the twentieth century, the political impact of the continuing presence of the past—particularly of difficult, traumatic events, often consigned to oblivion—has become closely connected to the challenges faced by individuals and collective entities in society. In this regard, it was the question of the impact of the Holocaust upon individual and collective memory, that has initiated likely the most influential and continuous strand of research within trauma and memory studies.[220] It was the broadening of the Holocaust debate which indirectly led to further discourses about the unavoidable need for reflection upon the means and modes of representation of other individual and collective traumatic events.

1.4. Memory of the Holocaust as *Image Reservoir*

> "Who can find a proper grave for such damaged mosaics of the mind,
> where they may rest in pieces?"
> (Lawrence L. Langer)[221]

The notion of trauma and memory in the late twentieth and twenty-first century has been overwhelmed with the history of the Holocaust. Since the 1960s, the Nazi genocide, conceived as a complete destruction of both the physical as well as the cultural presence of Jews in Europe, has been commonly known in the English-speaking world as 'the Holocaust'.[222] Marked by ethnic and racial hatred, violence and subsequently war, the

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[219] Holocaust discourses initially emerged in the 1980s, firstly in disciplines such as history, and migrated into other disciplines and contexts in the 1990s. For a discussion of the emergence of the Holocaust studies, see, for instance, Wulf Kansteiner and Todd Presner, "Introduction: The Field of Holocaust Studies and the Emergence of Global Holocaust Culture," in Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner (eds.), *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture,* Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2016, pp. 1-43.

[220] A comprehensive bibliography of works about the Holocaust in the context of trauma and memory would be far too extensive to reference here. To name only a few influential scholars and works in the field, these include Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991; Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994; and James E. Young, *Writing and Re-Writing the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Representation,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988.

[221] Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 34.

[222] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 3. A long period of silence accompanied the post-Holocaust years in the

Holocaust has through the past seven decades been transformed into a cipher of human suffering and moral evil, known and understood worldwide. Initially an event traumatic to the extreme for particular groups of people in society, it has been redefined as a traumatic event for all of humankind, as an event of a universal nature.[223] Studies of the Holocaust played a role of critical importance for the re-emergence of trauma and memory research after the war and their migration into other disciplines and discourses since the 1990s.[224]

The tension between the comprehension of the Holocaust and its representation in contemporary culture lies at the heart of Michael Rothberg's work *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (2000).[225] To investigate the question of representing the *unrepresentable*, Rothberg turned to the graphic novel titled *Maus* (written in series between 1980 and 1991, graphic novel medium) (Figures 1.10., 1.11., and 1.12.) by the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman (b. 1948). The novel uses visual graphics to represent Jews as mice, Germans as cats, and Poles as pigs. It shows Spiegelman interviewing his father and asking him questions about his intimate experiences of being a Jew and a Holocaust survivor, all which classified *Maus* as a memoir. One of the main drawings in the novel (Figure 1.10., detail) introduces the protagonist, Artie, depicted as a mouse. Standing in Artie's shadow is a smiling Disney figure Mickey Mouse, while in front of Artie, held in his human hands, is a more realistically drawn mouse. This drawing is confusing not merely because of Spiegelman's representational strategies and the ambiguity of the relationship between the three mice figures, but because of the way viewers are forced to consider how they recognise any of

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Western hemisphere, with a debate over its historical significance and its heritage developing only gradually. *The Burden of Our Time* (1951), written by the German/American political scientist Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), played a significant role in understanding of the genocide, the Holocaust, as a burden imposed on a nation; see Hannah Arendt, *The Burden of Our Time,* London: Secker & Warburg, 1951.

[223] Alexander, *Trauma,* p. 31. A definition of the Holocaust as a traumatic event for all humankind does not interpret the event as experienced or represented as such by all humankind. For Alexander's discussion of the Holocaust in the context of trauma in this regard, see particularly Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Holocaust and Trauma: Moral Universalism in the West," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2012, pp. 31-96.

[224] Milija Gluhović, *Performing European Memories –Trauma, Ethics, Politics,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 17.

[225] Apart from Rothberg's *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (2000), see also an excellent essay by Rothberg and the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman (b. 1948) in Michael Rothberg and Art Spiegelman, ""We Were Talking Jewish": Art Spiegelman's *Maus* as "Holocaust" Production," in *Contemporary Literature,* Vol. 35, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), pp. 661-687.

these as mice. Rothberg suggests that the third mouse might as well be a rat, while Artie, the survivor's son drawn as a mouse (perhaps Spiegelman himself, despite his mouse facial features) is wearing human clothes and cradles the mouse/rat, according to Rothberg, with his human hands.[226] It seems difficult at first for the viewer to connect the drawing with the events of the Holocaust. Rothberg argues that it is probably the initial absence in *Maus* of any events linked directly to the Holocaust which gives this graphic novel its overwhelming impact.[227] He further suggests that, for Spiegelman, the traumatic nature of the Holocaust memories made it necessary to evoke them through these indirect means.[228] In other words, Rothberg understands this very absence of any meaningful or connecting events in the visual as the key to the problem of the Holocaust representation in contemporary times. In this respect, he writes that

> ”the drawing [that of *Maus* by Art Spiegelman] provides an allegory to the contradictory position of the post-Holocaust artist – an artist who produces formally experimental works about genocide for the smiling, two-dimensional face of the entertainment industry, but everywhere confronts the detritus of the real.”[229]

In his investigations into the *Maus* series, Rothberg additionally reflects upon the tensions between the mouse, the Maus and the Disney Mickey Mouse, which he saw as an equivalent for the relationship between documentation, aesthetical response and public circulation. In this regard, he turns to the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) and his notion of ‘constellation’, a type of montage in which different elements are brought together through the act of writing, with an aim of emphasising the importance of representation for the interpretation of history.[230] In this regard, Rothberg contends that the constellation of elements which makes up the world is grasped, in a way, only through the exploration of its most extreme moments and times, of which the Holocaust is the high point.[231]

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[226] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, pp. 1-2.
[227] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[228] Ibid., see also Rothberg's and Spiegelman's essay in footnote 225.
[229] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 2. For another compelling discussion of Spiegelman's *Maus,* in the context of 'postmemory' and the visual arts, see Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory,* pp. 87-94.
[230] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 10.
[231] Ibid.

How to grasp, how to comprehend and how to represent a traumatic memory of the Holocaust have been amongst the main driving questions of the Holocaust studies. These were already thorny questions in trauma and memory studies in their formative years in the 1990s. According to the Dutch cultural theorist Ernst van Alphen (b. 1958), there were two different ways to understand the Holocaust effect, the historical and the imaginative,[232] whereas Rothberg made a distinction between the realist and the antirealist approach.[233] Both scholars in fact identified a similar contrast. The approach termed 'historical' or 'realist' is characterised by the epistemological understanding that the Holocaust is knowable and, as such, is a representational entity.[234] Hence, the horror experienced can be perceived for what it was, and reaction to it will therefore be rational, for example, an attack on the belief systems which legitimised it.[235] This approach characterised the dominant methodology amongst those scholars who found it necessary to consider the Holocaust according to scientific procedures.[236] The approach termed 'imaginative' or 'antirealist' takes the view that the effects of the Holocaust are not knowable and that as such, they cannot be captured in any traditional representational way.[237] The antirealist approach holds that a person responds to horrific events not with criticism or decisive action, but with silence and bewilderment, and often accompanied by suppression and denial. Only after enough time is allowed for these responses to take their course do they (i.e. individual or a collective) start to feel safe enough to let their traumatic memories surface and take steps in response to what emerges.[238] The antirealist approach has been applied in literary, aesthetic, and philosophical considerations of the *Shoah.* It is an approach which removed the Holocaust and its associated traumatic memories from the usual historical and cultural framework of understanding, allowing it to enter the field of sublime, thus beyond any rational

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[232] Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Arts, Literature, and Theory,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 8.
[233] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, pp. 3-4.
[234] Ibid.; and van Alphen, *Caught by History,* p. 8.
[235] Ibid. For instance, Hannah Arendt's approach to understanding of the Holocaust came into being after she attended the trial of Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), in Jerusalem, in 1962. Following Eichmann's trial, where he was charged of being one of the masterminds behind the Holocaust, Arendt sought to capture the essence of the *Shoah* in an ordinary figure of a Nazi administrator following the expectations of the Nazi party and its ideology. Arendt's essay "Banality of Evil" was initially published as an article in 1962 in the newspaper *The New York Times*, and later independently in Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil*, United States: The Viking Press, 1963.
[236] Alexander, *Trauma,* pp. 34-38; and Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, pp. 3-5.
[237] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, pp. 4-5.; and van Alphen, *Caught by History,* pp. 8-9.
[238] Alexander, *Trauma,* p. 35.

discourse and knowledge. Individuals from both the generation of survivors and the post-war generation who shaped the antirealist approach in contemporary culture were such significant figures as the Romanian/American writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), the American novelist Philip Roth (1933-2018), the French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann (1925-2018),[239] the German/American writer and Holocaust survivor Ruth Klüger (1931-2020), and the French author Charlotte Delbo; while the 'postmemory' generation[240] includes the French sculptor Christian Boltanski, and the German artists Anselm Kiefer and Gerhard Richter, to name but a few.

Meanwhile, the questions of how to grasp, how to comprehend and how to represent the *unrepresentable* of the Holocaust in art, whether in literary fiction, cinema or the visual arts, were also widely disputed. The relationship between the arts, historical developments and a collective experience of trauma in general abounds with complexities. It was this very conflict—thus, of what it means to express and represent a traumatic memory of such magnitude as the Holocaust—that drove the thinking of the German philosopher Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) in the immediate post-war years. Adorno, known as one of the leading philosophers and social theorists after World War II, argued that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,"[241] a famous sentence made primarily in response to the creation of post-Auschwitz poetry. The question of whether Adorno thought that there should be no aesthetic response to either one's own, intimate,

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[239] Claude Lanzmann, whose ten-hour long film *Shoah* (1985) has been recognised as one of the most comprehensive and original cinematic contributions to the Holocaust studies, argues about the importance of the cinematic medium, alongside the written materials produced by historians, for understanding the dimensions of the Holocaust. In this respect, see again Lanzmann, "The Obscenity of Understanding," in *Trauma,* pp. 200-218.

[240] I would like to remind the reader here about the term 'postmemory' (see footnote 187), coined by Marianne Hirsch.

[241] Adorno wrote this phrase in his essay "Cultural Criticism and Society" published in 1951, which is one of his most important essays in the field of critical theory. While naming a particular place of Auschwitz, that of Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the major concentration camps in the present-day Poland during the war, Adorno referred to the Holocaust in its broader terms. For "Cultural Criticism and Society," see Theodor Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society" (translated from the German by Samuel and Shierry Weber), in Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997 (Ninth printing), pp. 17-34. In addition, see also Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (translated from the German by E. B. Ashton), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, particularly pp. 361-408 (originally published in German, in 1966 as *Negative Dialektik* by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main). For a discussion of Adorno's work in this respect, see also Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism,* pp. 19-58; and Andreas Huyssen, "Introduction to Adorno," in *New German Critique,* No. 6 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 3-11.

or collective past traumatic memories after the Holocaust, has been much discussed in academic discourses as well as in the public sphere.[242]

Enwezor countered Adorno's contention that lyricism and its romantic impulse in some ways destroyed the sharpness of memory by drawing attention to the poem *Death Fugue* (*Todesfuge*, written around 1945; first published in 1948) by the Romanian-born German-language poet Paul Celan (1920-1970).[243] For a generation of Germans living in the 1950s and 1960s, this poem symbolised a confrontation with evil that haunted not merely the German nation but the entire Western hemisphere through the second half of the twentieth century. Celan wrote about his traumatic memories with great moral precision and honesty, whilst not compromising on the beauty of language.[244] He spoke without reservation of the horrors that had claimed the lives of his parents and many of his close friends, describing the loss and the pain in words of haunting beauty. Celan, as a survivor and thus a primary witness, used a work of the imagination to speak not only about trauma that he had suffered as an individual, but also about the traumatic memories that now haunted Jews and other particular groups of people, as a collective experience.

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[242] Adorno's phrase about writing poetry after Auschwitz engaged scholars and reseachers from various academic disciplines. For a reference, see Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism,* pp. 25-59; Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung*, pp. 19-24; or Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* pp. 18-21.

[243] For a compelling discussion of Celan's work in this regard, see Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung*, pp. 20-22. For Celan's work translated into English, see Paul Celan, *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan,* New York: Norton & Company, 2001 (edited and poems translated into English by John Felstiner). The American-born John Felstiner (1936-2017), known as a translator and a biographer of Paul Celan, wrote the following passage about the poem *Death Fugue*:

> "This astonishing piece of writing has drawn more passionate attention than any other poem from the war. What looms largest is its public career since 1952, when it came out in Germany. The *Guernica* [Felstiner is referring here to the work *Guernica* (1937) by the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)] of the post-war European literature, "Todesfuge" has become a historical agent, accumulating its own biography. Lyric poetry rarely has an effect like that of judicial precedent or scientific experiment, upsetting assumptions or forcing new choices."
> (John Felstiner quoted in Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma,* p. 22).

See also the excellent John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.

[244] Enwezor, "Remembrance of Things Past," in *Trauma und Erinnerung,* p. 21.

The Acts of Remaking and Reimagining the World

The aftermath of World War II called for the rebuilding of the Western hemisphere, for acts of remaking and reimagining. Bearing witness to difficult memories and deep wounds entered a realm of imagination. According to the American comparative literature scholar and essayist Elaine Scarry (b. 1946) bearing witness became closely linked with expressing traumatic memories, in other words, expressing something not yet fully comprehended.[245] For Scarry, this very expression can also occur through the medium of art.[246] In her seminal work *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985), a compelling study of pain, Scarry gives the name 'expressibility' to the fact that witness could be borne to a painful traumatic past.[247] She argues that imagination and pain are intertwined with each other; they are

> "each other's missing and intentional counterparts, and they together provide a framing identity of man-as-creator within which all other intimate, perceptual, psychological, emotional, and somatic events occur, which is perhaps most succinctly suggested by the fact that there is one piece of language used – in many different languages – at once as a near synonym for pain, and as a near synonym for a created object; and that is the word *work*."[248]

For Scarry, then, a created object has the potential to become a form of expression, a quiet and sensitive unit of signs, a language for unveiling traumatic memories. In *The Body in Pain* she talks also about the near impossibility of expressing traumatic memories in the years following the war and the Holocaust.

In the years following the war and the Holocaust there was a long period of silence and denial, especially amongst the primary witnesses. The trauma that primary witnesses had experienced often made it hard for them to get in touch with their memories, which made the secondary memory of even greater importance. The Romanian/American

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[245] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 168-169.
[246] Scarry, *The Body in Pain,* p. 169.
[247] Scarry elaborates on this subject in Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 28-51.
[248] Ibid. p. 169.

comparative literature scholar Marianne Hirsch (b. 1949) calls this memory (i.e. the secondary memory) the 'postmemory'.[249] To bring the *real* memory to expression, even in a tamed form, an encounter between the primary participant and the secondary witness is of critical importance; following such an encounter, the secondary witness often becomes better equipped to then assess the *real* memory.[250] The notion of 'postmemory'—the secondary memory of a generation that comes after the primary witnesses—does not deny or devalue the primary memory, without which a traumatic past would indeed become an abstract field, but recognises the battlefield on which primary witnesses often find themselves, being ill-equipped for formulating their own difficult experiences. In this respect, the 'postmemory' generation has the advantage of greater distance and is likely to be better equipped for developing much-needed new forms of expression.[251]

In the visual arts, the generations of artists working after World War II and in the aftermath of the Holocaust originated mostly from the second generation, hence from the 'postmemory' generation. Through newly invented media or by re-inventing old media, many searched for adequate means to narrate, present and represent the often *unspeakable*, *incomprehensible* and *unrepresentable* experienced by the generation before them.

The Visual Arts 'after Auschwitz'[252]

Following the lengthy period of silence and denial after the end of war, the field of visual arts in the 1960s saw a flowering of new art practices linked to the memory of the Holocaust. Artists were searching for an adequate visual idiom in which to speak of an abject past, developing new representational strategies and visual means to respond to traumatic memories of the Holocaust and its aftermath. Several artists went a step further and challenged the distinction between historical and imaginative treatments of the

[249] For Hirsch's work in this regard and for the concept of 'postmemory', see footnote 187.
[250] LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* p. 21.
[251] Ibid.
[252] The phrase 'after Auschwitz' is used here in an allusion to Adorno's phrase "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (see footnotes 241 and 242). The phrase 'art after Auschwitz' was used as such also by Lisa Saltzman in her work *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (1999), which is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the visual art from that period (see footnote 255).

Holocaust. Their visual creations can be seen as a form of expression, in Scarry's sense, of a new visual language for unveiling a traumatic past, expressing the *invisible,* and thus representing the *unrepresentable.* Amongst these artists were the French-born Christian Boltanski, the German painter Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943),[253] the Dutch artist Armando (1929-2018), the American artists Frank Stella (b. 1936), Richard Serra (b. 1938) and Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), the Austrian artist Günter Brus (b. 1938), the Israeli/French artist Bracha L. Ettinger (b. 1948), and the German artists Anselm Kiefer and Gerhard Richter, to name but a few.

Whereas Frank Stella's minimalist and abstract black paintings, such as *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor, II* (1959, oil on canvas) (Figure 1.13.), or the formalist abstraction in the works of Richard Serra and Sol LeWitt,[254] all seemingly refusing figuration, were understood as expressing the impossibility of creating art in the aftermath of Auschwitz, the works of Anselm Kiefer[255] and Gerhard Richter from the 1960s and 1970s spoke of the artists' engaged search for expression in the medium of painting.[256] These works, as artistic objects, acted as sites for historical and memorial encounters.[257]

In the context of expressing the *invisible* and representing the *unrepresentable* of the Holocaust, van Alphen argues that the presence of this traumatic memory could be recognised in the visual by means of a reference to it.[258] For van Alphen, a traumatic past event of such magnitude can be addressed only within the representational realm of art,

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[253] Charlotte Salomon is today primarily remembered for her autobiographical series of paintings entitled *Leben? Oder Theater?: Ein Singspiel* (1941-1943, consisting of 769 individual works painted as series). Salomon painted the series in the south of France while hiding from the Nazis in the early 1940s. In 1943, Salomon was captured and taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she and her unborn child died soon after her arrival. For an account of Salomon's life and work, see the recently published *Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theatre?,* Cologne: Taschen, 2017 (artist monograph).

[254] Amongst Le Witt's and Serra's works created in this period are *Black Form – Memorial to the Missing Jews* (1987, sculpture) by Sol LeWitt; and a monolithic sculpture *Gravity* (1991, sculpture) by Richard Serra.

[255] Much of Kiefer's oeuvre confronts his nation's traumatic past, examining the relationship between the history and the present. For a discussion of Kiefer's 1960s and 1970s works in the context of the Holocaust memory, see van Alphen, *Caught by History,* pp. 3-15; for a comprehensive account of Kiefer's work in this respect, see again Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (1999). In *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz,* Saltzman positions Kiefer as an artist of the second generation of the post-war era, who encounters and represents history in an innovative medium of painting. She convincingly argues about Kiefer's work in the context of examining the legacy of Nazism through means in the visual art.

[256] Although the death of the painting medium was announced by the American art historian Yve-Alain Bois (b. 1952) in the 1960s (see Luckhurst, *Trauma,* p. 156), Richter and Kiefer have been reinventing the medium of painting ever since.

[257] Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter,* p. 6.

[258] Van Alphen, *Caught by History,* p. 10.

in a place where an artist, through visual means, expresses and represents the *invisible* and the *unrepresentable*.[259]

In his works of the 1960s and 1970s, the German artist Gerhard Richter interrogated the possibilities of integrating photography into his use of the painting medium where he was engaged with unveiling memories of a traumatic past. His mid-1960s paintings, such as *Aunt Marianne* (*Tante Marianne,* 1965, oil on canvas) (Figure 1.14.), *Mr. Heyde* (*Herr Heyde,* 1965, oil on canvas) (Figure 1.15.), and *Uncle Rudi* (*Onkel Rudi,* 1965, oil on canvas) (Figure 1.16.), were haunting and challenging attempts to plot an intersection between individual and collective memory (i.e. a historical experience of a nation). Confronted by the *unpaintable* nature of those memories which were at the same time chapters of his nation's history, Richter adopted the strategy of first painting and then giving the paintings a trial run as an altered photography.[260] The works he treated in such manner were all images of historical moments in the war, imbued with memories of pain and loss.[261] These paintings in monochromatic grey, which also deployed photographs with faces and details blurred, were produced only to be damaged to various degrees, which often made it impossible for their audiences to make out exactly who the figures were. Representation of specific people was, indeed, never their primary function. In this regard, these works were primarily Richter's investigative studies of unspoken guilt, angst and suppressed memories, burdened with meanings which they refused to disclose, and at the same time speaking of aesthetic beauty as that which is uninjured.

Another artist who worked in this regard and who too deployed the medium of photography in his art practice was French-born Christian Boltanski. Boltanski started using the medium of photography in the early 1980s, with his initial representations of absence in the visual. Starting with the *Children of Dijon* (*Les Enfants de Dijon*, 1985, installation), Boltanski cropped the faces of anonymous individuals in found

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[259] Ibid.
[260] Robert Storr, *September. A History Painting by Gerhard Richter,* London: Heni Publishing Inc., 2009, p. 58.
[261] Ibid. For a comprehensive account of Richter's work in the medium of painting, see also Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Doubt and Belief in Painting*, New York: MoMA Press, 2003; and Paul Wood, "Truth and beauty: the ruined abstraction of Gerhard Richter," in John Roberts (ed.), *Art Has no History! The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art,* London and New York: Verso, 1994, pp. 201-245. See also the excellent exhibition catalogue *Gerhard Richter: October 18, 1977,* published by MoMA, New York, on the occasion of the exhibition *Gerhard Richter: October 18, 1977* at the MoMA in 2000/2001.

photographs, re-photographed them and blew them up to the point where their individual features turned into generic patterns of light and shade.[262] He installed these as site-responsive installations, sometimes displayed on columns, suggesting coffins and urns, and sometimes attached to archive boxes, as a reference to lives absent and forgotten. This method of using old photographs became integral to Boltanski's art practice, while his growing archive of anonymous faces enabled him to create ”public memorial art that attests to the erasure of memories.”[263] Amongst these works was also *The Reserve of Dead Swiss* (*Réserve des Suisses Morts*, 1990, installation) (Figure 1.17.). His focus on documents, archives and photographic remains led him to a sequence of installations created in the late 1980s, where he made the very first explicit references to the Holocaust. For the work *La Fête de Pourim* (1987-1988, installation) (Figure 1.18.), he used pre-war photographs of Jewish children to evoke the traumatic past and the memories of genocide in the light of the destruction of a culture. Another such work was *Canada* (*Canada,* 1988) (Figure 1.19.), where Boltanski piled up second-hand clothes in large quantities and installed them site-specifically. For the artist, used clothes were the equivalent of found photographs, both now discarded and anonymous, ”they are simultaneously presence and absence.”[264] In parallel, his use of the word 'Canada' in the title recalled the word’s use by the Nazis as an euphemism for the place where the possessions of those sent to death camps were stored.[265] With this combination of archive material and new media, Boltanski created unique memorials for representing the traumatic past in the visual.

To recapitulate: the first chapter has highlighted the elusive and 'travelling' nature of the two headline concepts informing this study, trauma and memory. I have underlined their complex relationship and the ways they have migrated into different disciplines and discourses since the 1990s, including into the field of visual arts. I have also presented the various approaches to understanding and investigating both trauma and memory, hence those that have arisen in the past three decades of critical research, and outlined

[262] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question,* p. 154.
[263] Ibid. p. 155.
[264] Christian Boltanski quoted in Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question,* p. 156.
[265] Ibid. pp. 156-157. For a discussion of Boltanski's art in the context of the post-Holocaust art, see also van Alphen, *Caught by History,* pp. 48-52.

those that will be most relevant for tracing the intimations of the two concepts in the work of Nalini Malani.

In parallel, the chapter has also brought to the fore the notion of collective trauma and memory, and the question of their recall and representation in contemporary culture and the visual arts. What is often referred to as collective traumatic memory is in fact a construct of fragments of intimate traumatic memories and historical events, stitched together in complex ways, each questioning the authenticity of any past experience. When collective memories are engaged with in the visual arts—or through any other means of expression—any direct representations of collective traumatic events cannot exist outside personal history and individual memories, as the two are deeply intertwined. In this light, Malani has been re-engaging with her own childhood experiences as a daughter of non-Muslim refugees who fled from Karachi to Bombay during the 1947 Partition. This has all played an important part in her art and art practice, as I argue further on, as she engages with the collective pain and loss. In this respect, Marianne Hirsch's concept of the 'postmemory' generation will also be of reference and a relevance for examining Malani's works through the lens of the two concepts, trauma and memory.

In its examination of presence (or intentional absence) of trauma and memory, and their related discourses in selected works, the theoretical framework of this study combines theories from different disciplines, in this way building a framework for investigating the subject. The theoretical contributions of Pierre Nora and his concept of a *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of memory', Michael Rothberg's investigations into the place of a 'multidirectional memory', Andreas Huyssen's 'present pasts' and his examinations of the importance and roles of a memory-work, in the form of an artwork, in the present, as well as Charlotte Delbo's reflections on different types of memories in relation to accessibility of trauma—these will all be of relevance and a reference for the ways I engage with Malani's works in the following chapters. Furthermore, the recall and representation of the Holocaust in the visual has inevitably invited a discussion, with collective memories and historical traumas increasingly transcending borders. Theoretical contributions in the field and investigations into what has been discussed amongst scholars as 'representing the *unrepresentable*' in the society and the visual arts, in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, act as another lens for examining Malani's work. As we will learn in the following chapters, Malani too has been using collective archive materials

and drawing on these in her art at a time of socially and politically inflicted amnesia and denial.

The following chapter will first provide a general introduction to Malani's life, work and art practice, and then examine the development of her work and art practice from her early creative period in the late 1960s, when she has been experimenting with the media of film and photography, through 1970s and 1980s, when she was mainly using the medium of painting, and concluding with the early 1990s, when she started experimenting with new media.

2. Nalini Malani: Biographical Milestones and Early Creative Period

> ”It is memory and thought, and the coalescing of these two together, that makes me look forward and brings to me the area of 'recall'. I like to put that forward as a function of the art itself.”
> (Nalini Malani)[266]

Trauma and memory narratives in either written or visual language use a variety of artistic means in order to illuminate their private as well as social, historical or political dimensions. In this way they offer alternative pathways for memories from the personal and the collective spheres to be brought to the surface. In the arena of the visual arts—or of other media—representations of individual memories and trauma are always embedded in a larger collective context, while no unveiling of collective traumatic events can exist outside personal history and intimate memories. Malani's artistic path has been profoundly influenced by the politically and socially burdened events which she lived through as a child: her family was displaced in the 1947 Partition and she grew up as a migrant in post-Partition India.[267] Her initial explorations of the media of film, photography and painting, in which she engaged through visual means with social and political issues, show how deep her engagement with them was at that early stage. Her biographical milestones and the issues that concerned her in her first two decades of creation have continued to play an important part in her mature and more recent practice. It is also interesting to note that elements of Malani's visual language for addressing violence, dehumanisation and historical trauma—dubbed 'specific inter-media hybridity' by Andreas Huyssen[268]—were already evident in her work in the early

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[266] Nalini Malani in an interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; see ”Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in Conversation with Nalini Malani,” in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 12-35.

[267] With ten to twenty millions of people displaced, the overwhelming refugee crisis and with up to two millions of lives claimed, the 1947 Partition of India was one of the most traumatic chapters in Indian history of the twentieth century. Outlined in the Indian 1947 Independence act, the Partition was a result of the dissolution of the British Empire in India, with a division of the British India into two separate and independent dominions, Pakistan and India. For a general account of the subject, see, for instance, Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016; for an account of Partition in the context of violence and human loss, see Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

[268] The phrase 'specific inter-media hybridity' in relation to Malani's work and art practice was coined and used as such by Andreas Huyssen; see Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 48.

1990s, as she built on her earlier experience with more traditional media: film, photography and painting.

The present chapter starts by introducing Malani's major biographical events, which serve as a general framework of the artist's life and career path. The milestone events also act as a point of reference for my investigations in later chapters into intimations of trauma and memory in a selection of Malani's works. There follows a chronological presentation of Malani's early works in the medium of film and photography, created between Bombay and Paris from 1969 to 1976. With reference to these works, the chapter shows Malani's early social and political engagement in India and abroad, and her endeavours to communicate her views through the moving image, a medium which has played an important part in her later work. Malani has been recognised as one of the pioneers in the field of video art in India. However, apart from the work of the Dutch art historian and curator Johan Pijnappel,[269] little attention has been paid to her early contributions in this field. There are several possible reasons for this neglect: Malani originally trained as a painter, several of her early films have been lost, and she used the medium independently only briefly between 1969 and 1976. The 1990s were marked by her return to the moving image medium, with an implementation of video elements into an inter-media hybridity that has characterised her mature creative period.

The section that follows puts into context several of Malani's works in the medium of painting created between 1972 and 1990, when the artist lived and worked in her native India. This presentation of works from her early painterly oeuvre will lead to a discussion of her early focus on specifically female trauma.[270] In particular, Malani's depictions of female bodies will be examined in the light of Pierre Nora's *lieu de mémoire,*

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[269] This study is indebted to a set of theoretical engagements with Malani's art in the medium of cinema by Johan Pijnappel, who specialises in video and new media art. Pijnappel's research into Malani's work in this regard serves as a main point of reference in this study, where her endeavours in cinema are concerned. For Pijnappel's contributions, see Johan Pijnappel, "The Missing Link: Nalini Malani's Experimental Films from 1969-1976," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead: Retrospective 1969-2018,* Volume I, Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2017, pp. 80-114 (exhibition catalogue). Pijnappel uses the term 'filmic view' to indicate the deep impact and influence of film on Malani's work and art practice from her early period through her mature years of creation. For Pijnappel's contextualisation of Malani's career milestones in the framework of her use of the 'filmic view', see also Johan Pijnappel, "Selected Biography: Compulsions toward a Filmic View," in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 60-87.

[270] The first to have recognised the subject of female trauma in Malani's paintings was probably the Indian art critic and art historian Geeta Kapur. In this respect, see Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India,* New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000, particularly pp. 23-38.

a 'site of memory'. The questions which arise from an investigation of Malani's early works in the medium of painting will also open up alternative pathways for my explorations of later intersections between the concepts of trauma and memory in the socio-political and the visual context.

The chapter closes with a discussion along lines proposed by Rosalind Krauss of *transgressions*[271] into new media in the contemporary arts. The emergence of the postmodernist practice[272] in the Western hemisphere in the 1980s, accompanied by a collapse of traditional media such as painting and sculpture, led Krauss to coin the phrases 'post-medium condition'[273] and 'the medium is the memory'.[274] She spoke of the 'post-medium condition' in the visual arts, where contemporary artists were re-inventing the old media or inventing new media as their expressive forms.

Malani started making *transgressions* into new media in the early 1990s, on a path which took her through a reinvention of old and invention of new media to an inter-media hybridity of her later work. As I will argue further on, the subject matter examined in her works and closely connected to concepts of memory and trauma, became inextricably linked to the medium of their expression itself. In a discussion of three works created in the early and mid-1990s, the final part of this chapter examines the relationship between the subject matter and the medium in the circulation of expression, showing how the expressive form of the subject in a certain medium provides a possible site for memory.

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[271] The word 'transgression' goes for an act, a process or an instance of transgressing, such as an infringement or a violation of law, command, or duty. This study intentionally uses the word 'transgressions' (as *transgressions*) in discussions of Malani's transitions into new media, in line with the artist's use of reinvented or newly invented media as an act, a 'walking out of the zone of known' in order to grasp and communicate the subject matter with more depth and precision through new means. In parallel, it is important to note that this decision and usage has no connection with Malani's work with the same title, *Transgressions* (2001, video/shadow play medium), which is discussed separately in Chapter 4.

[272] For a discussion of modernism and postmodernism in the context of 'Western' versus 'Indian', with relevant accounts of reference, see pp. 123-124 and footnotes 314, 401.

[273] For a reference on Krauss' work in this regard, see footnotes 36 and 37.

[274] Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory,* p. 19.

2.1. Nalini Malani: Biographical Events and Milestones

> "I have no direct experience of Partition. It is more the atmosphere that my mother and my grandparents lived with; the sense of loss – loss of culture and community, loss of language."
> (Nalini Malani)[275]

Malani was born in Karachi in 1946, in what is now Pakistan and was then part of the British Indian Empire.[276] Soon after her birth, Malani's parents left the city of Karachi, searching for refuge in post-Partition India, firstly in Calcutta and later in Bombay. The 1947 Partition of India into a majority-Hindu and a majority-Muslim state, India and Pakistan, respectively, was a traumatic event for many millions of families at the time, who, finding themselves under threat due to their religion, left behind all their belongings and headed for what they hoped would be a safer place. The newly imposed poverty and new languages made settling in all the more difficult. Malani's father worked for an airline company, which enabled young Nalini and her mother to visit places outside the Indian subcontinent. Between 1958 and 1961, they travelled widely, visiting countries such as Egypt, Japan and France, all which enabled Malani to see places and art outside her native country during those early formative years.

Between 1964 and 1969, Malani studied fine arts at Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art (abbreviation Sir J. J. School of Art)[277] in then-Bombay, where she graduated with a government diploma in 1969. In that period she also started working in her own studio, a space obtained at the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, which was then a hub for artists, dancers, musicians and theatre practitioners. The Indian theatre director Satyadev Dubey (1936-2011), with whom Malani worked, showed her the value of re-working the ancient myths and old epic stories in a contemporary artwork. This was later

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[275] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Radar Journal*; see "Indian Artist Nalini Malani Talks Myth, Metaphor and Women," in *Art Radar Journal,* March 21, 2014 (https://artradarjournal.com/artist-nalini-malani-talks-myth-metaphor-and-women-interview/ accessed on January 10, 2022).

[276] British Indian Empire or British Raj (1858-1947) was the rule of the British Crown on the Indian subcontinent from 1858 until 1947. Written accounts of this subject are usually of biased nature, and as such they are highly debatable. For a recent overview of this highly contentious and politicised topic, see, for instance, Shashi Tharoor, *An Era of Darkness: the British Empire in India*, New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2016.

[277] Sir J. J. School of Art in then-Bombay was at the time one of the most distinguished art institutions in India, with a traditional curriculum comprised of the European oil painting traditions and focused on teaching the medium of painting.

to become part of her art practice, and was an important element of her engagement with collective historical events and memories in the present. At the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, Malani had an opportunity to meet and interact with the Indian artists such as Maqbool Fida Hussain (1915-2011), Tyeb Mehta (1925-2009) and Nasreen Mohamedi (1937-1990). This was also the time when Malani developed her interest in the moving image, acquainting herself with art cinema from various parts of the world, including the French New Wave[278] and the Italian Neorealism.[279] On a theoretical level, the European cinema inspired Malani to start reading works by Sigmund Freud and the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Karl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) as well as Greek mythology; on the practical level, she started to explore the medium of film and how to incorporate it into her academic studio work.

In 1969, Malani joined the Vision Exchange Workshop (abbreviation VIEW), founded by the Indian artist Akbar Padamsee (1928-2020).[280] The VIEW was at that time a unique place in Bombay, enabling artists to further evolve their interest and work in film, photography and print. Apart from Malani and Padamsee, those working at the VIEW included the Indian artist Altaf Mohammedi (b. 1942), the Indian poet and playwright Gieve Patel (b. 1940), the Indian artist Vivan Sundaram (b. 1943), and the Indian filmmakers Mani Kaul (1944-2011) and Kumar Shahani (b. 1940). The VIEW was a place where Malani created her first series of 8mm and 16mm short films and cameraless

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[278] The French New Wave (originally in French *La Nouvelle Vague*) was a French art movement that emerged in the late 1950s. The movement rejected the traditional filmmaking conventions of the time and favoured experimentation in editing, visual styles and narratives; in parallel, it was known for its filmmakers' engagements with the social and political issues of the era. For a general account of the French New Wave movement in cinema, see, for instance, Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

[279] Italian Neorealism (originally in Italian *Neorealismo Italiano*) was an Italian national movement in cinema after World War II. The movement was characterised by narratives set amongst the poor and the working class in Italy, often using non-professional actors. Neorealism in Italian cinema was understood as a sign of cultural change and social progress in Italy after the war ended. For a general account of the subject, see, for instance, Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism – Rebuilding the Cinematic City,* London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006; for an account in Italian language, see Stefania Parigi*, Neorealismo – Il Nuovo Cinema del Dopoguerra*, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2014.

[280] Akbar Padamsee (1928-2020) was one of the foremost artists working in India after the Independence gained in 1947. Padamsee is today considered as one of the pioneers of modern Indian painting and is closely associated with other prominent Indian artists of the time, amongst which Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002), Sayed Haider Raza (1922-2016) and Maqbool Fida Husain. Padamsee wasn't one of the founding members of the Bombay Progressives*,* a short-lived progressive art group launched in 1947 and challenging India's then-conservative art establishment, however he was closely associated with the group soon after he finished studying at the Sir J. J. School of Art (Partha Mitter, *Indian Art*, Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 203-219; for a reference on Bombay Progressives, see particularly p. 206). For a definitive account of modernism in India, see Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism – India's Artists and the Avantgarde 1922-1947,* London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007.

photographs (i.e. photograms).[281] She remained a member of the VIEW until 1970, when she left for Paris to study at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts on a full scholarship. As a result of political upheavals in France at the time, following student protests in May 1968,[282] lectures at the well-known French art academy did not take place regularly, which gave Malani the freedom to organise her study programme according to her interests. She remained at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts until 1972, and during her time there she invested her energies in exploring photography and film. At the Maison de l'Inde, in the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, where she first lived, Malani met a doctoral student of political sciences, Jyotsna Saksena, who became a lifelong friend. She also attended lectures and talks given by the American philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky (b. 1928), the French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the French writer Michel Leiris (1901-1990) and many other prominent political and social thinkers and writers of the time. This was a period when intense intellectual debates were taking place amongst the students at the Cité Internationale, focusing on colonial and post-colonial issues and imperialism. These Paris years strengthened Malani's political views and saw her grow in political maturity.

The medium of film, as an artistic form, became an important part of Malani's working life in Paris; she was using her own camera for the first time and worked on a new series of photographs. At the Cinémathèque Française[283] she met various prominent French filmmakers of the time, including Alain Resnais (1922-2014), Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930), Chris Marker (1921-2012), and the American photographer William Klein (b. 1928).

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[281] Cameraless photographs or photograms are made by placing an object in a direct contact with a photosensitive surface in the dark, while making an exposure of both to light. Where the object blocks the light, either partially or in full, its shadow is recorded on the paper. An artist who works with this medium is not able to predict any results, often working in the dark. The final result comes to view after physical and chemical manipulation with materials. It has been mostly agreed that the term photogram appeared around the year 1925 (www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/camera-less-photography-techniques/ accessed on December 22, 2021). For a concise historical survey of photographic images created without a camera, including a survey of photograms, see Martin Barnes, *Cameraless Photography* (V&A Series), London: Thames & Hudson, 2018.

[282] For a general account of the May 1968 events in France, see, for instance, Daniel Singer, *Prelude to Revolution: France in May 1968,* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013; for a compelling analysis of May 1968 events in France in the context of the movement serving a political agenda at the time, see Kristin Ross, *May 68' and its Afterlives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

[283] Cinémathèque Française, founded in 1936, is a French non-profit organization, based in Paris, holding one of the largest archives of film documents and objects related to film.

After living in Paris for two years, Malani decided not to stay in the West but to return to her native India[284] and help build the next generation of the young Indian nation. The first few years back in India were difficult ones for her. Soon after returning to Bombay, Malani married and moved from the residential Warden Road area in South Bombay to live with her husband and his family in the Lohar Chawl area, a busy wholesale market in the heart of Bombay. Life in a joint Hindu household was constricting after the independence and relative freedom she had enjoyed in Paris, while she also had to struggle to obtain the means to create art. Her personal life experience in this period was mirrored by that of India as a nation, where there was disillusionment with the so-called Nehruvian dream, an idea of India inspired by the hopes vested in Jawaharlal Nehru (1884-1964),[285] who became India's Prime Minister in 1947, immediately after the Independence. The personal and political situation with which she was confronted in India had a profound impact on Malani. She responded to it by re-working her first short film, *Dream Houses* (1969, 8mm film transferred to video) (Figures 2.1.1.–2.1.3.), made at the VIEW in 1969, to create a double film projection, *Utopia* (1969-1976, 8mm and 16mm film transferred to video). This was also the last film that Malani made at the VIEW before it closed.

In 1978, Malani's father died and she was offered one last complimentary air ticket. She decided to travel to New York, where she met with some of the most prominent female artists of the time, amongst which the American artists Nancy Spero (1926-2009), May Stevens (1924-2019), and the Cuban-born Ana Mendieta (1948-1985). They met at

[284] A decision that was made on similar grounds by Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941), the first Indian professional female artist and one of the first Indian modernists. Sher-Gil also studied at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, between 1929 and 1934, moving to Shimla, India in December 1934. Like Malani, Sher-Gil felt that, although it had been important to spend a certain number of her formative years in the West, she wanted to pursue her further artistic journey in her native India. For a comprehensive account of the life and work of Amrita Sher-Gil, see Yashodhara Dalmia (ed.), *Amrita Sher-Gil: Art and Life*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014; for a more general survey of her life and work, see *Amrita Sher-Gil. The Passionate Quest*, New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art, 2013 (exhibition catalogue); or *Amrita Sher-Gil. An Indian Artist Family of the Twentieth Century,* München: Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, 2007 (exhibition catalogue).

[285] Jawaharlal Nehru (1884-1964) was the first Prime Minister of India after it gained Independence in 1947. Nehru held the office from 1947 until his death in 1964, serving India as a Prime Minister for eighteen years. For a general account of Nehru's life and work, see, for instance, Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru – The Invention of India*, New York: Arcade Publishing, 2004; for a collection of essays about Nehru's work and legacy in the context of Indian post-Independence history, see Nayantara Sahgal (ed.), *Nehru's India – Essays on the Maker of the Nation,* New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Books, 2015.

the A.I.R. Gallery,[286] whose exhibition space at that time was at 97 Wooster Street in the New York district of SoHo. A.I.R. Gallery was at the time the very first not-for-profit gallery exhibiting only women artists in the United States. Malani's encounters in New York were an inspiration, not merely for her own future artistic path, but also because they gave her the idea of organising an exhibition of art created by female artists in her native India. After returning to India, she joined forces with her Indian contemporaries Madhvi Parekh (b. 1942), Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945) and Arpita Singh (b. 1937) for a touring exhibition, titled *Through the Looking Glass* (1987-1989), displayed in various formations and at different locations between the years 1987 and 1989.[287]

In the early 1990s, Hindutva[288] was gaining ground in India, accompanied by eruptions of fierce violence, all of which brought back memories of trauma experienced personally and collectively during the 1947 Partition. It is likely that these events influenced Malani to start looking beyond the purely painting medium mostly used at the time, in order to reach the attention of a wider public. In 1991, she created her first installation work, titled *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* (1991, mixed media installation) (Figure 2.16., installation view), using the material Mylar.[289] This transparent acrylic material, typically used in a medical context, became a key element of her work and art practice. This heralds the inter-media hybridity that Malani developed through the 1990s, in which the medium served the subject represented in her works. The sheets of Mylar were

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[286] A.I.R. Gallery is today a permanent exhibition space which supports an open exchange of ideas and experimental projects created by women artists in order to provide support and visibility. Today the gallery maintains an exhibition space in Brooklyn, New York, and exhibits works of over one hundred artists each year (www.airgallery.org/about-1 accessed on December 22, 2021).

[287] In the 1970s and 1980s, several female artists were gaining momentum on the Indian art scene. By creating bold and individualistic works, drawing from a range of aesthetic traditions, their concerns in art were from the start with both their own lives and the larger social environment. For an account of the lives, work and endeavours of female artists in India after the Independence, see, for instance, Mitter, *Indian Art,* pp. 226-235; see also Yashodhara Dalmia and Salima Hashmi*, Memory, Metaphor, Mutations: Contemporary Art of India and Pakistan,* Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007. In addition, see also *Indian Women Artists Exhibition,* New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Arts, 1986 (exhibition catalogue).

[288] Hindutva is an ideology seeking to found a hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of living. For an account of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism, see, for instance, Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007.

[289] Malani discovered Mylar—flexible, transparent and highly adjustable polyester paper-like sheets—by chance while working on the series *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* (1990, series of paintings in the form of an artist book) (Figure 2.15., detail), during one of her visits to a copy shop below her studio. The photocopier was used by different people, including medical doctors who were using Mylar to print medical X-rays. Malani realised that the material would help her achieve the layers of superimpositions she wanted in her work, enabling her to juxtapose different temporal worlds within a single frame (in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead*, Volume I, p. 138). The use of Mylar in her art practice consequently opened the way for her unique work in the shadow play medium; I discuss Malani's work in this regard in Chapters 4 and 5.

generally painted in reverse,[290] and then either hung vertically or bent into cylinders and mounted in such a way that they turned under projections of light. As the cylinders turned, the images painted on them moved over the walls, playing and crossing over each other in what became known as a 'shadow play'.

In an interview given to the art magazine *ArtAsiaPacific* in May 2009,[291] Malani explained how another violent event in that period, the demolition of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya[292] by Hindu extremists in 1992, had inspired many women artists in India to embrace new media and forms of expression. Malani's own response was to create her second installation, *City of Desires* (1992, inter-media hybridity installation) (Figure 2.17., installation view). This work, which also included performance as well as the drawings and erasures on the walls, marks the start of Malani's inter-media hybridity period. The 1990s were also marked by the artist's first ventures into the medium of theatre. Her theatre plays and theatre/video plays, referred to as 'video plays',[293] were further responses in the visual medium to past and on-going violence in India, especially upon minorities and women, and to the oppressive political climate of the 1990s. A collaborative project, an experimental theatre play *Medeamaterial* (1992-1993, theatre

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[290] No longer conventional paintings, the majority of Malani's works since the 1990s have been created by using this method that goes back to the tradition of reverse painting in Santiniketan, in West Bengal, dating from early to mid-twentieth century. For a reference on this tradition of painting, see, for instance, Anna L. Dallapiccola (ed.), *Indian Painting – The Lesser-Known Traditions,* New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2011, pp. 111-117.

[291] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Asia Pacific;* see "Her Cassandra Complex: Nalini Malani," in *ArtAsiaPacific*, Issue 63, May/June 2009 (http://96.126.110.91/Magazine/63/HerCassandraComplexNaliniMalani accessed on January 12, 2022).

[292] Babri Masjid Mosque was built in the city of Ayodhya, in north India, during the Mughal period (1526-1857) in the early sixteenth century by the Mughal emperor Babur (1483-1530). It was built on a site identified as the birthplace of Rama, one of the most widely worshipped Hindu deities, on the location of a Hindu temple from ancient times. Babri Masjid has been a matter of disputes between Muslims and Hindus for several centuries. The 1992 demolition of Babri Masjid resulted in riots and the nationwide violence, one that claimed over two thousand lives and heightened sectarian tensions in the country. For an account of the history of Ayodhya and the destruction of Babri Masjid, see, for instance, Valay Singh, *Ayodhya – City of Faith, City of Discord,* New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2018; or A. G. Noorani, *Destruction of the Babri Masjid - A National Dishonour,* Chennai: Tulika Books, 2017. At the time of writing this work, the ruling party in India under the leadership of its current Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b. 1950) has started building a Hindu temple on the site where Babri Masjid once stood. On August 5, 2020, the Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone for the new temple, for which he and his party had campaigned throughout his entire career and for which the supreme court cleared its path in November 2019 (see "India Shrining: India's ruling party replaces a mosque with a Hindu temple," in *The Economist,* August 4, 2020 (https://www.economist.com/asia/2020/08/04/indias-ruling-party-replaces-a-mosque-with-a-hindu-temple accesed August 8, 2019; updated January 12, 2022))

[293] The term 'video play' was coined by Malani in the late 1990s for the hybrid medium she developed from her earlier theatre plays in the 1990s. Her first work in this new medium was *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* (1998, video play medium). This study refers to her theatre/video plays as works created in the video play medium or simply as 'video plays'.

play medium) (Figures 3.1.1.–3.1.6.), was followed by the theatre play *The Job* (1996, theatre play medium) (Figures 3.2.1.–3.2.8.), and the video play *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* (1999, video play medium).[294] The year 1998 saw Malani again joining forces with other female artists, this time from outside India: with the Australian artist Judith Wright (b. 1945) and the Japanese artist Kaoru Hirabayashi (b. 1955). Together, the three artists created another touring exhibition, titled *Another Landscape: History/Life/Language* (1998), which was exhibited in Japan, India and Australia. The subject explored by the three artists in *Another Landscape: History/Life/Language* was the rejection of the predominant Western worldview, with an exploration of alternative ways of living.

Since her formative years in India and Paris, Malani has been drawn to the theatre as a mode of expressing her views. Her early theatre plays, created in the 1990s, and her later video plays were essentially political works,[295] critically reflecting on the past in the present. In response to the difficulty of taking her conventional theatre plays, including *Medeamaterial* and *The Job,* on tour, Malani invented a medium which she called a 'video play', as part of her artist residency at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, in Japan, in 2000. Malani worked extensively in that year with the Japanese Butoh[296] dancer Harada Nobuo (b. 1955), a collaboration that resulted in the four-channel video play *Hamletmachine* (2000, video play medium) (Figures 3.3.1.–3.3.4.), after a theatre play written by the German playwright Heiner Müller (1929-1995). Malani's *Hamletmachine,* created in 2000, was followed by other works in the video play medium, including *Unity in Diversity*

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[294] *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* was created as the artist's protest against the Indian government's nuclear testing in Pokhran, Rajasthan. The work was commissioned in 1998 by the World Wide Video Festival in Amsterdam. This was Malani's first video play, which included four video projectors and twelve monitors. Malani took the main character, that of Toba Tek Singh, from a short story *Toba Tek Singh* (1955) written by the Urdu writer and playwright Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955). In the following year, *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* was exhibited for the second time, this time in Malani's native India, at the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. The exhibition was shut down soon after its inauguration, a decision taken by its then-director Sadashiv Vasantrao Gorakshkar (1933-2019) given the political climate in India at the time. After many diplomatic efforts, the exhibition reopened and remained open for almost its full originally scheduled period and it attracted more than 25.000 visitors in only ten days. *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* is not part of the selection of works discussed in this study; for a discussion of the work, see, for instance, Betty Seid and Johan Pijnappel, *New Narratives: Contemporary Art from India*, Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2007, pp. 30-32.

[295] Pijnappel, "The Missing Link," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead,* Volume I, p. 82.

[296] Butoh is a form of Japanese dance and theatre combined, encompassing a range of dance and performance techniques. For a general account of Butoh, see, for instance, Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario, *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance,* Abingdon: Routledge Press, 2019; for a compelling account of Butoh in the context of the political and the social environment after the World War II, see Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy,* United States: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

(2003, video play medium)[297] and *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* (2005, video play medium).[298] From the late 1990s onwards, Malani's video plays have been gaining international recognition and praise. Such works as *Hamletmachine, Unity in Diversity,* and *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* have been shown to gain a critical acclaim across the world, including at the Tate Modern in London; at the New Museum in New York; at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin; and at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney.

Alongside her work in the video play medium, Malani continued working on her installations with the material Mylar. Her shadow play and video/shadow play media, developed in the late 1990s, was a reinvention of a traditional art form known in India and in wider Asia for centuries. In Malani's art practice, it became a hybrid combination of reverse paintings on Mylar, usually in the form of rotating cylinders, accompanied by elements such as video, sound and light. The video element (i.e. when one or more projections originating from the video are hitting the cylinders and nearby walls) added palimpsestic[299] views of the past. The first work that Malani created using this medium was *Transgressions* (2001, shadow play medium) (Figures 4.6.1.–4.6.7.), followed by *Gamepieces* (2003, video/shadow play medium) (Figures 4.7.1.–4.7.5.), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2005, video/shadow play medium) (Figures 4.9.1.–4.9.6.), and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012, video/shadow play medium) (Figures 4.12.1.–4.12.11.). Her works in this medium have received international recognition; they have been shown on

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[297] Malani created *Unity in Diversity* (2003, video play medium) as a reaction to fierce violence in the region of Gujarat, in 2002. *Unity in Diversity* is not part of the selection of works investigated in this study; for a discussion of *Unity in Diversity*, see, for instance, Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 81. For a general survey of the circumstances leading up to violence in Ahmedabad, Baroda and Gujarat in 2002, thus for understanding of the context within which Malani's work was created, see, for instance, Siddharth Varadarajan (ed.), *Gujarat – The Making of a Tragedy,* London and New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2002; for an account of the Gujarat aftermath in the light of the human rights violations and the failure of law, see Sanjeevini Badigar Lokhande, *Communal Violence, Forced Migration and the State: Gujarat since 2002*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

[298] *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* (2005, video play medium) was created for the 51st Venice Biennial in 2005. The work referenced two historic markers, the 1947 Partition and the 2002 events in Gujarat, when sectarian violence was at its highest point and when women and othre fragile minorities suffered the most. For its title, Malani turned to the Indian cultural anthropologist Veena Das (b. 1945) and her 1996 essay "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* is not part of the selection of works investigated in this study; for a discussion of the work, see Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* pp. 81-82; for Das's essay, see Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Daedalus,* Vol. 125, No. 1, Social Suffering (Winter, 1996), pp. 67-91.

[299] The word 'palimpsest' refers to something reused or altered, still bearing visible traces of its earlier form beneath the surface.

occasions such as the 8th Istanbul Biennial in 2003; the 51st Venice Biennial in 2005; and the group exhibition *Paris-Delhi-Bombai* (2011) at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, in 2011. In that period, Malani's work also entered several permanent museum collections worldwide, including those of the Stedeljik Museum, Amsterdam; the MoMA, New York; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (abbreviation KNMA), Delhi; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (abbreviation The MET), New York.

In 2007, Malani exhibited at the 52nd Venice Biennial,[300] which was curated by the American art historian and contemporary art curator Robert Storr (b. 1949). The work shown was her *Splitting the Other* (2007, painting installation), an installation of fourteen panels painted in reverse, which covered six walls inside the Italian pavillion building at the Giardini venue in the heart of Venice. In *Splitting the Other*, Malani addressed such subjects as past and present violence, especially against minorities and women, crimes against the environment, and global wars and their aftermaths in the present. In 2012, she exhibited at dOCUMENTA (13), in Kassel,[301] curated by the Italian/American art historian and contemporary art curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (b. 1957). Malani's installation was titled *In Search of Vanished Blood,* a video/shadow play with six channels showing a video freeze above the audience. The recurring themes in *In Search of Vanished Blood* were wars and their aftermaths, past and the on-going violence and oppression, and the failure of relationships between humans.

In the years following dOCUMENTA (13), Malani received several important art awards, including the Fukuoka Asian Art Prize in 2013; the St Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014; and the Asia Game Changer Award in 2015. She has continued working with the video/shadow play medium, extensively exploring the subjects of conflicts, wars and violence. In 2016, Mieke Bal, the Dutch cultural theorist, engaged in an in-depth study of five of Malani's video/shadow plays, looking at

[300] Venice Biennial or Venice Biennale (originally in Italian *La Biennale di Venezia*) is an international exhibition of contemporary art, taking place in Venice every two years. Most world nations are invited to participate with one artist's work or with a work of group of artists, representing the cutting edge contemporary art of their respective countries.
[301] dOCUMENTA is an international exhibition of the cutting edge contemporary art that takes place in the city of Kassel, in Germany, every five years, and showcases the most important developments in the visual contemporary arts.

theoretical issues in respect to arts and politics. This turned into a four hundred and twenty page book, *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays* (2016).[302]

In 2017 and 2018, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea in Torino presented the first retrospective of Malani's *chefs d'oeuvre,* created between 1969 and 2018. The works were exhibited between the two museums, in France and Italy. The year 2020 saw Malani's first solo exhibition in London, at the Whitechapel Gallery.[303]

2.2. Explorations of the 'Filmic View'[304] (1969-1976)

> ”In an area between the individual and collective, [...], Malani creates psychological landscapes from a combination of collective histories through her own expressive moving images.”
>
> (Johan Pijnappel)[305]

Malani's training at the Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay, where she gained her diploma in fine arts in 1969, had focused mainly on the European oil painting tradition, the medium she used widely throughout the 1970s and 1980s. At the time, visual artists in India were less involved in deploying alternative media such as film and photography. Learning about these media or working in another medium than painting was a peripheral rather than a core activity, one that took place on the outskirts of artistic circles. Between 1964 and 1969, while still attending lectures at the Sir J. J. School of Art, Malani had her first studio within the community of artists, musicians and theatre people at the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute in Bombay. The latter was the first venue which enabled young Malani to encounter and gain experience with other media than painting. Her work with Satyadev Dubey, one of the directors of the Institute's Theatre Unit, gave Malani her first

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[302] See Mieke Bal, *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2016.
[303] My main reference for Malani's biographical milestones is the *Catalogue Raisonné,* a descriptive catalogue of works of art with scholarly comments, published on the occasion of Malani's 2018 retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Torino; and *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* published in 2012 on the occasion of Malani's exhibition at dOCUMENTA (13).
[304] For the coining and use of the term 'filmic view' in relation to Malani's work in the medium of film, see footnote 269.
[305] Johan Pijnappel in Pijnappel, ”Selected Biography,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 60.

experiences with time-based productions that made it possible to link the past with the present time. This was also the time when she developed an in-depth interest in the moving image, visiting the Anandam Film Society and the Soviet Cultural Centre, and learning about the art film genre and foreign cinematic productions. Malani not only became acquainted with the Russian avant-garde cinema, the French New Wave, and the Italian Neorealism, but she also studied the work of the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), especially *The Film Sense* (1942) and *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (1949), and of the German film theorist Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007), particularly *Film as Art* (1932) and *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (1954).

The second such alternative venue, which Malani joined in 1969 after completing her diploma, was the VIEW, an artistic hub in Bombay established by Akbar Padamsee with the award money received from the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship. The VIEW[306] was Padamsee's visionary interdisciplinary studio hub, where artists of various backgrounds were given the space to discuss and experiment with ways of complementing their existing art practice with new twentieth century media. Gieve Patel, another VIEW member, had explained the idea behind the founding of the VIEW in India as

> "not only to house equipment but to provide a meeting place where artists and specialists in various media could come together to exchange their views to learn and to teach and thus hopefully provide a fostering ground for a new genre of art. [...] The century has also brought forth its own unique medium – film. The artist cannot afford to be any longer a specialist in a particular medium. [...], more and more artists find it necessary to express themselves in more than one medium."[307]

Soon after its opening, in a building on Nepan Sea Road in Bombay owned by Padamsee's family—and close to Malani's parents' house—the VIEW became a space providing ground-breaking facilities for printmaking, photography and filmmaking.

The materials and space to work which the VIEW gave Malani enabled her to develop her interest in film, photography and prints, and to create four experimental short films

[306] At the time when the VIEW opened and operated there was no similar space in India for artists working in the medium of film or photography, with an exempt of the Films Division project, which worked with artists amongst which Maqbool Fida Hussain and Tyeb Mehta (Pijnappel, "The Missing Link," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 90).

[307] Gieve Patel quoted in Pijnappel, "The Missing Link," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, pp. 88-90.

during her time there. The multiple screen projection which she created in 1976, of which her first film of 1969 forms a part, also owes much to the VIEW and could count as Malani's fifth project created at the VIEW, although the venue had already closed by that time. Pijnappel argues that Malani rarely experimented with the medium of film for its own sake, as many prominent Western filmmakers whose works she studied had done, but that the main driver behind her explorations of the representational possibilities of the moving image and photography was rather her social and political engagements.[308] Hence, even at that early age, Malani began using the medium of film to reach the attention of a wider public and spark a dialogue on critical social and political issues. This characterised her art practice more and more strongly in the years that followed.

Malani's first stop-motion animation film[309] made at the VIEW was *Dream Houses* (1969) (Figures 2.1.1.–2.1.3., movie stills from Variation I). It comprises two films, *Dream Houses I* and *II,* also referred to as Variation I and Variation II. *Dream Houses* took two intensive months to make. For a long period of time, it was thought to be lost. However, *Dream Houses* (Variation II) was discovered in 2011 and exists today as an independent film and as part of *Utopia* (1969-1976),[310] Malani's multiple-screen projection, while *Dream Houses* (Variation I) was found as recently as 2017.[311]

Dream Houses, which lasts three minutes and forty-nine seconds, takes as its main subject the problem of housing in Nehruvian India, in the light of the idealism and hope which Nehru's era and modernism together had brought to India. *Dream Houses* reflects the young Malani's engagement with Nehru's vision for a new India. It is a remarkable choice of topic for a first film: not only does Malani show the housing needs of the poor, but she also presents possible solutions. Her interest in architecture and its implications in society at large stemmed in part from her involvement with a group of students of

[308] Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 60.
[309] Stop-motion animation is a technique in which the artist physically manipulates objects between individually photographed frames, so that they appear more independently. It is captured one frame at a time. For a general account of the subject, see, for instance, Christopher Walsh, *Stop-Motion Filmmaking,* London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.
[310] *Dream Houses* was an essential part of *Utopia*, acting as the left side of the double screen projection. For this reason, the work is sometimes chronologically classified as 1969-1976, after the year of each film's conception.
[311] Both films from the *Dream Houses* series have been digitalised and restored. Malani's short films *Dream Houses* (1969)*, Still Life* (1969)*, Onanism* (1969)*,* and *Utopia* (1969-1976) are part of the collection of MoMA, New York. They can be seen at MoMA, exhibited or upon request.

architecture at the Sir J. J. School of Art. Another important influence was the Indian architect Charles Correa (1930-2015), a close friend of Padamsee, who made frequent visits to the VIEW. Correa was the foremost architect in India at the time. Malani met him at the VIEW soon after she joined, and talked with him about the building of the new Bombay.

To make *Dream Houses*, Malani used a combination of still[312] and film camera. She first built an architectural model of the housing setting using thick black cardboard. She then lit the model with a lamp from various positions, to produce shadows, which she photographed on a negative film and developed onto larger positive and negative acetate sheets with registration holes. These were placed on a fixed metal wall mount and each acetate sheet was shot separately through a variety of colour filters, thus achieving a range of colour combinations in the whole architectural setting. *Dream Houses* was not only an experimental film, making creative and interdisciplinary use of the medium of film,[313] but it also addressed the spirit of the time in India.[314] Malani's early commitment to social engagement as an artist became increasingly important in her artist identity and art practice as she continued to experiment with different media and techniques.

Malani's second and third short films created at the VIEW, *Still Life* (1969, 16mm black and white film transferred to video) and *Onanism* (1969, 16mm black and white film transferred to video), produced in the same year as her first, were both made single-handedly by the artist herself. Both are shot in black and white with grey tones. Malani was learning many aspects of camera technique at this period: not simply working out

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[312] Still camera is a film-based device or a digital device which takes one picture at the time. The term is generally used to distinguish it from the other more prevalent film camera or video camera type. It is, however, possible for a still camera to have a moving picture setting, while a film camera can have a still camera option. For a general account of the two types of camera, see, for instance, Chris Marquardt and Monika Andrae, *The Film Photography Handbook*, San Rafael, California: Rocky Nook, Inc., 2019, particularly pp. 34-37.

[313] Additionally, the *Dream Houses* was also a formalist research in colour, light and movement, inspired by the colour theories of the Swiss artist Johannes Itten (1888-1967) and by the photographic experiments of the Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) (Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 66).

[314] The work *Dream Houses* was shown at MoMA, New York in 2016/2017 as part of their one year exhibition programme *From the Collection 1960-1969* (2016/2017)*;* as such the *Dream Houses* today accounts as part of the art history of late international modernisms, which includes the Indian modernism. For a discussion of Indian modernism versus Western modernism, a much debatable subject, see particularly Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism – India's Artists and the Avantgarde 1922-1947,* London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007; and Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India,* New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000.

how to do a montage and how to splice, but also studying an in-editing process that required detailed planning.[315]

Still Life (Figures 2.2.1. and 2.2.2.), the first in the series, is a double portrait film of four minutes and seven seconds in length. It conveys emotions to the viewer without any actors by placing everyday objects in a natural setting in an apartment on an ordinary day in Bombay. The viewer's position is that of the camera, of a *voyeur* witnessing the intimacy between two absent characters. The camera first shows us a dark staircase through a window and leads us to it, and then into a first room, where we see books, magazines and women's and men's clothing strewn on the bed. The viewer is drawn into thinking that they are witnessing an intimate relationship between two people meeting in a private place. After a couple of turns, the camera also shows us Eisenstein's book *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. The film ends with a prolonged take of a rotating ceiling fan. At the time, *Still Life* was a progressive cinematic experience in India, for both the filmmaker and the audience.

Even more progressive was the short film *Onanism* (Figures 2.3.1. and 2.3.2.), from the same series. It is the third in the overall opus of Malani's early films. Created shortly after *Still Life, Onanism* is three minutes and fifty-one seconds long and has a single protagonist. Even though these were the late 1960s in India, female sexuality and sexual freedom were still a taboo and the traditional Indian ways of thinking held sway. Malani, however, young as she was, used her art to advocate for a more liberal understanding of the position of women in society. In *Onanism*, Malani worked with a female friend who was diagnosed with epilepsy and was therefore familiar with and able to act out in front of the camera the uncontrolled body movements of an epileptic. Malani filmed her friend through a bird's-eye view as she lay on the bed, experiencing bodily convulsions. In the final minutes of the film these convulsions produce a sense of hysteria. Malani commented: " [...] when words fail, hysteria becomes an extension of the spoken language."[316]

Onanism was shot on a black and white 16mm film, as was *Still Life*. It introduces its female protagonist in an everyday room in Bombay, where there is a striped sheet over

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[315] Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 64.

[316] The artist quoted in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 208. For Malani, *Onanism* and *Still Life* were about women's liberation in India at the time, while she also used them to research the tools of abstraction in art, which she valued in the work of the Swiss-born German artist Paul Klee (1879-1940), and artists Johannes Itten and László Moholy-Nagy (ibid.).

a large bed and a simple black carpet on the floor. The protagonist wears black, in contrast to the white sheets on the bed. A series of shots shows the intimate details of an erotic female experience.[317]

Onanism and *Still Life* also bear witness to Malani's early interest in the key concepts of psychoanalysis, including absence and presence, voyeurism and fetishism.[318] She referred to these in her later work, initially during the 1970s and 1980s, when she was exploring the medium of painting, and more widely in her mature creative period since the 1990s. The elements of absence and presence in Malani's art came to be closely linked to the concept of memory, an aspect that I will return to and discuss later in this and the following chapters.

Malani created her fourth short film, *Taboo* (1973, 16mm black and white film transferred to video), shortly after her return from Paris. *Taboo* was shot on black and white 16mm film with a camera, which Malani borrowed one last time from the VIEW—for in the years when Malani was studying abroad, the VIEW had more or less closed down. *Taboo* has a duration of one minute and fifty-eight seconds and addresses the subject of oppression and discrimination against women in India, often driven by caste and religion. This was a topic about which Malani felt more strongly after her time spent in Paris.

Malani was inspired to create *Taboo* when she took up the invitation of a young experimental filmmaker, Mani Kaul, to help him film *Duvidha* (1973) in a small village outside the city of Jodhpur. In her free time, Malani explored the village and talked to people living in the area, where professions were classified by caste. The women were

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[317] Pijnappel conducted several interviews with the artist regarding her early films. On one occasion, Malani recalled her work on *Still Life* and *Onanism*, saying that

> "in part it was an exercise in black and white abstraction, while the main motive was to stand up to society's orthodox mores regarding female sexuality. The objective was to raise the issue of sex and masturbation from a woman's point of view, when these were taboo subjects in film and in the visual arts in India at the time."
> (Nalini Malani quoted in Pijnappel, "The Missing Link," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 94).

[318] Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 65. In this regard, Malani was interested in the work of the British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (b. 1941). The concepts of presence and absence were the key concepts dominating the writings of Mulvey; see Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996; and Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures,* Berlin: Springer, 1989.

very open towards Malani and she became close to several of the female weavers. They agreed to her proposal to film some of their work and their way of life. *Taboo* starts by introducing the working space for weaving, where the viewer is greeted by a woman who quickly closes the door after noticing the camera. The same woman is shown again in the second part of the film, working on various preparatory stages of the weaving process. She is heavily veiled throughout. In the second half, the film introduces a man who looks into the camera fearlessly and proudly. The camera follows his engagement with the weaving process in detail, and the film ends with a slanting shot over a loom. In this way, Malani portrayed the hierarchy within the weaving process, where women are relegated to the lowest stages of work, while the highest are delivered by men. Women were thus being excluded from the most creative parts of the process, a phenomenon which was widely accepted in India at the time, across all professions and layers of society.

Malani's fifth film—and at the same time her first multiple-screen projection—was titled *Utopia* (1969-1976). The format, which uses two film projectors simultaneously, enabled Malani to expose two different views of modern life in India in the 1960s and the 1970s. Her first short film *Dream Houses,* discussed above, became one part of *Utopia,* acting as the left side of the double-screen projection. In the Nehruvian India of the 1960s, solving the housing problem of Bombay's poor had seemed a realistic dream; with *Utopia* Malani revisits this idealistic past on a black and white 16mm film. This four-minute-long double screen projection was Malani's politically engaged reflection. She explains in an interview that the film *Utopia*

> "by placing the utopian and the dystopian beside each other, reaches another level when the disillusioned dreamer and the dream merge into a single experience."[319]

Utopia starts by showing a young woman looking out of a window from an upper floor apartment in urban Bombay, her gaze drifting across the mundane buildings, train tracks and slums, to a well-developed southern area of the city. In *Utopia,* Malani again worked with a female protagonist, this time a twenty-year-old woman from the nearby slum area. Malani portrays her in *Utopia* as a young woman who is tired of life, disillusioned and

[319] The artist quoted in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 228.

surrounded by the old and the new architecture, and uses her protagonist's viewpoint to reflect on the meaninglessness of human life and the insignificance of an individual within the broader context of the modern world. *Utopia* ends with a final shot of the young woman fading away in clouds, perhaps alluding to the disappearance of idealism and hope.

Photograms and Solarised Photography

Malani acquired her photographic skills on her own initiative, since classes in photography were not part of the curriculum at the Sir J. J. School of Art. When she made her first photographs at the VIEW between 1969 and 1970, at its newly opened dark room, she turned for help to the Indian photographers Dayaram Chawda (b. 1949) and Nina Shivdasani (b. 1946). The inspiration for her first series of black and white camera-less photographs, known as photograms,[320] came from the work of the American photographer and artist Man Ray (1890-1976) and the Hungarian painter László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946). For her photograms with the titles *Precincts* (1969) (Figure 2.4.), *Trajectory* (1969) (Figure 2.5.), *Flight* (1969) (Figure 2.6.), and *Vestige* (1969), Malani initially created a linear structure resembling an architectural drawing and then made use of various experimental techniques to achieve a greyscale character. As with her first short film *Dream Houses,* Malani made various paper cut-outs and objects from paper. She then left these for specific lengths of time under an enlarger on a sheet of photosensitive bromide paper. Although this technique was complicated and time consuming, it resulted in nuanced photograms, at first glance appearing like abstract artworks. Her photograms, however, were a mode of expression of an ideal city plan of modern Bombay, complementing her work in the medium of film, such as *Dream Houses.* In its content and subject matter, the young Malani's work in both media, photography and film, was inspired by her discussions about the development of social architecture in India with students of architecture at the Sir J. J. School of Art and with Charles Correa.[321]

[320] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 281.
[321] In *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 218. Photography as an artistic medium was rarely exhibited in India at the time, however the two surviving reviews, from the *Time of India* and the *Evening News of India,* praise Malani's work in this medium (ibid.).

During her time in Paris, Malani continued producing photograms and also created a series of solarised photographs[322] in the darkroom of the photo club in the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, of which she became a member soon after her arrival. We can see in her work how she was both experimenting with the medium and developing her political awareness and views. From the non-figurative and partially abstract field of her Bombay photograms, she moved into a charged, politically engaged territory. Solarised photographs with titles *Mushroom Cloud* (1970) (Figure 2.7.), *Damaged Survivors* (1970), *Le Chemin de Fer* (1970), and *Les Manifestations-Paris* (1970) (Figure 2.8.), witnessed to Malani's social and political standpoints. In the early 1970s, her protests centred on the Vietnam War and the global nuclear arms race.

Although the closure of the VIEW and Malani's personal circumstances meant that she gave less time to film and photography after her return to India in 1972, Malani's interest in the moving image and in its representational potential never waned. In this period, she was involved in several film productions by various wIndian filmmakers, including *A Memoir for the Future* (filmed in early 1980s, unfinished) by Kumar Shahani, and *Duvidha* by Mani Kaul. At the same time, she was taking note of the way local objects could be used in filmmaking—as in *Maya Darpan* (1972) by Shahani—and of the uses of lighting—as in the work of the Indian cinematographer K. K. Mahajan (1944-2007). Malani assimilated this knowledge and was to integrate it into her inter-media hybridity work in the 1990s and beyond.

[322] 'Solarisation' or 'Sabatier effect' is a photo technique, where the effect of the photograph is created through an extreme overexposure of the camera negative. With solarisation, dark areas appear light and light areas appear dark, this way giving the photograph a specific visual effect. Solarisation requires manipulation through various methods, with different camera placings, colour lighting and contrast, all yielding different results (Lynne Warren (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Inc., Volume III, 2005, p. 1459). This technique has been widely applied by photographer and artist Man Ray. For a general account of solarised photography in the context of the twentieth-century photography, see again Warren, *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*, Volume III, pp. 1459-1461.

2.3. The Medium of Painting in the 1970s and 1980s – Female Bodies as 'Sites of Remembrance'[323]

> ”My endeavour is to make visible that which is invisible.”
> (Nalini Malani)[324]

When Malani returned to the medium of painting after her time in Paris, she engaged early on with subject of women within Indian society. We can see her using the skills gained in her early training to suggest in the visual language the dynamics of a woman's inner life, acknowledging her often traumatic experiences. As the Indian art critic and art historian Geeta Kapur justifiably argues, this was the period when Malani first made female trauma the subject matter of her oil paintings.[325] Through the 1970s and 1980s there were traces of the genealogy of the feminine in Malani's paintings,[326] an aspect that became increasingly important for her work in the 1990s, when she started complementing her art practice with literary sources and the medium of theatre. What remained a constant was her device of creating a female character to serve as an allegory for the contemporary present.[327] Malani's works of this period address issues of race, caste and gender in India, and women are a constant presence, with allusions to their own painful experience in the larger network of relationships. Her paintings in the early and mid-1970s, as we will see, were largely inward-focused, representing a woman, her inner struggles and her fight for a survival within family interactions. In this regard, in her work of the early and mid-1970s, Malani followed Amrita Sher-Gil in addressing wider social issues through subtly allegorised autobiography.[328]

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[323] The term 'site of remembrance' was coined by author of this study, by analogy with Pierre Nora's term *lieu de mémoire,* 'site of memory'.
[324] Nalini Malani in an interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; see ”Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in Conversation with Nalini Malani,” in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 12-35.
[325] Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, p. 24. Kapur wrote extensively on Malani's work in the medium of painting; see Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, particularly pp. 23-38.
[326] With ‘genealogy of the feminine’ in Malani’s paintings I am referring to the artist’s study and analysis of the position of a woman and the different stages in her life within the frames of a wider society.
[327] Gayatri Sinha, ”Feminism and Women Artists in India,” in Yashodhara Dalmia (ed.), *Contemporary Indian Art – Other Realities,* Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2002, pp. 64-66. The deployment of a female character as an allegory for the contemporary times became most evident in Malani's engagement with the myth of Cassandra. I discuss Malani's work in this regard in Chapter 5.
[328] Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, p. 23. Kapur reminds us here that autobiography was slow to develop as a genre in the medium of painting in India, with Sher-Gil's personalised representations being a real

In the early 1970s, Malani worked on the series of paintings called *Untitled Woman* (1971-1972).[329] These were oil paintings on canvases of various sizes which depicted women in different physical and emotional states. The majority of works addressed the pain of existence. Through sensitive brush strokes, Malani created different female characters who communicated their vulnerability to their audience. They were depicted seated, lying, in a supine position, smiling inhibitedly, in tears, or close to death. The painting *Untitled Woman II* (1971, oil on canvas) (Figure 2.9.), with a single female protagonist in her death throes, is part of these series. Caught in different moments of their lives, most of these women were depicted as heavy and passive. We sense that they are victims of unbearable life circumstances, which they can only passively observe. Malani's focus in that period was mostly a woman victimised by a man; women were depicted as subject to flagellation and continuous violence.[330] Through the mid-1970s, Malani became ever more immersed in an exploration of the dynamics of roles and relationships on the axes man/woman, woman/wider social environment, and woman/herself.[331] This period was characterised by Malani's portrayals of the trauma

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achievement at the time. Malani, however, started taking herself as a subject at a point when women had already forced their path to a right of self-representation, explains Kapur (ibid. pp. 23-24). In the West, several women artists were simultaneously exploring the female experience through observing the self, and as such they were developing new representational strategies for speaking of the female experience in the visual. To name but a few, these included the French artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), the Portuguese artist Paula Rego (b. 1935), the American-born Nancy Spero and the Cuban-born Ana Mendieta. A separate mention goes to the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), who extensively explored the pain of self-existence in the context of a woman destined to trauma and pain; for a compelling discussion of Kahlo's and Sher-Gil's work in this regard, see again Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, pp. 3-23.

[329] The precise number of works from series *Untitled Woman* (1971-1972) is not known. Malani's works in the medium of painting and created in the 1970s and 1980s were exhibited regularly as solo exhibitions at the Pundole Art Gallery in Bombay, in years 1973, 1975 (an expanded oeuvre), 1979, 1980 and 1984.

[330] Dalmia and Hashmi, *Memory, Metaphor, Mutations,* p. 151. In speaking about violence against women in the visual—the subject that in Malani's art practice matured through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s—the artist often turned to written sources, such as the work of Veena Das. In her work, Das examined the extreme violence against women during the 1947 Partition, and contributed critical discussions and accounts of the subject of violence, how it affects the everyday life and how it acts as an interruption of life in the society which only bears witness to it. In this regard, see the aforementioned essay Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Daedalus,* Vol. 125, No. 1, Social Suffering (Winter, 1996), pp. 67-91; see also Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. The latter is Das' major work on this subject, where she also examines the massacre of Sikhs in 1984, following the assassination of then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1917-1984).

[331] In an interview with the Indian art historian Geeti Sen (b. 1943), Malani interestingly mentioned how her views regarding the victimhood of women changed through the 1970s and 1980s. Where she had thought at first that a man must be held responsible for a woman's being a victim, consequently making him responsible for her suffering, her thinking shifted towards allowing the possibility that a woman might, by consciously acting in such ways as to idealise the man, be partially responsible for her own suffering (Nalini Malani in an interview with *India Today*; see "Exploring Nalini Malani's Depiction of Women," in

present in a woman's psyche, as we can see from the many female figures she depicted at this time. *Woman in a Pink Room* (1975, oil on canvas) (Figure 2.10.), created in 1975, is a good example. The single female protagonist, depicted in a private boudoir-like environment, is reclining on a sofa, evidently waiting or posing for somebody outside. When we look closer, however, we encounter a woman with a seemingly scarred inner world, her split body speaking of fragmentation within her psyche and of the victimhood she does not know how to escape from. Through the 1970s, Malani's canvases were both emphatically declarative, silent and renunciatory, often apparently refusing to make explicit what they alluded to. They spoke of a woman being *violated, scarred* and *invisible.*

Given the elusive nature of trauma and memory, the material that makes up their narratives—whatever the means of expression—is configured in many different ways, so as to illuminate trauma's private, social, and political dimensions.[332] There are forms of trauma narratives that are more visible, often following those singular moments of violence or oppression upon individuals, as captured on film or in literature. In my view, Malani's work in the medium of painting through the 1970s shows more gradual processes of trauma through the depictions of female bodies, which, as such, became an important marker of the traumatic experience of women in the context of domestic and the wider social and political environment in India at the time. At the same time, my contention is that these female bodies also act as a 'cultural memory'[333] in the present. The American anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas (b. 1952) convincingly argues in his essay "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology" (1988) that the body forms the existential ground of culture upon which any subject engenders and is engendered.[334] Csordas described the human body, with its own 'embodied memory', as a producer of cultural knowledge of a certain era.[335]

Another author who deployed an 'embodied memory', framed by the trope of the body to speak of the intimate, the silenced and the suppressed in her work, was Charlotte

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India Today, March 27, 2015 (www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-the-arts/story/19760131-exploring-nalini-malanis-depiction-of-women-819570-2015-03-27 accessed on January 25, 2022)).

[332] Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival,* pp. 2–3.

[333] For a reference on 'cultural memory', see pp. 41-42 and footnote 120.

[334] Thomas J. Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology," in *Ethos,* Vol. 18, No. 1 (March, 1990), pp. 5-47. Csordas developed his methodology from the perspective of psychological anthropology, leaning strongly in the direction of phenomenology.

[335] Csordas,"Embodiment as a Paradigm," in *Ethos,* pp. 5-47.

Delbo.[336] Delbo's methods of examining memory and trauma in relation to her intimate experience as a Holocaust survivor may inform readings of other works,[337] including the visual artworks, engaged with trauma and memory and their related discourses. Such readings, I argue, can be imported into other historical and cultural contexts and modes of expression.[338] Delbo's way of engaging with memory and trauma, and the context with which she gives them expression, can be discerned from the title of her final work, the memoir *Days and Memory.* It is from this work that I will derive my focus on how the body can be perceived as a powerful agency through certain visual—or other—narration: as a marker of an intimate experience as well as of a 'cultural memory' in the present. In the following passage from *Days and Memory*, Delbo makes a compelling comparison between the Holocaust memory and the metaphor of a snake that sheds its skin:

> ”Explaining the inexplicable. There comes to mind the image of a snake shedding its old skin, emerging from beneath it in a fresh, glistening one. In Auschwitz I took leave of my skin – it a had bad smell, that skin – worn from all the blows it has received. [...]. Rid of its old skin, it's still the same snake. I'm the same too, apparently. [...]. How does one rid oneself of something buried far within: memory and the skin of memory.” [339]

Delbo saw the memory as something that changes through the passing of time, as the skin of a snake does. Memory ages and alters, and so do its representations and transmissions. Delbo extended the metaphor of the snake shedding its skin with an image of the leftover of snake's skin retaining its memory—the traces of who that snake once was and the experiences it had. Through her description of the snake's old and new skins, embodying the dynamics between memory and remembrance, Delbo spoke of the traces of the traumatic Holocaust experience and its memory as something present in the body long

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[336] For the work of Charlotte Delbo in this regard, see pp. 45-46 and footnotes 17, 140 and 141.
[337] For a reference on Scarry's writings in this regard, see pp. 74-75 and footnote 245.
[338] Although the Holocaust survivor testimonies, including Charlotte Delbo's memoir *Days and Memory*—which by virtue of their existence imply that memory and trauma can be understood and represented—can be a useful methodological resource for thinking through an intimation of trauma and memory in the visual arts, we should at the same time be aware that any such investigations of the two concepts must remain sensitive to the broader contexts of time and place, and the ways in which they inform debates of historical relativism regarding the Holocaust.
[339] Delbo, *Days and Memory,* p. 1.

after the actual experience.[340] For Delbo, the shedding and disappearance of the 'skin memory'—the 'embodied memory'—was, in fact, a metaphor for communicating the *visible* and *invisible* of the material traces of memory. The more the traces of memory dissipate, the greater the responsibility memory carries to represent the past authentically. In Delbo's work, her own observations of memory traces fading with the passing of time speak of her concerns about the role of memory in recalling past trauma and uveiling it in the present. In this light, Malani's depictions of female bodies unveiled the presence of something *invisible,* the traces of trauma positioned within the domestic, cultural and socio-political framework of contemporary India. These female bodies, then, became a visual language for veiled silences, where each body constitutes both a site of perception and experience, thus also acting as a 'site of remembrance.'

The Medium of Painting in the 1980s

Malani's women may have been victims in the 1970s, but by the end of the decade her emphasis shifted to portraying women as survivors. Following her 1979 solo exhibition at the Pundole Art Gallery in Bombay, the Indian art critic Adil Jehangir Jussawalla (b. 1940) commented:

> ”Nalini Malani's bodies [depicted on canvases and exhibited at the Pundole Art Gallery] are all female. These are women subject to a world made by a man, the doer, the maker, the aggressor. What is new, however, is that these women fight back. They will not watch and wait and endure with their large, sad eyes as women have been shown to be doing since the work of Amrita Sher-Gil.”[341]

Through the 1980s, Malani continued working in the medium of painting, exploring it as means of expressing the *invisible*, as Delbo had aspired to do in her writings. She moved away from her earlier treatment of trauma, experienced by women, as the subject matter

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[340] In this regard, see Heidi Grunebaum and Yazir Henri, ”Re-membering Bodies, Producing Histories: Holocaust Survivor Narrative and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Testimony,” in Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time,* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 101-118.

[341] Adil Jehangir Jussawalla's quote was published in the exhibition catalogue on the occasion of Malani's exhibition at the Pundole Art Gallery in Bombay, in 1979; Jussawalla's quote is taken from Pijnappel, ”Selected Biography,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 68.

of her works, and introduced into her canvases the subject of women's struggles to escape from a passive observer role and gain visibility and recognition. Malani achieved this by positioning *her* women inside a larger network of social relationships. The work *Grieved Child* (1985, oil on canvas) (Figure 2.11.), created in 1985, exemplifies these new developments. A female protagonist, lying supine on the bed and positioned above all the other figures, still appears passive and heavy. Looking over towards the maid, with a child in a yellow dress, she seems at least partially engaged in what is going on in her environment. The child looks back in from the balcony, seemingly more active in its presence, and communicating its own as well as its mother's urge to free themselves.

Another monumental canvas created in the mid-1980s and titled *Love, Deception, and Intrigue* (1985-1986, oil on canvas) (Figure 2.12.), presents several vignettes together. The female protagonist, who in the 1970s would have been portrayed as a solitary figure, was often depicted with other characters in the 1980s and situated in many different relationships. The relationships, however, often seem strained. The canvas *Love, Deception, and Intrigue* shows a woman character looking longingly towards a man, while the man is looking towards the mirror, shaving, with seemingly no interest in the woman. Malani offered an insight into her work at the time on an occasion of speaking with Sotheby's auction house:

> "At the time of this work, I was using cinematic devices and a continuous narrative [in her paintings] which came from my early films of 1969-1976. I wanted to create a narrative the way a filmmaker would do, fleshing out a character and creating a story. The story is not a linear story or a sequential story. It is more like the woman who is looking at the man who is shaving. It all starts there. They become like *sūtradhāras* [storytellers, the holders of strings] of the entire work. There is a *reverie* to earlier times with the water and the swimmer and the man looking back at his past, which is layered with some joy but also trials and tribulations, which have to do with jealously, envy and those type of emotions."[342]

In the early and mid-1980s, Malani worked on another series of paintings which investigated the position of women in the social context of India at the time, titled *His Life*

[342] From Sothebys' correspondence with the artist in January 2016 (www.sothebys.com/zh/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/modern-contemporary-south-asian-art-n09479/lot.548.html accessed on December 12, 2021).

(1978-1984).[343] For the first time, she took a man as her protagonist. In the series *His Life,* the narrative shifted from the first person to a third person,[344] which I contend was another representational strategy of the artist to explore interactions within the family and investigate the traces of the *invisible* in women. The canvas *His Life III* (1981, oil on canvas) (Figure 2.13.) shows a male figure as the patriarch of the family. He is depicted in a supine position, unashamedly self-satisfied, while the world around him appears hectic. Several female figures surround him, and while they appear more active than Malani's earlier women, some are bleeding, and all seem veiled in tiredness, sadness and a sense of futility.

In her works of the mid-1980s, including *Passages from a Criminal's Dream I and II* (both 1984, oil on canvas), *Woman Destroyed* (1986, watercolour on paper) (Figure 2.14.) and *Signs of Depression* (1986, oil on canvas),[345] Malani investigated women's unwillingness to play the roles assigned to them in society. According to the Indian cultural anthropologist Veena Das (b. 1945),[346] whose writings on violence and trauma experienced by women in the context of Partition and its aftermath influenced Malani's work, these women

> ”rage against their bodies that have to bear pain within, rather than just disintegrate in the face of such tragedy.”[347]

For these women, Das adds, grief is never just a passing moment, but it is

> ”experienced as a bodily pain and the female body as one that will carry this pain within forever.”[348]

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[343] As with the series *Untitled Woman* (1971-1972), it is uncertain how many canvases originally went to make up *His Life* series (1978-1984).
[344] Pijnappel, ”Selected Biography,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 60. Pijnappel made some useful theoretical contributions with regards to Malani's works in the medium of painting and her use of the 'filmic view' therein. He drew attention to Malani's use of 'crane shot' in her earlier compositions and her shift to a 'medium shot' in her paintings of the mid- and late 1980s (ibid. pp. 60-87).
[345] The three works mentioned were exhibited in a group exhibition titled *Exhibition of Recent Water Colours/Through the Looking Glass* (1987) at the Roopankar Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal, India. The exhibition was curated by Nalini Malani herself.
[346] For a reference on Das' work in this respect, see footnotes 298 and 330.
[347] Das, ”Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain,” in *Daedalus,* p. 80.
[348] Ibid.

My contention is that Malani translated the violence perpetrated against women—violence that Das wrote about—into a visual language, in which *her* women, whose bodies are visually recognisable and socially legible, act as agents of 'cultural memory' in the present.

Malani's artistic path in the 1970s and 1980s thus shows how deeply she was already engaged with social and political concerns, and how profound was her search for the means of representing her subjects of interest in her visual language. Just as in the 1960s and 1970s, the German artists Gerhard Richter and Anselm Kiefer had sought the means of expressing their nation's abject past in the painting medium—in vastly different forms and under different terms[349]—despite the claims that it defied representation, so Malani investigated the medium of painting for expressing the *invisible* within an individual, positioned within the wider social and political context of the era.

2.4. *Transgressions* into New Media – Medium becoming the Memory

> ”The medium is the memory.”
> (Rosalind Krauss)[350]

In the 1990s, Malani belonged to a vanguard of artists[351] who were re-inventing the old media or inventing new modes of expression in line with what Krauss has called ”the art in the age of the post-medium condition.”[352] The international trend of the avant-gardes in the late 1980s and the 1990s was focusing on new forms of narration as an escape from art-historical ties to abstraction and figuration, the two primary and rival movements of the twentieth century art. Across the non-Western world, new aesthetic practices were emerging which Huyssen justifiably called ”a new kind of world art.”[353] In the visual arts,

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[349] Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter,* p. 6.
[350] Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory,* p. 19.
[351] Other artists who worked in this context were the aforementioned William Kentridge, Doris Salcedo, and Miroslaw Balka, to name a few. For a discussion of Kentridge's and Salcedo's work in this regard, see pp. 59-64.
[352] See the aforementioned Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (2000). Additionally, see also footnotes 36 and 37.
[353] Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 48.

new narrative possibilities offered by new media such as photography, film and video-based installations were being used in the service of "the return of the real."[354] The new subject matters were closely linked to the new media, often speaking of the suppressed *invisible*, while memory itself became a protagonist in the present.[355]

The discourses in the visual arts were shifting from aesthetic to other media, recalling the pronouncement of the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), 'the medium is the message.'[356] McLuhan's slogan was reformulated by Krauss as 'the medium is the memory', in the light of which each expressive form—thus, each medium understood as an on-going source of meaning—provides a possible site for memory.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Malani moved away from her representational techniques and strategies deployed through the 1970s and 1980s, which had been mostly connected with the medium of painting, to work with a range of media, translating into a visual language subjects spanning the inner lives of individuals, communities, classes and countries. At the same time, she started drawing on mythology and sources from literature to help her address the narratives of oppression and violence, conflicts and wars, in India and globally. We see her embracing a new visual language, an inter-media hybridity, which closely served the subjects she represented. Malani's art, like that of William Kentridge or Doris Salcedo,[357] became embedded in worldly matters, explicitly addressing political and social 'present pasts'[358] through newly invented means.

Malani's Art Practice and Stepping Stones in the Early 1990s

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[354] For coining of the phrase 'the return of the real' by Hal Foster and his work in this regard, see pp. 54-55 and footnote 165.
[355] Franz Kaltenbeck and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Trauma und Erinnerung (Trauma and Memory: Cross-Cultural Perspectives),* Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2000, p. 229.
[356] Marshall McLuhan was a Canadian philosopher, whose work is amongst the cornerstones of media theory; see Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects,* London: Penguin Group, 1967. The title of the work is a play of words on McLuhan's phrase 'the medium is the message', where McLuhan adopted the word 'massage' to describe the effect of various media 'massaging' the human sensory system. For McLuhan's earlier account of the subject of media theory, see Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* London and New York: Routledge, 1964.
[357] For a discussion of Kentridge's and Salcedo's work in this regard, see pp. 59-64.
[358] For the coining of term 'present pasts' and Huyssen's work in this respect, see footnote 184.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Malani expanded her art practice, shifting from earlier examinations of female trauma in the visual to respond to an individual caught in the machinations of the city. In an early innovation, she engaged with this concern through a medium with which very few contemporary Indian artists were familiar at the time—that of artist books. These were books made from photocopies of monotypes on paper enhanced by the use of watercolours, pastel and charcoal. Each work was usually of a horizontal format, while they all referred to a storyboard,[359] a sequence of works telling a story. The series *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* (1990, artist book with drawings, hardcover, collage on Sunlight buff paper, watercolours, soft pastel and ink) (Figure 2.15., detail) was amongst the series of the limited-edition books created in this period.[360] Malani's studio at the time was situated in the busy area of the wholesale market, Lohar Chawl, in Bombay, where she lived and worked in the period from 1978 to 2003, observing the ordinary lives of Lohar Chawl's daily workers and their conflicting roles within the larger mechanisms of the city. In 1990, her studio underwent a renovation and Malani perforce spent many of her working hours away from it, exploring the city. She responded to the homelessness she saw and the lives of the street people on whom the Lohar Chawl market relied with *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* series. Connecting with the neighbourhood at its core, a community living on the margins of South Bombay, Malani made the anonymous people inhabiting the place into the main protagonists in her work. She created a kind of 'hieroglyphic' language from the silhouettes of those who hid in the crowds—some of the poorest people, often invisible to society at large. By unveiling and disclosing their lives, she was representing a difficult experience of their existence in the visual.

In parallel, this was also the period when Malani started integrating the transparent material Mylar into her art practice.[361] This enabled her to play with overprinting and to create palimpsestic effects, an element which became important in her later work in the context of recalling memories and trauma in the visual. In 1991, Malani built on her *Hieroglyphs* series to create her first installation work, responding to

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[359] Pijnappel convincingly points out Malani's use of several filmic devices in the series *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* (1990), amongst which were the 'roll film' and the storyboard (Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 69).

[360] The first in the series were the accordion books *Dreamings and Defilings* (1990), *Musings* (1990) and *Cast Off* (1990). Malani's experiments with this medium continued in the following years with *Degas Suite* (1991), and her collaborative projects *23 Views of the Avon Lady on the Amazon* (1997) and *The Water Book* (1997) (Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* pp. 70-71).

[361] For Malani's discovery and use of Mylar, see footnote 289.

changes in India's social and political climate, the work titled *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* (1991, mixed media installation) (Figure 2.16., installation view). Installed at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay for the first time, the installation consisted of six ink scroll drawings and paintings on Mylar sheets, each measuring 200 x 102 cm, hanging from the ceiling in a specific zig-zag formation. The initial scroll showed a man peeing on the street in Lohar Chawl market area; this was followed by one showing a salesman who was trying to hide from the rain; next was a lower-caste woman taking a break by resting her hands on the wheel of a cart; then a larger-than-life portrait of a carrier of daily goods (see Figure 2.16.); the semi-final scroll showed an abundance of tools and electric machines hovering over two different male characters who carried them on their hunched backs, along with the weight of the cityscape of Bombay; while on the final scroll, a homeless family inhabiting a plastic tent appeared to float in the air.

The exhibition was commissioned and organised by the Chemould Art Gallery, Bombay and inaugurated at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay in 1991. In 1992, the exhibition travelled to the south of India and was exhibited at the Sakshi Art Gallery in Madras. There, Malani installed the Mylar scrolls in the space in such a way as to involve the audience in her installation, something which became a frequent part of her art practice in the 1990s and beyond.[362]

In 1992, Malani created her second installation, titled *City of Desires* (1992, inter-media hybridity installation) (Figure 2.17., installation view). This was a site-specific exhibition, which Malani called a wall drawing/erasure performance.[363] The artist was given the whole space of the Chemould Art Gallery, where she worked *in situ* for the whole period of the exhibition, creating ephemeral drawings on the walls of the gallery, with images occurring and disappearing. This drawing/erasure method was to become closely linked in her later practice and work to the recollection and a recall of memories and traumatic

[362] Since Malani's participation at the group exhibition *Splash: Images on Glass* (1990) at the Chemould Art Gallery in Bombay, where she involved the visitors for the first time, this became her frequently used method, enabling her to get her audiences more engaged with subjects and narratives she portrays.
[363] In *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead: Retrospective 1969-2018,* Volume II, p. 138. *City of Desires*, a site-specific installation, was exhibited on several occasions after its inauguration in 1992, amongst which at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in 2007, and more recently, in 2018, on the occassion of Malani's retrospective between Paris and Torino. At the latter venue, Malani created a link between the 1992 exhibition at the Chemould gallery and her first film *Dream Houses*, created at the VIEW in the late 1960s. Revisiting her subjects became part of Malani's art practice, hence working in series over a period of time, and revisiting her subjects of interest later in time, either in same or newly invented media.

chapters of histories through her visual language. The protagonists of these drawings and erasures on the walls at the Chemould gallery were again the familiar inhabitants of the Lohar Chawl market, the homeless people in Bombay joined by the refugees of Vietnam War—a reflection on histories repeating themselves, which, I contend, was Malani's particular memory-work at the time. *City of Desires* was at the same time the artist's response to the rise of Hindu nationalism, following the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque in the city of Ayodhya, in 1992.[364] In this period, women in particular were living with heightened fear, worrying that those with extreme orthodox views would impose more restrictions on the population and subject them to even more oppression in the future. As with some of her works in the medium of painting created in the 1980s, when she turned to Das' texts detailing past and present violence against women during the 1947 Partition and beyond, in the *City of Desires* Malani recalled again the memories of Partition and their traumatic nature, using it, I suggest, as a trope for engaging with what Huyssen calls 'present pasts'. With the *City of Desires*, Malani also moved further away from a more conventional media and started complementing her art practice with the moving image, the medium she had used widely during her experimental period at the VIEW.[365]

This second installation also shows Malani's deepening interest in the key concepts of absence and presence. She had engaged with these initially while working on her first short films *Onanism* and *Still Life* in 1969, being influenced by the work of the British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (b. 1941).[366] In the 1990s, the two concepts—that of presence and absence—became closely linked in her work to the concept of memory, with the ephemeral nature of drawings and their erasures pointing to absence and presence, and the elusive and fragmentary nature of memory. Malani handled her surface in such a way that its erasures and defacements would challenge traditional aesthetics, while in parallel, by overlaying the walls with images one on top of the other, she created a palimpsest of the historical in the present.

It is thus my contention that the way in which Malani used this medium, creating characters with an ephemeral, short-lived presence on the walls with continuous erasures, marks the start of a new element in her art practice, in line with Krauss' 'the

[364] For a reference on Ayodhya events, see footnote 292.
[365] For Malani's use of the moving image medium, see footnote 269.
[366] For Mulvey's work in this respect, see footnote 318.

medium is the memory.' Malani used this additional element itself as another layer, making a reference to the fragmentary nature of memory itself and this way also offering a reflection on ways how violent history repeats itself in continous cycles in the past and in present times.

Excavating History

Malani made another such leap—a *transgression*—into an innovative medium in 1997, which was also the fiftieth anniversary of India's Independence. This was a period when she was using a variety of media in her art practice, including theatre, installations and the moving image. For a touring exhibition titled *Mappings: Shared Histories ... A Fragile Self* (1997-1998)[367] Malani turned back again to the 1947 Partition, which by now had became an important source in her work. *Excavated Images* (1997, canvas created from a used and painted quilt) (Figures 2.18.1. and 2.18.2., details) was a canvas created from a quilt which had once belonged to Malani's grandmother. The family used it as a sack in 1947, at the time when they immigrated to Bombay during the Partition.[368] Malani presented it as a worn-down, tired object, adding colours on both sides as a reference to human sweat and blood, thus drawing on dispersed traces of traumatic memories and representing these in the present of the late 1990s. In the centre of the quilt, she painted her family's female genealogy, with two painted portraits of her grandmother, Malani herself and a printed photo of her eldest daughter. The rest of the quilt was covered with pictorial elements that were both personal and historical, invoking individual memories and trauma embedded in a larger collective context, and, at the same time, representing a collective traumatic event intertwined with personal and intimate memories.

The quilt was also very much a contemporary artwork, reflecting on the continous racial and caste violence still present in the country fifty years after the Independence. A large part of it was covered with black and white reverse photographs from contemporary Indian newspapers, several that were making reference to attacks on

[367] The exhibition *Mappings: Shared Histories ... A Fragile Self* (1997/1998) was a touring exhibition jointly organised by the Eicher Gallery, New Delhi; the National College of Arts Gallery, Lahore; and the Chemould Art Gallery, Bombay. Between 1997 and 1998, the exhibition travelled from New Delhi to Lahore and Karachi (both in the present-day Pakistan), and closing in Bombay.
[368] In *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 182.

Dalits[369] in that year. The subject matter in *Excavated Images* was inextricably linked to its unique medium—we see Malani's conscious artistic translation of individual and collective traumatic pasts, allowing the work to act as a 'site of memory' in the present.

To recapitulate: this second chapter began by presenting key events in Nalini Malani's life, focusing on those that were particularly crucial for her as an artist, in order to lay the groundwork for further analysis of selected works of hers in the light of memory and trauma. Many of these events, which entailed fierce violence against women and minorities, became memories which Malani has been recollecting and recalling in her work—works that will be investigated in the coming chapters. Malani's life path and her formative years were placed within the context of her experience of the 1947 Partition, which today counts as one of the most traumatic events in the history of the twentieth century India. The societal changes that marked her formative years were also noted, with their importance for Malani's future and life-long artistic commitments: the transition from the optimism of the Nehruvian era of the 1950s and 1960s to the disillusionment of the 1970s, which prompted significant changes in the overall socio-political climate and gave rise to more stringent and chauvinistic forms of Hindu nationalism.

The chapter then focused on Malani's early formative period, when she was experimenting with new media, most notably with film and photography, while living between Bombay and Paris and developing her political and social awareness. Malani's artistic path was set in the context of wider societal and political changes in India and the West in the 1960s and 1970s, showing how she responded to these changes in terms of her artistic subjects as well as her choice of media used in her art practice. Attention was drawn to the important role of the moving image medium in Malani's work of the 1990s, and to the ways in which this medium would play a part in the inter-media hybridity of her later work, due to be examined in the context of memory and trauma.

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[369] Dalits are members of the lowest caste in India, also known as the 'untouchables.' For a comprehensive yet general account of the Indian caste system in the context of its development and genesis, see, for instance, B. R. Ambedkar, *Castes in India: Their Mechanisms, Genesis and Development,* first presented as a paper at Columbia University, New York, on May 9, 1916; the paper was first printed in Indian Antiquary Volume KLI (May 1917), and republished by Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2017; for another more general account of the subject, see also G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India,* New Delhi: Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2017; see also the recently published collection of essays and papers in Ramnarayan S. Rawat and K. Satyanarayana (eds.), *Dalit Studies,* United States: Duke University Press, 2016.

Malani's two decades of creation in the medium of painting (i.e. her 1970s and 1980s period of creation) were then examined in the light of the two headline concepts of this thesis, memory and trauma. Her initial introduction of female trauma in the visual, in the depictions of female bodies on her early canvases, was discussed in the context of 'embodied memory' from the work of Charlotte Delbo, who used the metaphor of a snake that sheds its skin. Delbo's 'embodied memory' relates to trauma residing in the human body long after the experience has passed, which resonates with Malani's female bodies, seen to act as the 'sites of remembrance', performing an important memory-work in the present.

The final part of this chapter introduced three of Malani's works created in the early and mid-1990s, this time deploying Rosalind Krauss's statements on the 'post-medium condition' in the contemporary arts and the way in which newly invented media serve as a memory. Discussions of Malani's first installations created in the early and mid-1990s underlined the relationship between the subject matter and the medium in the circulation of expression; therein I argued that these expressive forms of the subject, through re-invented or newly invented media, constitute the very early 'sites of memory' in Malani's oeuvre.

The next chapter will focus on Malani's work in the 1990s, looking in particular at three works created in the medium of theatre. I will discuss the subjects represented and the artist's use of the medium in the context of the postmodern memory-theatre. The chapter will trace the two concepts, memory and trauma, in the three plays, while focusing on Malani's strategies for representing collective memories and histories in the present.

3. Memory-Theatre – Performing National and Global Histories

> "All theatre is a cultural activity deeply involved with memory and haunted by repetition." (Marvin Carlson)[370]

Theatre as an artistic medium is a form of expression, an art of repetition, of memorised texts, gestures, images and voices. It is a medium that synthesises text and its performance, gesture and speech, while it also creates an articulated communication between actors and their audience. Theatre as a medium is a temporal art, an art-through-time, and as such it is in dialogue with the audience and its memories. Whenever memory is at issue in postmodern theatre,[371] it emerges as unhinged, multiple, and fragmented.[372] Postmodern theatre texts compulsively and often traumatically invoke past events which re-inscribe identities, and they are often concerned with those for whom "the great whole of history has proved to be the great hole of history."[373] These theatre plays hence summon memories by performing them[374] through re-enactments of past collective events or by investigating the effects of those events on the lives of individuals and their descendants.[375] The experimental strategies adopted to this end are the inclusion and reinterpretation of mythical materials; the use of archival or semi-archival materials; the

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[370] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage – The Theatre as Memory Machine,* United States: University of Michigan Press, 2003, p. 11.

[371] The use of the term 'postmodern' in the context of theatre in this study follows the German semiotician Erica Fischer-Lichte (b. 1943) and the American theatrologist Jeanette Malkin (b. 1965) in referring to the ways in which theatre plays function in the world and in which their function is perceived by their audiences. Postmodern theatre in this sense includes the social and political expressions of *Zeitgeist,* the defining spirit of a certain period of time, which helped shape the memory-theatre under discussion here. The term 'memory-theatre' is, as such, used by Malkin in her discussions of the postmodern theatre plays in the context of memory; for these Malkin uses the term 'memory-play'; see Jeanette Malkin, *Memory-Theater and Postmodern Drama,* United States: University of Michigan Press, 1999. The use of the terms 'memory-theatre' and 'memory-play' in this study primarily follows and builds upon Malkin's written accounts of memory-theatre. For a discussion of the postmodern theatre, see also Erica Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theater,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992 (originally published in German, in 1983 as *Semiotik des Theaters* by Gunter Narr Verlag, Tubingen).

[372] Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* pp. 1-2.

[373] Suzan-Lori Parks quoted in Bahun-Radunović, "History in Postmodern Theatre," in *Comparative Literature Studies,* p. 447.

[374] The use of phrases 'performing memories' or 'performance of memories' in this study and in the context of memory-theatre under discussion here follows theoretical accounts contributed by Malkin and by the Bosnian-born British theatrologist Milija Gluhović (b. 1970). Under 'performance of memories' is understood the playwright's recall of memories and representation of these on the stage for their audiences. Alongside Malkin's aforementioned work, see also Milija Gluhović, *Performing European Memories – Trauma, Ethics, Politics,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[375] Bahun-Radunović, "History in Postmodern Theatre," in *Comparative Literature Studies,* pp. 447-448.

presentation and representation of historical events—all presented as fragmented and re-enacted units through stage performance in the present. In this regard, these theatre plays are also referred to as 'memory-plays'.[376]

Of particular influence on Malani and her work in the medium of theatre were two German playwrights who employed many of the strategies above, in the tradition of the twentieth century avant-gardes.[377] Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) sought to historicise and address social and political issues of the time in his theatrical work, combining theory and practice to explore the theatre as a forum for political ideas. His successor Heiner Müller (1929-1995) replaced the didactic theatre language developed by his predecessor Brecht with more open dramatic forms and layered meanings; he also developed a practice called *Kopien,*[378] that of taking texts written by others as material to be used, imitated, rewritten and reinterpreted.[379] This practice was later adopted by Malani, who encountered the works of both Brecht and Müller in the 1980s, when India was politically aligned to the Eastern Bloc of the Soviet Union, which enabled people in India to read works originating in East Berlin.[380] Malani was fascinated by how far the practice of *Kopien* was in line with the Indian tradition of retelling stories from epics over and over again, and reusing and reinterpreting them in new ways.[381] She incorporated the practice in her own work, using and referring to various written sources, and re-inventing, re-

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[376] For a reference in this regard, see footnotes 371 and 374.
[377] For a classic account of the avant-garde, see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (translated from German by Michael Shaw), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 (originally published in German, in 1974 as *Theorie der Avantgarde* by Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin). For more on the avant-garde theatre, see, for instance, Bernard Frank Dukore and Daniel Charles Gerould (eds.), *Avantgarde Drama: A Casebook 1918-1939,* New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1976.
[378] *Kopien* translates as 'copies'.
[379] Heiner Müller did not consider the work of other writers and artists as a private property, nor the re-using of it a potential stealing of intellectual property. On the contrary, according to Müller, it was to be used as the material for one's own work and reinterpretations. For a compelling discussion of Müller's work in the light of reused and reinterpreted plays of other authors, see Jonathan Kalb, *The Theatre of Heiner Müller,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[380] When asked how an Indian artist at the time would gain access to materials originating in East Berlin, Malani explained about India being politically aligned to the Eastern Bloc of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, which enabled people in India to read works written by German authors, including those of Heiner Müller, Bertolt Brecht and Christa Wolf (1929-2011) (Nalini Malani in an interview with *Interview Magazine*; see "Nalini Malani Tells a Story," in *Interview Magazine,* June 28, 2016 (www.interviewmagazine.com/art/nalini-malani-ica-boston accessed on January 12, 2022)).
[381] Malani explained in an interview that behind her turning to already existing materials was the wish to retell the stories not only in new ways but also in new, contemporary configurations (Nalini Malani in an interview with Johan Pijnappel; see "Interview with Nalini Malani from the *Icon India* catalogue produced for the Indian show at the 51st Venice Biennial," in *Icon India,* 2005 (www.nalinimalani.com/texts/venice.htm accessed on January 25, 2022)).

contextualising and appropriating these to the subjects investigated in her art. The memory-plays of Müller and Brecht, which took an activist stance against the distortion and repression of the past, as presented in the official discourses and narratives in their native Germany, were also of particular interest to Malani.

Malani's interest in the work of Brecht and Müller and their strategies for performing memories on stage found a compelling expression in three of her theatre and theatre/video plays (i.e. 'video plays'),[382] created between 1993 and 2000: *Medeamaterial* (1993, theatre play), *Naukari* (1996, theatre play), and *Hamletmachine* (2000, video play). *Medeamaterial* built on Heiner Müller's play *Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts* (*Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten,* 1982),[383] while *Naukari* was a Hindi adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's short story *The Job or By the Sweat of the Brow Thou Shalt Fail to Earn Thy Bread* (*Der Arbeitsplatz, oder Im Schweisse deines Angesichts sollst du kein Brot essen*, dated to ca. 1933).[384] *Hamletmachine*, created in the theatre/video play medium or simply referred to as a 'video play', which Malani developed from her previous theatre plays, was modelled on Müller's adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,[385] *Hamletmachine* (*Die Hamletmaschine,* 1977),[386] and drawing on Müller's use of montage developed in the theatre of the French dramatist and theatre director Antonin Artaud (1896-1948).

A particular frustration for anyone discussing Malani's works for the theatre is that the specific texts no longer exist in their original form, since they were to some degree always improvisations. Apart from paintings and drawings, which Malani created for *Medematerial,* the elements that survived are also from the installation entitled *The Job*,

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[382] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 293.
[383] See Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage* (edited and plays translated by Carl Weber), New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984, pp. 123-126.
[384] See Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Short Stories* (edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim; translated by Yvonne Kapp), London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1983; for story *The Job,* see pp. 112-116; for editor's notes on *The Job,* see particularly p. 235. The short story *The Job* is classified among Brecht's *Berlin Stories* written in the period between 1924 and 1933. The story was based on a real-life episode reported from the city of Mainz in 1933, while it is not clear how and when the story reached Brecht's attention in that year. For more information in this regard, see the above edition of Brecht's collected stories, particularly p. 235.
[385] *Hamlet* is a theatre play, a tragedy, written by the English playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616). The creation of *Hamlet* is dated between 1599 and 1601; the play was first performed in 1609.
[386] See Müller, *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage,* pp. 49-58.

that derived and was created a year after the theatre play *Naukari*. However, what we do know about the performances allows us to see how Malani developed new ways of evoking memories and historical events[387] in the theatre, and throws a new light on her later creative practice.

The present chapter examines the three works of Malani introduced above, in the context of their performance of personal, national and global histories as memory-plays. In parallel, it also investigates the strategies deployed in these plays for performing memories and historical events, while drawing attention to their cultural and political differences. The chapter falls into four sections. The first gives a brief account of an early form of memory-theatre in the sixteenth century Italy, and draws parallels between this and the twentieth century postmodernist theatre, contextualising the performance of memory. Each of the following sections (3.2. to 3.4.) is devoted to one of the three works of Malani. For each work, I examine the ways in which the artist prioritised memory, as did works of Brecht and Müller, giving it a political tenor in the present. In parallel, I also examine the relationship of each play to its audience as it calls for the recollection of memories (i.e. often those that are linked with trauma) and their critical reflection in the present. And finally, this chapter aims to show how Malani's reinterpretations of Brecht's and Müller's works acted as innovative performative and visual means in India at a time when theatre as a medium was rarely used.

The classification and the discussion of works is led by their chronology of production and by the progression of medium in Malani's art practice. I present and examine the works of Brecht and Müller only insofar as they are relevant to Malani's work as discussed in the context of memory-theatre. This incremental discussion of the works gathers a comparative force as it progresses and sheds light on the vision of theatrical practice in the artist's overall oeuvre, emphasising the common effort of these plays to revisit and represent individual and collective memories.

[387] For a reference on understanding and use of terms 'memory' and 'history' in this study, see pp. 15-16.

3.1. Postmodern Memory-Theatre – Revisiting and Reassembling of Histories

> ”Memory is not a constantly accessible copy of the different facts of our life, but an oblivion from which, at random moments, present resemblances enable us to resuscitate dead recollections.”
> (Marcel Proust)[388]

To throw light on memory-theatre in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I shall start the discussion in this chapter by turning back to Renaissance Italy, to consider what may have been the very first memory-theatre, that of Giulio Camillo Delminio (1480-1544).[389] The rhetorician and occult philosopher Camillo was one of the most famous men in the late sixteenth century Italy, in part also because of the celebrated theatre he built for King François I of France.[390] Camillo's theatre was a wooden structure, crowded with images, which could accommodate only one or two visitors at the same time. It was designed to perfect the personal memory and evoke transcendent memory; Camillo claimed that it would convey all the learning of the past to its audience.[391] On different levels of this semi-circular theatre, memories were stored and were to be retrieved through mental associations with images and symbols.

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[388] Marcel Proust, *The Captive,* in Marcel Proust*, Remembrance of Things Past* (translated into English by C. K. Scott Moncrieff), London: Chatto & Windus, 1929, Volume III, p. 146 (originally published in French, in 1923 as *La Prisonnière (À la Recherche du Temps Perdu)* by Nrf, Paris).
Proust's 'involuntary memory' (in French *mémoire involontaire)* can reveal hidden memories and take the past out of its obscurity. This remembering can be achieved in two ways: when a momentary irrational sensation occurs outside the time and the will, restoring the forgotten or lost past; and, secondly, through a temporal process of remembrance, where an individual's previous unwilled discovery obtains a concrete form. In Proust's case, his *mémoire involontaire,* triggered by a smell or a taste, has the power to restore itself completely in ways that the willed memory cannot (Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* pp. 6-7).

[389] We are indebted for information on Camillo's theatre, work and life to the research done by the British historian Frances Amelia Yates (1899-1981), who has reawakened interest in Camillo's work. Yates was amongst the first, if not the first, who investigated and discussed Camillo’s theatre in the context of memory; see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 129-172. Camillo himself wrote *L'idea del Theatro* (originally published in 1550), where he explained his theatre in detail; see Giulio Camillo Delminio, *L’Idea del Theatro*, Milano: Adelphi, 2015 (edited and translated by Lina Bolzoni).

[390] Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 129-130. Camillo's contemporaries hailed him as a 'divine Camillo', however after the eighteenth century Camillo was mostly forgotten (ibid. p. 130). Camillo's work was mentioned again in several scholarly works in mid-twentieth century, prior to Yates' research and published work; see, for instance, Paolo Rossi and Rod. Goclenius L., ”Studi sul lullismo e sull'arte della memoria nel rinascimento: I teatri del mondo e il lullismo di Giordano Bruno,” in *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia,* Vol. 14, No. 1(Gennaio/Marzo, 1959), pp. 28-59.

[391] Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 130.

Camillo's theatre was described by some of his contemporaries as an amphitheatre, like that described by the Roman author Vitruvius (81 BCE-15 BCE).[392] The visitor stood in the middle of the theatre—as it were, on the stage[393]—looking out at the ranks of images. It rose over seven levels and was divided between seven gateways, each decorated with images drawn from Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Cabalistic and Christian traditions.[394] This mélange between the mythic and the occult was meant to bring the past into the consciousness of the viewer and draw hidden materials to the surface, this way acting as a mental trajectory towards remembrance. The gates, then, were *loci memoriae,* 'memory places'.[395] Camillo's vision of the theatre was deliberately cast within the framework of the classical art of memory,[396] using the traditional mnemonic[397] terminology, so that his theatre was in fact an archive of 'memory places'.[398]

The combination of images taken from different contexts and traditions, and the theatricalisation of the fragmented images—images without any determined meaning, but which depend for their meaning on their audience's prior knowledge—surfaced again in the theatre of the late twentieth century. The American theatrologist Jeanette Malkin (b. 1965) convincingly connected with the postmodern memory-theatre the story of the Renaissance visionary man—Giulio Camillo Delminio—who built a theatre of memory and flooded the spectator with images that demanded recollection without offering a key

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[392] Yates argues that Camillo's theatre was actually a distortion of the real Vitruvian theatre (Yates, *The Art of Memory,* pp. 136-137). Camillo used the plan of the Vitruvian classical theatre, while adapting it to his mnemonic intentions (ibid. p. 137).

[393] Yates notes that Camillo never mentioned the actual stage in his writings, which made her omit it from the drawing of his theatre (Yates, *The Art of Memory,* p. 137; for the drawing, see an insertion pp. 144-145).

[394] See again the inserted page in Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 144-145.

[395] The art of memory, which initially emerged in Roman rhetoric, and was later inherited by medieval and modern-day scholars, entailed a system of mnemonics, thus a system of ideas, signs or associations, to help an individual to recall the memories. This system of mnemonics used *loci memoriae,* 'memory places', for storing information for a possible future recall (Yates, *The Art of Memory,* pp. 130-135) *Loci memoriae,* a term coined by Yates, was used by Pierre Nora for deriving the phrase *les lieux de mémoire,* the 'sites of memory', with Nora explicitly citing Yates as his source for the phrase:

> "Though not really a neologism, the term did not exist in French when I first used it. [...] I took it from ancient and medieval rhetoric as described by Frances Yates in her admirable book, *The Art of Memory* (1966), which recounts an important tradition of mnemonic techniques. The classical art of memory was based on a systemic inventory of *loci memoriae,* or 'memory places'."
> (Nora, *Realms of Memory,* Volume I, p. xv).

[396] For a reference in this regard, see the above footnote.

[397] 'Mnemonics' is a system such as a pattern of letters, ideas, or associations, all which assists in remembering. While the 'mnemonic device' (i.e. also 'mnemonic means') is any device, an element that aids information retention or retrieval of memories in humans.

[398] Yates, *The Art of Memory,* p. 144.

to their understanding.[399] Both Camillo's sixteenth century theatre and the memory-theatre of the late twentieth century set out to elicit the recall of memories in the present, while also intervening in an (un)conscious suppression of memories—all in a dialogue with their audiences.

Coming to Terms: On the Postmodern in Theatre

My use of the term 'postmodern' in this study is formal and at the same time pragmatic. I employ it here in a sense which suits the theoretical framework which I am constructing in the present chapter, to describe the ways in which theatre plays function in the world and in which their function is perceived by their audiences. In this sense, this inevitably includes the social and political expressions of *Zeitgeist,* the defining spirit of a certain period of time, which helped shape the memory-theatre under discussion here.[400] In this regard, the term will principally be used in connection with the theatre of Heiner Müller.

Before going any further, however, it will be useful as well as important to focus briefly on the concept of 'modernism', a predecessor of postmodernism, and on the associations the term has in India.[401] I take 'modernism'—a distinct from 'modernity', the quality of being 'modern'—as a term used in art historical vocabulary. The concept produced a multilayered framework, one without a rigid structure and with progressive narration. It refers to developments in the field of fine arts[402] in Western Europe and North America from the 1880s through the 1950s. The American art critic Clement Greenberg's (1909-

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[399] Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* p. 3.
[400] In this regard, see again footnote 371.
[401] There is a vast literature of historical discussions and theoretical polemics on modernism and postmodernism. The American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) is accredited with setting a definition of the term 'modernism' in art historical vocabulary and the parameters of what consitutes a work of art and the role of an artist in modernism. For his seminal work on the subject, see Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture,* Boston: Beacon Press, 1961. For the account of modernism in India, see the aforementioned Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism – India's Artists and the Avantgarde 1922-1947,* London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007; and Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India,* New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000. See also footnote 314.
Additionally, for a discussion of transition from modernism to postmodernism, see, for instance, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1991; for a discussion of the postmodern condition, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979.
[402] Historically, the fine arts comprised painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry, and the performing arts including theatre and dance.

1994) influential narrative on modernism[403] was primarily a synthesis of what leading Western artists, philosophers and critics had begun to articulate in the 1880s. The fact that it was generated in a political context of imperialism inevitably gave it an exclusionary focus on the West, as the centre of global modernist art production. Despite the fact that the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s marked a newly gained political independence for most of the developing countries, including India, the cultural hegemony of the West continued through a discourse on modernism. Geeta Kapur justifiably argues that many nations, including India, were excluded from modernism as interpreted by the West.[404] As the discussion progresses in this and subsequent chapters, it will be important to bear in mind the cultural complexities surrounding the use of these terms.

Hal Foster convincingly argues that the transition from the modern to the postmodern in art historical vocabulary entailed a move from artwork that was ”formally self-sufficient, apart and without purpose” to one that also had an ideological aim.[405] The postmodern art was therefore deliberately embedded within the social, cultural and political dimensions of the era, the *Zeitgeist,* in which it was shaped and within which various art forms and media were read. In postmodernism, an artwork was no longer discussed purely in terms of its aesthetic form, but also in terms of its relationship with the world. The German semiotician Erica Fischer-Lichte (b. 1943) took this discourse further, arguing about the transition from the modern to the postmodern in the theatre. She investigated the relationship between time and space, the dissolution of the self, the focus on the interaction between the text and the audience, and the emphasis on performance, all of which was adopted by postmodernism from modernism, argues Fischer-Lichte, and all which assumed an audience with changed attitudes of reception.[406] Both Fischer-Lichte and Malkin examined the shift in relations between these main characteristics and the historical events to which they corresponded.[407] Where modern theatre was made to provoke the audience and raise their consciousness for the purpose of social and cultural

[403] For Greenberg's work in this regard, see footnote 401.
[404] In this respect, see the aforementioned Kapur's *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (2000).
[405] Hal Foster, ”Postmodernism: A Preface,” in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 1985, pp. vii-xiv, p. xv.
[406] Erica Fisher-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective,* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997, p. 269. Additionally, for Fisher-Lichte's work in this regard, see also footnote 371.
[407] See particularly Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre*, pp. 273-274; see also Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* pp. 18-25.

transformation, the postmodern theatre assumed an already knowledgeable audience with new attitudes of reception: an audience which had already gone through a cultural transformation and which it was no longer necessary to shock.[408] The audience of postmodern theatre plays, then, was encouraged to apply its own meanings to the form it was witnessing on the stage.

Another change occurred on the level of performance. The production of a postmodern performance was informed by a particular set of philosophical and ideological assumptions, which also influence how these plays were received and interpreted by their audience. While modern theatre focused almost entirely on the object, the postmodern theatre shifted attention towards the relationship between the audience and the object, assuming an audience which was able to read these multiple meanings. In these plays, the materials were often those from collective archives containing memories of traumatic nature, and presented as pieces from the collective (un)conscious. We will find several of these characteristics in Malani's plays discussed later in this chapter.

On the Performance of Memory in Postmodern Theatre

The insights of postmodernism into how memory functions have thus influenced the ways in which memories and historical events were performed in the theatre. Instead of progressing narratives that also incorporated memories, known from earlier times, in postmodernism we find non-narrative reproduction of disrupted, repetitive and collectively articulated fragments of past events and acting as memories.[409] This shift in the way of society dealing with the past (i.e. the relationship between the past and the present)[410] is, then, reflected in theatre through memory fragments, and their repetitions performed on the stage. According to Malkin, it is the weight given to the *memory* itself, which allows us to give the name of 'memory-theatre' to much of the postmodern theatre.[411]

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[408] Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* p. 18.
[409] Ibid. p. 7.
[410] For a reference in this regard, see the section on memory, particularly pp. 41-43.
[411] Ibid. For another discussion in this respect, see the excellent Carlson, *The Haunted Stage,* pp. 2-16.

The memory-theatre is characterised by presenting difficult historical events, those of tainted nature, through memory fragments and traces, hence the events which are known to the audience for whom these plays are written. Where previously plays that dealt with the subject of memory had been concerned with order and clear causal relationships, the postmodern plays offer discussions about collective pasts as well as a platform for a reflection about these tainted pasts in the present. We will look in more detail below how Malani uses these techniques in *Medeamaterial*, *Hamletmachine* and *Naukari*.

Further reflections of the ways how memory is conceptualised in the postmodern theatre are: the privileging of voice and image over narrative and character, the privileging of the collective over the individual, and the privileging of interactive over self-sufficient language.[412] In this new reality, Malkin argues, the question of *who* is actually remembering becomes an issue.[413] By contrast with earlier modernist works,[414] in which memory belonged to a single protagonist or to a specific group of people, the postmodern theatre texts often have no character who can function as an explicit source of remembrance.[415] The individual who remembers is no longer relevant and is given no particular weight. These new 'postmodern characters' are "lacking [their] egos or a core of human essence,"[416] they do not develop internally through time, and hence do not try to make their audience identify with them.[417] In Malani's plays discussed in this chapter we will see these characters mostly as a collective collage. They are characters who could hardly be the source of any memory; on the contrary, it is memory which has been given the leading role, as it becomes an independent subject that works through the characters. For example, in Malani's *Medeamaterial*, the memory attributed to Medea was in fact a collective memory recalled by the colonised nation; while the memory of Ophelia in Malani's *Hamletmachine* was in fact the national archive of shared memories of conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. These memories, then, originate from culturally and politically tainted collective archives of historical events. Both Malani's *Medeamaterial* and *Hamletmachine* make this plain.

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[412] Malkin, *Memory-Theater*, pp. 7-8.
[413] Ibid. p. 7.
[414] Amongst the many noted modernist playwrights from the Western canon were August Strindberg (1849-1912), Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), and Arthur Miller (1915-2005), to name but a few.
[415] Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* pp. 6-8.
[416] Ibid. p. 7.
[417] Ibid.

A further convincing point that Malkin makes about memory in the context of the postmodern theatre is that it is rarely polemical and never dogmatic, although some agendas do come to the surface through images that the audience encounters on the stage.[418] These agendas are informed by the collective, national (usually) and not very distant pasts, and fed by social, cultural and political events, often those accounted as failures of history. The memory-theatre could, then, also be understood as a theatre, which imitates traumatic, conflicting and often suppressed or denied memories of collective pasts. Through the means of repetition, regression, cacophony of voices, images and sounds, the memory-theatre, then, acts as an initiator of the processes of remembering. We will now turn to three selected works of Malani and see how she deployed the techniques and strategies known in the postmodern memory-theatre, in order to address the intimate traumas and collective memories in 1990s India.

3.2. *Medeamaterial* (1993) – Performing the Myth and the Archive

> "Again and again I call to mind the sequence of those events – I've kept it locked up in my memory as a protective wall against the doubts that now, so late, are flooding through my defences."
> (Medea in Christa Wolf's *Medea: A Modern Retelling*)[419]

In the early 1990s, when Malani began exploring new directions and new means in her art practice, she started bringing together mythical materials with collective and personal memories to construct multilayered metaphors in the contemporary times. Her subjects, which were dedicated to questions of historical inheritance in the present, called for new representational techniques and new visual strategies for recalling the past. *Medeamaterial* (1993, theatre play) (Figures 3.1.1.–3.1.6.) was Malani's first work in the medium of theatre, which she explored extensively in her art practice in this decade. The work was created in collaboration with the Indian/French actress and theatre director

[418] Ibid. pp. 7-8.
[419] Christa Wolf, *Medea: A Modern Retelling* (translated from German by John Cullen), New York and London: Doubleday, 1998, p. 22 (originally published in German, in 1996 as *Medea: Stimmen* by Luchterhand Literaturverlag, München).

Alaknanda Samarth (b. 1950),[420] after Heiner Müller's play *Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts*. Malani and Samarth borrowed the tragic Greek character of Medea and contemporised it by infusing in the fragments of national and transnational historical events. *Medeamaterial* was scheduled to inagurate in 1992 and had to be put on hold when riots took place in Bombay after the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya,[421] by Hindu fundamentalists.[422] The escalation of violence and political denial that accompanied the events were reflected uncomfortably closely in Müller's text. The play was premièred in 1993 at the Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay.[423]

The myth of Medea,[424] famously interpreted by the Greek tragedian and playwright Euripides (ca. 480 BCE - ca. 406 BCE), became a story that posed questions specific to contemporary times. It has been adapted and rewritten by many authors, including Heiner Müller and the German writer Christa Wolf (1929-2011).[425] Medea, who killed her younger brother and sacrificed her two children to punish the man she loved for betraying her, is probably the most sinister and transgressive amongst female characters in the Western literature.

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[420] The initial idea of collaborating on the theatre play *Medeamaterial* and turning to Müller's work *Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts* came from Malani's long-time friend Alaknanda Samarth. For Malani, who was very fond of collaborative work and who felt close to the Brechtian theatre (i.e. the theatre according to the rules and theory set by Bertolt Brecht), experimenting with the medium of theatre was an exciting challenge. It enabled her to explore the medium itself as means of expression and to create artworks in its context, as was also the practice in Brechtian theatre. In this light, *Medeamaterial* was a creation of two strong individualistic presentations—the performance, directed by Samarth, and Malani's artworks (in the medium of drawing and painting), created in the historical, political, and cultural context—all of which converged in Müller's text (Kamala Kapoor, "Introduction," in Kamala Kapoor and Anita Desai (eds.), *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt,* Bombay: Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay, 1997, pp. 5-8, p. 7). *Medeamaterial* was a creative and collaborative work of two artists, each contributing their part, views and materials, and, in this light, this study refers to the work as Malani/Samarth's *Medeamaterial* or Malani/Samarth's Medea (i.e. for its female protagonist), for short.

[421] For a reference on Ayodhya in this regard, see footnote 292.

[422] For a reference on Hindutva and Hindu nationalism, see footnote 288.

[423] Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay was a branch of the Goethe Institute in Bombay at the time. *Medeamaterial* was staged only six times at the Max Mueller Bhavan, hosting seventy-five people each time (from an interview with the artist; see "Interview with Nalini Malani from the *Icon India* catalogue produced for the Indian show at the 51st Venice Biennial," in *Icon India,* 2005 (www.nalinimalani.com/texts/venice.htm accessed on January 22, 2022). Records say that Malani filmed the play on one occasion, however at the time of writing, no trace had been found of the filmed footage. The overall project, which became known under the title *Medeaprojekt,* spanned many years and entailed works in different media, including drawings, paintings, performance, and installation. For a written account and a collection of essays on *Medeaprojekt,* see Kamala Kapoor and Anita Desai (eds.), *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt,* Bombay: Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay, 1997.

[424] For an account of the bare bones of the story, see Appendix A.

[425] I return to Christa Wolf in Chapter 5, where I discuss a selection of Malani's works in the context of Wolf's retelling of the myth of Cassandra.

Malani and Samarth set their *Medeamaterial* in a period when "the old goddess-centered religions are being overwhelmed by new patriarchal god-ruled ones"[426] who were solidifying their powers. In contrast to some previous adaptations, which condemned Medea's crimes of fratricide, infanticide and murder, Malani/Samarth's Medea was no helpless slave from barbarian Colchis. On the contrary, she had hopes for a more humane civilisation. Their *Medeamaterial* (i.e. their Medea) was in fact a metaphor for a narrative of tainted historical events, those of past colonial desire, betrayal and violence, while at the same time it was also a reflection on the operations of power, past and present. In staging fragments of Medea's memories, *Medeamaterial* deployed the myth to relate the historical exploitation of particularly women to the history of colonialism. In this sense, Malani/Samarth's Medea represented the colonised and Jason—Medea's lover and the father of her two children—the coloniser, who came to raid Medea's native land to steal its prosperity, which originated from the Golden Fleece.[427] Memories of Jason's betrayal thus stood for the betrayal of Medea's search for a more humane world, while her disdain for his deeds, suggested a wider disillusionment with the colonist who arrives and conquers new lands, touting hollow promises of a better life. In this light, then, *Medeamaterial* revisited the political and the societal past of colonialism, that of Malani's and Samarth's native India, by means of the mythical, the myth of Medea.

Müller's original—an allegory for the processes of degradation in society—was reinterpreted in Malani/Samarth's *Medeamaterial* by summoning fragments of memories, those of a mythical character Medea, and standing as Malani/Samarth's allegory for collective histories, this way, reflecting on past violence and domination in the past and their cycles in the present. In this regard, Samarth's performance of Medea's personal history[428] (Figures 3.1.1.–3.1.3.) was inextricably linked with Malani's painted panels created specifically for the play. Performer and painted environment together delivered a powerful message in the present.

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[426] Margaret Atwood, "Introduction," in Christa Wolf, *Medea: A Modern Retelling,* New York and London: Doubleday, 1998, pp. ix-xvi, p. xii. Christa Wolf, who wrote her interpretation of the myth of Medea several years after Malani/Samarth's *Medeamaterial* was staged in Bombay, did likewise.

[427] For the bare bones of the story, see Appendix A.

[428] For a compelling and yet controversial analysis of the fraught relationship between the political and representational visibility in performance, see the excellent Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance,* London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Medeamaterial was staged inside and outside the walls of the Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay, with the inside stage divided into three different yet equal spaces. Each act took place in its own space with its own painted environment. The play was envisaged as a monoplay with a single protagonist—Samarth in the role of Medea—who recited the reinterpreted Müller's text in a performance. The paintings and drawings in each space (Figures 3.1.4.–3.1.6.) were created in close connection to the memories of the narrative of the colonised Medea,[429] and, as such, I contend, they acted as mnemonic means in the play, as aids to help the audience's recollection of memories. Malani's paintings and drawings—her visual translation of the past experience of the colonised—took the form of an enlarged accordion book, resembling her earlier artist book series *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* (see Figure 2.15., detail).[430]

The play started on the street outside Max Mueller Bhavan. In an evocation of the riots, which Bombay had recently experienced, three policemen wearing black and driving motorbikes circled the audience like vultures homing in on their prey, while Samarth—as Medea—was to be seen in a glass cage inside Max Mueller Bhavan, pacing erratically, helplessly caught in the flashes of lightning. Once the audience entered the theatre space, Medea intoned Müller's text at a ponderous pace, like a funeral dirge. For each change of scene, Malani had created a different painted environment to give context to Medea's performance. The first set of paintings and drawings showed two variations of the story of Jason (Figure 3.1.6., detail), painted once in colour and once in black and white, as two different visions of the same world. The audience was invited to recall the historical events from the colonial era and make the connections between the colonised and the coloniser, each with their own history and their own interpretation of past events. The second set consisted in what Malani called a 'theatre of images',[431] in which a story of six different actors was photographed on a slide film. Their faces were highly dramatised through the use of strong-coloured filters, presented by means of a side stop-motion intervention, acting, I argue here, as a mnemonic device. The Indian art historian and art critic Chaitanya Sambrani (b. 1960) argues that

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[429] For a reference in this regard, see again Appendix A.
[430] For Malani's *Hieroglyphs: Lohar Chawl* series, see pp. 111-112.
[431] The artist quoted in Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 73.

> ”the reality of his [Jason's] existence is compromised violently even as the violence latent in his actions was represented through the violence it provoked in Medea.”[432]

Müller made only a few practical specifications about the performance of *Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts*, which enabled Malani and Samarth to find their own ways of reinterpreting his text and staging the play. Malani/Samarth's *Medeamaterial* had several characteristics in common with Müller's postmodern memory-theatre presented and discussed earlier,[433] amongst which were the privileging of image and voice (i.e. that of Medea), emphasising collective historical events over individual memories (i.e. those of colonialism), and presenting past events through fragmented narratives (i.e. through Samarth's performance and through the means of Malani's painted environment). These narratives were a patchwork of memory fragments taken from different sources, stiched together and inviting a recollection of histories. In this regard, each memory fragment in *Medeamaterial* carried a meaning and effectually asked its audience questions—relating to past events and their implications in the present.

To walk the path of recall and remembrance in *Medeamaterial*, the audience was offered the painted environment, comprising recollections of memory fragments and traces of tainted histories, superimposed on the slow unfolding of the myth. Malani/Samarth's *Medeamaterial* made the past reverberate traumatically across different textual planes, such as Medea's Colchis and Jason/Medea's Corinth as a metaphor for India and for India as a colonised nation under the British Crown; and Medea's vision of the truth and attempt to free herself as another metaphor for India's escape from captivity and search for its own voice as an independent country (Figure 3.1.5., detail). In the light of the postmodern memory-theatre, *Medeamaterial* invited its audience back in time, in order to re-live past events—by the help of mnemonic means—events, which at the same time enabled that very audience to inquire about their meaning in the present.

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[432] Chaitanya Sambrani, ”Nalini Malani: The Medea Project and Beyond,” in Kamala Kapoor and Anita Desai (eds.), *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt,* Bombay: Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay, 1997, pp. 10-23, p. 18.
[433] For a reference in this respect, see pp. 123-127. Additionally, see also Malkin, *Memory-Theater*, pp. 71-115; and Milija Gluhović, ”History, Memory, and Trauma in Heiner Müller's Theatre,” in Milija Gluhović, *Performing European Memories – Trauma, Ethics, Politics,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 30-100.

3.3. *Naukari* (1996) – Memories of Oppression in Brechtian Theatre

> "Thereafter she probably sank without trace into the ranks of that army of millions who are forced to earn their modest bread by selling themselves, [...], and who are in short lost, and if we are to believe the prevailing view, lost forever."
> (Bertolt Brecht, *The Job*)[434]

Malani's adaptation of Brecht's work in the mid-1990s had a more experimental and interactive character than her earlier theatre work. *Naukari* (1996, theatre play) (Figures 3.2.1.–3.2.4.), a staged version of Bertolt Brecht's short story *The Job or By the Sweat of the Brow Thou Shalt Fail to Earn Thy Bread*, was made in collaboration with the Indian theatre director Anuradha Kapur (b. 1951) at the National Centre for Performing Arts, in Bombay. A year later, Malani created a related installation titled *The Job* (1997, installation)[435] (Figure 3.2.5., detail), as a continuation of her staging of the work in the theatre. Malani adapted this short story, written in the period of Great Depression,[436] to the Indian context of the late twentieth century, visualising and staging fragments from one woman's memories—as in Brecht's story—and contextualising these within the broader political and social framework of injustice and inequalities in India at the time.

Bertolt Brecht, who came of age during the Weimar republic (1918-1933), is today considered one of the foremost German playwrights.[437] In his work for the theatre, Brecht developed a theory and practice, exploring the medium as a forum for political ideas and a melting pot of critical aesthetics. In Brecht's theatre, the intention was that events on the stage provoke a reflection and enable the audiences to adopt a critical perspective on

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[434] Bertolt Brecht, "The Job," in Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Short Stories,* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1983, pp. 115-116; for the entire short story, see pp. 112-116 of the same edition.
[435] *The Job* (1997, installation) was a solo exhibition, which included the installation titled *The Job*, the Mylar cylinders created for the theatre play *Naukari* (1996), and a series of study drawings made for the theatre production of *Naukari.* The exhibition premièred at the Goethe Institute, Bombay (Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* pp. 74-75).
[436] The Great Depression is a term used for a severe economic recession that began in the United States after the stock market collapsed on October 24, 1929. For an account of the subject, see, for instance, Thomas E. Hall and David J. Ferguson, *The Great Depression: An International Disaster of Perverse Economic Policies,* United States: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.
[437] There are several comprehensive accounts of the life and work of Bertolt Brecht. See, for instance, Loren Kruger, *Post-Imperial Brecht: Politics and Performance, East and South,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004; for a more general account, see, for instance, Klaus-Detlef Müller, *Bertolt Brecht: Epoche – Werk – Wirkung*, München: C. H. Beck, 2009.

problematic social and political aspects of society. For this purpose, he employed various dramatic devices and techniques,[438] distancing the actors and their audience from the events portrayed, introducing strange elements into the events that the audience might take for granted, and portraying complex and contradictory characters on the stage. In this way, Brecht disrupted his audience's sense of reality, making them aware of its multifaceted nature.

Brecht's short story, *The Job or By the Sweat of the Brow Thou Shalt Fail to Earn Thy Bread*, tells of a single widowed woman, Mrs Hausmann (i.e. Frau Hausmann), a mother of two small children, who fights for survival during the Great Depression. In the passage below, Brecht's reader encounters Mrs Hausmann after she leaves the hospital, dressed in men's clothes:

> ”The hospital released Frau Hausmann in men's clothes. She came home in the morning, and from noon on the whole quarter gathered in the hall on the pavement outside to wait for the male impersonator. That evening the police took the unfortunate woman into custody to put an end to the uproar. She was still in men's clothes when she got into the car. She no longer had anything else.”[439]

Malani adapted Brecht's text to the context of her native India in the 1990s, setting the play at a factory in Delhi. Her adaptation tells of a night watchman who was found to be a woman masquerading as a man, at a time when women were not allowed to take on positions intended for men. The woman turned out to be a single widow fighting for the survival of her two children and herself. As in Brecht's story, in Malani's *Naukari* she had been forced to impersonate her dead husband to keep his job as a night guardian at the factory. After the authorities discovered her trespassing, she was no longer allowed to continue working at the factory, which pushed her into searching for other, more sinister ways to earn money for survival.

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[438] Some of the terms used to describe these devices are the following: alienation effect, breaking the fourth wall, gesture, narration and use of songs. Apart from his work in theatre, Brecht also wrote poetry. He used his work in this medium to criticize the European culture, amongst which also the Nazi party and the German bourgeoisie. For references on Brecht's theatre in this respect, see the above footnote.
[439] Brecht, ”The Job,” in *Collected Short Stories,* p. 115.

To stage *Naukari,* which was performed in the proscenium space,[440] Malani built an environment between the stage and the seating space, blocking both spaces with a massive wall made out of cardboard boxes (Figure 3.2.4.). Behind this walled space, she created a series of different sets and installations (Figure 3.2.2., details). My contention is that these sets and installations had a mnemonic function in *Naukari.* At the start of the play, a female protagonist greeted the audience outside the theatre—this was a female actress, who was playing an impoverished man, inviting the audience to follow *him* into the labyrinth of painted sets and installations on display within the walled environment. The single protagonist then led the audience through installations and painted sets, improvising and acquainting them with the various elements that functioned, I contend, as mnemonic means. Amongst these were bell jars filled with the contents of a basic Indian diet, a projected stop-motion animation, a zoetrope[441] with a young boy and girl skipping, surgeon's gloves filled with water, and a triangular kaleidoscopic hut made out of mirrored material.[442] These props subtly brought traces of memories into their audience's consciousness.

After a quiet opening, performance began on the stage, accompanied by paintings and drawings—as in *Medeamaterial*—and, for the first time, by five life-size cylinders made out of Mylar, and painted in reverse.[443] Given the transluscent character of Mylar, these cylinders took on a variety of roles in *Naukari*. The protagonist was able to change her identity inside the cylinder by hiding behind a painted figure of choice[444] (Figure 3.2.3.), while at other times cylinders with painted images, floating above the protagonist, functioned as a metaphor for the past. An interplay between painted cylinders created

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[440] Proscenium is a vertical plane of space in a theatre which serves as the frame for the audience to witness the events on the stage. It stretches upwards from the front of the stage and is usually surrounded on the top and at the sides by a physical proscenium arch. For a discussion of the subject of the proscenium and the nature of representation in theatre, see Francis Grin, *The Proscenium Arch: A Representation of our Anxiety within the Theatre,* München: Grin Verlag, 2008.

[441] Zoetrope is one of several pre-film animation devices which produces the illusion of movement by displaying a sequence of either drawings or photographs through its progressive phases. For an account of the subject, see, for instance, Leo Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital*, London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005.

[442] None of these early installation materials that accompanied the play survived (in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 174).

[443] For a reference on Malani's discovery of Mylar and for her use of reverse painting technique, see footnotes 289 and 290.

[444] Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 75.

shadows displayed over the walls. This was to become a central representational technique for inviting a recall of memories in Malani's work in the twenty-first century.[445]

In *Naukari*, past trauma (i.e. of a widowed woman) disclosed gradually through fragments and intimations of past events, in performance and by mnemonic means. Malani adapted Brecht's text and presented it through memory fragments as traces of an individual's past existing outside the usual plane, to make a point about the social and political environment in India at the time. In this light, the audience was asked to identify with the trauma of another person. In her essay "*Tenebrae* after September 11: Art, Empathy, and the Global Politics of Belonging," Jill Bennett presented a convincing argument about the identification with another person's trauma in this respect.[446] A subject that deals with an unfamiliar experience, Bennett contends, does not try to understand this experience on its own terms or in terms of another's experience, but considers "what it would be like if this happened to me."[447] In this light, Malani's *Naukari* too invited its audience to identify with a character on the stage, while it also went a step further and asked this same audience to adopt a critical perspective and recognise such experience within the political and social environment in India at the time.

In particular, one representational strategy, deployed to recall and stage the personal trauma and memory fragments of a widow in *Naukari,* expanded on a practice which Malani had used to a great effect in *City of Desires,* earlier in the 1990s.[448] In *Naukari,* this became an important element—a hand painted drawing/erasure video animation that was later exhibited independently under the title *Memory: Record, Erase* (1996, video animation)[449] (Figures 3.2.6.–3.2.8.). The work consisted of a series of shots of a single sheet of parchment paper, showing a continuous process of drawing and

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[445] I discuss the role of Mylar cylinders and their use in the context of Malani's work in the shadow play medium in Chapter 4.

[446] See Jill Bennett, "*Tenebrae* after September 11: Art, Empathy, and the Global Politics of Belonging," in Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 177-194.

[447] Bennett, "*Tenebrae* after September 11," in *World Memory,* p. 180.

[448] I remind the reader here about Malani's work *City of Desires* (see Figure 2.17.), created in 1992 as a response to the rise of Hindu nationalism, following the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya. Within her second installation work, Malani introduced an element of a wall drawing/erasure performance, closely connected to the two concepts of presence and absence. The ephemeral nature of drawings and their erasures pointed to absence and presence, and the elusive and fragmentary nature of memory. For a discussion of *City of Desires* in this regard, see pp. 112-114.

[449] The work *Memory: Record, Erase* (1996), which initially existed only as part of the theatre play *Naukari,* was later exhibited independently at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, in New York, and as part of a group exhibition at the 2nd Asia/Pacific Triennial, in Brisbane, Australia.

erasing. This became a metaphor for what the artist called a 'memory membrane',[450] overcharged with the protagonist's thoughts. The tension between drawings and their erasures spoke of the two concepts—presence and absence—that invited a reflection on the acts of remembering and forgetting. For Malani, the elusive nature of memory is experienced on the skin or embedded in the membrane where it records experiences.[451] Her *Memory: Record, Erase* acts, I contend, as a reflection, as an artistic translation, of memory processes and of the complex relationship between the remembering of difficult pasts and a desire to forget or even an urge to deny. This brings us back to Charlotte Delbo's work and the 'embodied memory',[452] which speaks of intimate and silenced experiences from its seat in the body. Let us recall here the passage from Delbo's final work, the memoir *Days and Memory*, where she speaks of the remains of the Holocaust memory, using the metaphor of a snake that sheds its skin.[453] Just as Delbo saw the memory as aging and altering, while remaining present on the leftover skin of a snake, Malani used her alternation between drawing and erasure in *Memory: Record, Erase* to highlight similar dynamics between remembrance and forgetting, using the visual means. In Malani's work, memory traces were recorded on the individual's skin—the widow's skin—just as the snake's skin retains the traces of who that snake once was and the life experiences it had. Where Delbo spoke of the traces of her traumatic experience from Auschwitz and its memory being present in the body long after the actual experience, Malani envisaged difficult personal history as traces, memories being recorded on the skin, that did not allow a subject to forget.

[450] The term 'memory membrane' was coined by the artist herself during the creation of *Memory: Record, Erase* in 1996 (Nalini Malani quoted in Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 75). The artist has used the term and this representational technique throughout her mature period of creation.
[451] Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalani Malani. The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,* p. 50.
[452] For a reference on the 'embodied memory' and Delbo's work in this regard, see pp. 105-106.
[453] In this respect, see p. 105.

3.4. The Historical and the Personal in *Hamletmachine* (2000)

> "This is Electra speaking. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the names of the victims."
> (Ophelia as Electra in Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*)[454]

The video play *Hamletmachine* (2000, video play) (Figures 3.3.1.–3.3.4.), which Malani created in collaboration with Harada Nobuo[455] during a residency in 1999/2000 at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, was her second engagement with a text written by Heiner Müller. Müller's *Hamletmachine*, written in Berlin in 1977, at the height of the Cold War, was loosely derived from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Müller's play shocked audiences at the time of its production[456] with its unflinching look at the wellsprings of fear that were turning people against their neighbours. In the light of seemingly never-ending border conflicts in a divided Germany at the time, Müller's play deconstructed the collective myths of victimisation and redemption that turn people against each other, often resulting in loss of lives.[457] By appropriating Müller's play, Malani transformed the text into a parable of conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, which relied on religious and nationalist sentiments, thus in the context of her native India. She borrowed the title from Müller's original and adapted his text by inserting clips of documentaries by the Indian filmmakers—Anand Patwardhan's (b. 1950) documentary film *Father, Son, and Holy War* (1994) and Madhushree Dutta's (b. 1959) documentary film *I Live in Behrampada* (1993)[458]—in line with the way Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht had used montage.[459]

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[454] See Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage* (edited and translated by Carl Weber), New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984, p. 58.
[455] For a reference on Malani's and Nobuo's collaboration, see p. 90.
[456] Written in 1977, Müller's *Hamletmachine* received its world première in 1978, in Brussels, Belgium. This was followed by a German première in Essen, West Germany, in 1979, and a French première in Saint-Denis, Paris, in the same year. For an account of Müller's *Hamletmachine,* see, for instance, the excellent Eva Elisabeth Brenner, *"Hamletmachine" on Stage: A Critical Analysis of Heiner Müller's Play* (PhD dissertation), New York University, 1994.
[457] See Brenner, *"Hamletmachine" on Stage: A Critical Analysis of Heiner Müller's Play* (1994, PhD dissertation).
[458] The work of the two Indian filmmakers was widely known and discussed in India at the time. One reason why Malani assembled and used the footage from their films was because their work was so widely known and the subjects from their work were already present in the collective consciousness (in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 150).
[459] For a reference on Brecht's life and work, see footnote 437; for Artaud's life and work, see, for instance, Albert Bermel, *Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty,* London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1997.

Malani's twenty-minute long *Hamletmachine* involved four video projections presented in a dark theatrical setting, with three projections hitting the three screens forming one large triptych (Figure 3.3.1., installation view). The fourth projection was in effect projecting light onto a salt bed installed on the floor as the centrepiece in the room, a reference to the leader of the campaign for Indian Independence, Mahatma Gandhi (1896-1948), and his Salt March of 1930.[460] The play begins with a man who was born from salt and divided into four parts, symbolising the hierarchy of the Indian caste system. The audience encounters—through the means of video projections—several images of him: first, performing the sun salutation *Surya Namaskar,* a prayer to the Sun God, which is then joined by one of him dressed in a *dhoti*, the Indian traditional male garment (Figure 3.3.3.), and, in a separate, central panel, wearing a Western business suit (see again Figure 3.3.3.). The contemporary Indian man is becoming a cultural hybrid, whose identities are melting and are being questioned. There follow the images and accompanying sounds that Malani had devised to invite a recall of the violence that took place after the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque.[461] At the climax of the piece, projections fill the entire space, overwhelming the audience. The screens display a Muslim woman (Figure 3.3.4.) shouting in Hindi:

> "We are all brothers and sisters. How long will you keep up this hostility? Tell me are you bent on destroying this country? We want an answer!"[462]

The triptych of screens fills the space with individual faces, each portraying a strong emotion such as anger, pain or frustration. In parallel, a screen shows the Muslim slum *Behrampada* turning to ashes, in a reference to Dutta's documentary film *I Live in Behrampada*. The final scenes on the triptych screens are of a torso transformed into a dying fish, grasping for air with its last strength; while Nobuo as Ophelia—a pre-filmed

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[460] The Salt March or Dandi March, which took place from March to April 1930 in India, was led by Mahatma Gandhi as an act of non-violent civil disobedience against the British rule in India. For a comprehensive treatise of the subject, see Thomas Weber, *On the Salt March: The Historiography of Mahatma Gandhi's March to Dandi,* New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1997; see also Mahatma Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (translated by Mahadev Desai), London: Penguin Books, 2001.
[461] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 292.
[462] Recited (i.e. pre-recorded and released through speakers) in Nalini Malani's video play *Hamletmachine* (in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume I, p. 150).

footage projected through a video projector—lies on what had previously been the salt bed and drowns in a black pool filled with large carp.

Müller's *Hamletmachine* was a condensation of his two hundred-page-long dramatic commentary on the translation of *Hamlet* that he did for the theatre house Volksbühne in what was then East Berlin.[463] Shakespeare's setting of war and revolution was of great interest to Müller. He adapted the story of the hesitant Danish prince, Hamlet, to the contemporary reality in Germany at the time, recalling the fascist and communist historical events in the light of the Cold War deadlock.[464] In a similar way, and on her own terms, Malani adapted Müller's text to the contemporary Indian context of the twenty-first century. Her *Hamletmachine* took as its main subject the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India, incorporating both material from the national and collective archives as well as invoking the personal stories. Thus, Malani reworked archival images of the savage reprisals that followed Muslim unrests after the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque—the destruction of shanty towns of Muslim minorities in Bombay and around the country, the burning of slum colonies in Bombay, the crowds of Muslims trying to flee to the safety of the countryside—to stand as a reference for the wider past and for the on-going religious conflicts between Muslims and Hindus in the present-day India at the time. By framing events in Ayodhya in the context of broader memories of the trauma connected with Partition, Malani also brought her personal history and memories into the play.

The memory fragments in Malani's *Hamletmachine* are traced through the means of images, recited texts and sounds, and their repetitions. In Müller's mature plays, such sections, consisting of collective and personal memories, are known as 'synthetic fragments'.[465] In Müller's original, these fragments connected the historical events of his time, such as Adolf Hitler's (1889-1945) coming to power in 1933 and the division of Germany under the communist regime, with Müller's private memories,[466] making his

[463] See again Brenner, *"Hamletmachine" on Stage: A Critical Analysis of Heiner Müller's Play* (1994, PhD dissertation).
[464] Bahun-Radunović, "History in Postmodern Theatre," in *Comparative Literature Studies,* p. 449.
[465] Ibid.
[466] For a discussion of Müller's personal memories in the framework of *Hamletmachine,* see Bahun-Radunović, "History in Postmodern Theatre," in *Comparative Literature Studies,* pp. 449-454.

Hamletmachine replete with political, philosophical, literary, and personal allusions.[467] Malani appropriated Müller's text and bound the memory fragments together to act as a recall of national historical events, preferring a universal[468] viewpoint over a strictly religious one. Memories in Müller's *Hamletmachine,* which "are seized hold of as they flash up at a moment of danger,"[469] are presented in Malani's *Hamletmachine* as fragmented and unhinged, they arise as traces, shared between different actors presented on the screens. As such, my contention is that these memory fragments belong to the very contexts of their remembrance—a historical, cultural and political context as a memoried consciousness in the present.

In *Hamletmachine,* Malani widened the scope of mnemonic means she used to recall the past in her previous works. Whereas in her earlier theatre play, *Medeamaterial*, she had relied on her painted environments, and in her theatre play *Naukari,* she had introduced an element of drawing/erasure video animation, with *Hamletmachine* she took a somewhat different turn, attaching to each image sounds which added to their impact on the audience. In her seminal work on contemporary art and memory, Joan Gibbons makes a convincing point about the emotional charge of sound and its tenacious hold on memory.[470] Gibbons argues:

> "An emotional arousal (coming from sound) is fed in two intertwined ways: by capturing and reconfiguring actual traces of the past and, at the same time, by opening the mind up to the myriad of possibilities of involuntary memory[[471]]."[472]

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[467] Ibid. pp. 449-450. Additionally, see also Brenner, *"Hamletmachine" on Stage: A Critical Analysis of Heiner Müller's Play*; and Gluhović, "History, Memory, and Trauma in Heiner Müller's Theatre," in *Performing European Memories*, pp. 30-100.

[468] The notion of universalism has largely been understood as loyalty to and concern for others in defiance of strictly instituted national or other identity allegiances. In contrast to the prevailing orthodoxies within the post-colonial and cultural studies, the Slovenian comparative literature scholar and Indologist Ana Jelnikar (b. 1975) argues for a strain of universalism that is a creative and non-hegemonic concept, as evinced by two poets of the first half of the twentieth century, the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore's (1861-1941) and the Slovenian poet Srečko Kosovel's (1904-1926)—the former of whom profoundly influenced the thinking of the latter. See Ana Jelnikar, *Universalist Hopes in India and Europe. The Worlds of Rabindranath Tagore and Srečko Kosovel,* Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016, see particularly pp. 19-51.

[469] Walter Benjamin quoted in Gluhović, "History, Memory, and Trauma in Heiner Müller's Theatre," in *Performing European Memories*, p. 34.

[470] Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory,* particularly pp. 48-52.

[471] In this regard, see also Proust's 'involuntary memory' in footnote 388.

[472] Ibid. p. 49.

In the light of Gibbons' argument, then, sound has an ability to reactivate those memories that have been suppressed or not allowed into the realm of accessible memories—an aspect argued by Cathy Caruth.[473] In this regard, Malani's use of sounds, emotive music and the reciting voices in *Hamletmachine*, I contend, invites their audiences to recall and reconnect with the past, and this way enter a realm of culturally and historically resonant events.

In parallel, the peripheral events in Malani's *Hamletmachine* were of no lesser importance in the context of their perfomance of memories. Images—such as those of a man changing his identities—communicated across different chronological, imaginary and textual planes, as did the references to multiple temporalities. From references to Gandhi's Salt March, to events of violence and destruction as a result of religious tensions, and to Ophelia's deathbed at the end of the play, their referential flow ran between fragments and reassembling of historical events known to their audiences. Just as Müller's technique of recollecting personal and collective memories assumed a well-informed audience—thus, one that has already gone through a cultural transformation—in Malani's *Hamletmachine*, fragments from collective archives were performed for an audience which was able to recognise symbols, voices and images in the context of Indian past and present. At the same time, however, her play encouraged the audience to apply its own meanings to what it witnessed on the screens. In this light, then, both plays—Müller's original and Malani's adaptation—assumed an audience acquainted with the past and with the current social and political climate. Müller and Malani addressed the failures and shadows of the past openly, by means of memory fragments performed through a number of political identifications and social identities in the respective cultural, social and political context of each respective era. Just as postmodernist art cannot be discussed merely in terms of aesthetics, but also needs to be viewed ideologically as *anti-aesthetic*,[474] *Hamletmachine* was built on a relationship between an artistic form and the *Zeitgeist*. As a postmodernist artwork that was no longer "self-sufficient, apart and without purpose,"[475] Malani's *Hamletmachine* and Müller's original

[473] In this respect, see the section on trauma and Caruth's work on pp. 23-24; pp. 29-30; and pp. 34-35.
[474] The concept of 'anti-aesthetic' in postmodernism is not intended as an assertion of the negation of art or its representation, argues Foster; it rather signals a critique that de-structures the order of representation in order to reinscribe them (Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," in *Postmodern Culture,* p. xv). For an excellent collection of essays on the subject of 'aesthetic' and 'anti-aesthetic' in the framework of postmodern art, see the same publication.
[475] Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," in *Postmodern Culture,* p. xv.

play both communicated with their audiences within the framework of the postmodern memory-theatre vision,[476] hence that of the social mind-set, the *Zeitgeist*, within which each work was created and with which it was engaged.

By examining tainted chapters of history on the axis past/present, Müller's *Hamletmachine* had found a common voice with Artaudian theatre, that of the repetitive invocations of past horrors, of traumatic collective and personal histories that desperately needed exposing.[477] The long time-spans in which the past is presented in Malani's adapation of *Hamletmachine* through the fragmentary repetitions of past events also owe much to Artaudian theatre.[478] In this regard, the fragments of past events in Malani's adaptation were presented with a sense of urgency in the present, asking their audiences for a recollection and a recall of memories, and, this way, also enabling remembrance. In his essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1942),[479] Walter Benjamin convincingly argues that images of the past that are not recognised by the present are in danger to disappear irretrievably.[480] Malani's and Müller's *Hamletmachine* also operated on this axis. Whereas in Müller's original the historical events coalesced, Malani's adaptation largely focused on one historical event, that of the destruction of Babri Masjid Mosque, framing it in the context of broader conflicts and the on-going violence in India. I argue here that for Malani's *Hamletmachine*, recognising the trauma of the past and its implications, meant recognising and acknowledging the past, while at the same time also acting upon its concerns in the present. In this light, then, her work not only invited its audience back into the past to encounter certain difficult chapters of history, but demanded of this same audience that they make their own critical judgements on their contents in relation to the present.

Malani's adaptation, however, diverged from Müller's play in terms of its overall vision. Müller's *Hamletmachine* gave expression to Müller's worry about the power of fear

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[476] For a discussion of Müller's *Hamletmachine* in the light of the postmodern memory-theatre, see Malkin, *Memory-Theater,* pp. 71-115.
[477] For a compelling discussion of Müller's *Hamletmachine* in the context of Antonin Artaud's theatre, see Jonathan Kalb, "Müller as Artaud: *Hamletmachine,*" in Jonathan Kalb*, The Theater of Heiner Müller,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 104-127. Independently, for Artaud's life and work, see footnote 459.
[478] For a reference in this respect, see footnote 459.
[479] See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (edited by Hannah Arendt), New York: Schocken Books, 1976 (originally published in German, in 1976 as *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften* by Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin).
[480] Ibid. pp. 255-267.

overwhelming the reason.[481] My contention is that Malani's *Hamletmachine*, while it echoed Müller's pessimism, asked its audience, to aspire to a higher form of existence. Whereas Müller's prince Hamlet—with what may have been autobiographical traces of a hesitant intellectual Müller himself[482]—faces the proliferation of ghosts calling him to act or not to act, Malani's protagonist cries out for action. *Her* Hamlet might as well have been a *she*, a Muslim woman, crying out to the world and appealing to the brotherhood of men to end the hostilities and violence. While for Müller,

> ”the history cannot be understood from history books, but only felt as an instantaneous and painful perception of past-in-the-present,”[483]

for Malani, the memories of the past could be recognised and reflected upon in the present.

It is Ophelia on her deathbed in the black pool at the very end of Malani's *Hamletmachine*, that could be understood as the final representative of the past, an archive—a site of non-recorded traces of collective historical events in the present. Whereas in Müller's *Hamletmachine,* Ophelia has been linked to a point about the different pace of histories globally and Müller's belief in the emancipatory strength of the developing countries,[484] my contention is that Malani's Ophelia could be seen in the light of a subject-specific revolt to the oppression of women and other fragile minorities, the political advantages of religious conflicts and the violence associated with them, where the weakest suffer the most. The last scene in Malani's adaptation—that of Ophelia's drowning—revealed especially the weakness of unrecorded memories, their suppressing and denial, and their implications in the present. Ophelia's gradual drowning can also be understood as a metaphor for the gradual silencing of voices from the revolt and revolution of the past century. My hunch is, however, that it will have been the performance of revolt and the ending that drowned into silence, which most probably

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[481] For a discussion in this respect, see again Gluhović, ”History, Memory, and Trauma in Heiner Müller's Theatre,” in *Performing European Memories*, pp. 30-100.
[482] Bahun-Radunović, ”History in Postmodern Theatre,” in *Comparative Literature Studies,* pp. 449-451.
[483] Heiner Müller quoted in Bahun-Radunović, ”History in Postmodern Theater,” in *Comparative Literature Studies,* p. 454.
[484] Brenner, *”Hamletmachine” on Stage: A Critical Analysis of Heiner Müller's Play*, p. 73.

stayed the longest with audiences even after the play finished, as this remains the most persuasive response to the traumas of history.

To recapitulate: throughout this chapter, I have foregrounded three of Malani's works, created in the theatre and video play medium, which have a close tie to memory-theatre and the performance of memories on the stage. The memory-theatre, the memory-play, the performance of memories and the artist's use of mnemonic means have been recurring subjects in this chapter. With *Medeamaterial,* a collaborative project between two artists, Malani and Samarth, collectively shared historical events of the colonised and the coloniser were brought to the fore through the deployment of an ancient myth and its more contemporary retelling by Heiner Müller at the height of the Cold War. *Medeamaterial* deployed the myth not only to recall the past, but also to offer a critical reflection on the exploitation and oppression of women in relation to the history of colonialism. Malani's paintings created for *Medeamaterial* acted as mnemonic means to help their audiences' recollection of memories.

In *Naukari,* Malani's second theatre play, based on a short story by Bertolt Brecht, traumatic memories of an individual were brought to the fore through an interplay between performance, images and sounds, and their repetitions. *Naukari* was also important for the innovation of a new representational technique in Malani's art practice: the drawing/erasure video animation *Memory: Record, Erase,* one that communicates the complex relationship between presence and absence, between the remembering of difficult pasts and the desire to forget. This newly invented technique for a recollection of memories in the visual and at the same time communicating the elusive, fragmentary nature of memory itself, also enabled the artist to speak of the 'embodied memory' in the visual, so as to unveil intimate and silenced memories.

With *Hamletmachine,* a work in the video play medium, which appropriated another of Müller's plays, Malani addressed personal memories and collective historical events in India in the early twenty-first century. Her *Hamletmachine* was replete with political, societal and personal stories relating to religious conflicts and communal violence between Muslims and Hindus, which were, as with her earlier theatre plays, presented to their audience through memory fragments. In *Hamletmachine,* Malani also deployed sound as another mnemonic device, counting on its emotional charge and its tenacious hold on the memory of her audiences.

In the following chapter, I shall shift the emphasis from the memory-theatre and the performance of memories to focus on Malani's work in the shadow play medium. Five of Malani's works created in this medium will be discussed. As a visual strategy, I will argue about this medium allowing the artist a specific kind of engagement with historical subjects, intertwined with the two headline concepts, trauma and memory. As well as looking into the shadow play as the artist's visual strategy and a representational technique, the chapter will also examine and pursue the *shadows* of histories, aiming to map the *invisible* that they invoke in the present.

4. History of Shadows Unveiling the Shadows of History[485]

"Sprich –
Doch scheide das Nein nicht vom Ja.
Gib deinem Spruch auch den Sinn:
gib ihm den Schatten."
(Paul Celan, *Sprich auch du*)

("Speak –
But don't split off No from Yes.
Give your say this meaning too:
give it the shadow.")
(Paul Celan, *Speak you too*)[486]

I shall open this chapter with a reflection on the emergence of shadow and its intertwined relationship with the birth of painting. A Greco/Roman myth, recounted as *The Corinthian Maid* by the Roman author and philosopher Pliny the Elder (23(24)-79 CE),[487] gives an intriguing account of the origins of painting (Figure 4.1., Joseph Wright, *The Corinthian Maid* (1782- 1784), oil on canvas).[488] The myth recounts how in ancient Corinth, Butades, the daughter of a potter of Sicyon, traced the outlines of her lover's shadow on the wall in order to preserve his image as a memento after his departure to war. When her loved one lost his life in a battle, Butades' father filled in the silhouette with clay, and this became

[485] I am indebted for this phrase to Lisa Saltzman, who coined something similar—"How a History of Shadows Might Illuminate the Shadows of History"—in her seminal work on contemporary art and memory *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (2006); see Lisa Saltzman, "Negative Images – How A History of Shadows Might Illuminate the Shadows of History," in Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 48-74.

[486] See Paul Celan, *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* (translated from German by John Felstiner), New York: Norton & Company, 2001, pp. 76-77. For Celan's work in the context of memory and history, see p. 73; for Felstiner's work on Celan, see footnote 243.

[487] Pliny the Elder's best-known work is *Natural History* (*Naturalis Historia,* first published in 77 CE; published in English in the period 1938-1969)*,* encyclopedic in scope, and counting as one of the largest single works to have survived from the Roman Empire (27 BCE-476 CE). Divided into thirty-seven books and organised into ten volumes, the work covers numerous fields including astronomy, mathematics, geography, zoology, pharmacology, sculpture, and art, to name but a few. See Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (translated into English by H. Rackham), Volumes I-X, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938-1969.

[488] The painting *The Corinthian Maid* (ca. 1782-1784, oil on canvas) (Figure 4.1.), created by the English painter Joseph Wright (1734-1797), was inspired by the myth of the same name. The painting is part of the Paul Mellon collection of the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C.

the first relief sculpture.[489] The myth of *The Corinthian Maid* has been revisited by many scholars, including the Romanian/Spanish art historian Victor Stoichita (b. 1949),[490] who was specifically interested in the shadow. Stoichita has theorised its foundational role in both aesthetics and epistemology. In *A Short History of the Shadow* (1997) Stoichita argues that painting emerged when the shadow was first circumscribed by lines.[491] On this account, the medium of painting has spoken since its very beginnings of a relationship between absence and presence, thus between absence of the body and presence of its projection, and the dialectics of this relationship have marked the history of art since its very inception. We can see a painting as something intimately connected with a *shadow* whose outlines are traced, in turn becoming part of a *representation* that itself suggests the third dimension, that of volume, relief, the body.[492]

It was this projection—the shadow—which was given the central role in ancient shadow play or shadow theatre.[493] Originally an educational and entertainment medium, the shadow theatre also came to be used within visual artistic strategies in the contemporary art, as a way of invoking the *invisible*. As a visual strategy, it has been applied and reinvented by several contemporary artists in the late twentieth and in the twenty-first centuries, such as the American-born artists Kara Walker (b. 1969)[494] and Glenn Ligon (b. 1960), and the South African-born William Kentridge.[495] These artists have been using the medium of a shadow or a silhouette in their work and art practice as

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[489] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (translated to English by H. Rackham), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938-69, Volume IX, Libri XXXIII-XXXV, book XXXV, XLIII, 151-XLIV, 153.

[490] Victor Stoichita was one of many who turned to Pliny's story of *The Corinthian Maid* and his ideas about the origin of painting. Others who turned to Pliny's work in this regard have included the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), the British art historian Geoffrey Batchen (b. 1956), the American art historian Ann Bermingham (b. 1948), and the American-born Lisa Saltzman, to name a few. For Stoichita's work in this regard, see Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1997.

[491] Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, p. 7.

[492] Ibid. pp. 7-8.

[493] Depending on the region or country, the ancient form of storytelling was known under the terms 'shadow play', 'shadow theatre', or 'shadow puppetry'. For a comprehensive account of various traditions of shadow plays, chronologically and geographically, see David Currell, *Shadow Puppets and Shadow Play*, Wiltshire: The Crowood Press Ltd, 2007; for an account of the origins of various shadow play traditions in Asia, see, for instance, Fan Pen Chen, "Shadow Theaters of the World," in *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2003), pp. 25-64.

[494] Kara Walker mainly uses the technique of the silhouette in her work.

[495] For a discussion of Walker's and Liggon's work in this medium and in the context of representing racist history of the antebellum American South, see Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter,* pp. 48-74; for Kentridge's work in this medium and in the context of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa, see Huyssen*, Nalini Malani, William Kentridge. The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, pp. 17-48; Rothberg, *"Progress, Progression, Procession,"* in *Narrative*, pp. 1-24; and Rosalind Krauss, ""The Rock": William Kentridge's Drawings for Projection," in *October*, Vol. 92 (Spring, 2000), pp. 3-35.

a representational tool for unveiling memories, those that are related to tainted histories, those that hide in darkness, as *shadows,* often suppressed and denied. This medium—in which depicting what is not there stands for representing memories and histories of a traumatic nature—enables artists to engage with historical subjects that are often interwoven with their personal pasts. The silhouette and the shadow—as a form—establish a relation in these visual artworks to difficult memories, while even more importantly, they offer these experiences a recognition in the present. In their refusal of material figuration and their insistence on the absence of the figurative, such forms acknowledge the ineptitude of representation and, in turn, the ways in which these *invisible* and *unrepresentable* subjects come to haunt the present, demanding recognition.[496] By alluding to what cannot be represented, this medium hence enables difficult collective and personal pasts to acquire recognition in the present through visual means.

In parallel to the expanding interest in the Holocaust in the 1990s, a growing number of artists have been addressing historical traumas, oppression and violence through visual means.[497] The 1990s were also the years in which Malani started to work in this context. A crucial aspect of her art practice in this decade was her reinvention of the shadow play. Her use of this medium and its development within her own work evolved gradually. After her discovery of the material Mylar during her work on the exhibition *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* in 1991,[498] she used it on several occasions in the early and mid-1990s. It was Mylar that enabled her to gradually develop a life beyond images, a life residing in *shadows.* She initially used Mylar by painting on its surface and positioning Mylar sheets vertically, inviting the visitors to walk through passages of Mylars, as with her exhibition *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* installed at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay (Figure 2.16., installation view). Mylar cylinders were first introduced while she was working on her second theatre play, *Naukari* (Figure 3.2.3.),[499] in 1996. Malani's first work completed entirely in the shadow play medium was *The Sacred and the Profane* (1998, shadow play medium) (Figures 4.5.1–4.5.4.). In this work, the narratives from the past and

[496] Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, p. 53.
[497] In this regard, see the section on trauma and memory art, particularly pp. 56-63.
[498] For Malani's discovery and use of Mylar, see footnote 289; for a discussion of *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* (1991) (Figure 2.16., installation view), see pp. 88-89.
[499] In this regard, see pp. 132-136.

represented through the world of *shadows* became the main story. Since this time, Malani has used the shadow play medium throughout her mature creative period. In 2001 she combined the shadow play medium with a video element for the first time, resulting in the work *Transgressions* (2001, video/shadow play medium) (Figures 4.6.1–4.6.5.). In retrospect, this can be seen as the creation of a new hybrid medium—the video/shadow play. Many works from her oeuvre since the 1990s have made use of the shadow play or video/shadow play medium, either wholly or partially, resulting in an inter-media hybridity.

The present chapter discusses five of Malani's works, in chronological order and the progression of medium as used in her art practice: *The Sacred and the Profane* (1998, shadow play medium), *Transgressions* (2001, video/shadow play medium), *Gamepieces* (2003, video/shadow play medium), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007, video/shadow play medium), and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012, video/shadow play medium). I first investigate these five works in terms of the practice of shadow play or shadow theatre, arguing that the *shadow*—as a concretised form—is part of a wider logic at work in the artist's contemporary art practice. I aim to show how this practice, as a visual strategy, allows Malani a specific kind of engagement with historical subjects, drawing on collective and personal memories. This medium, which enables a palimpsestic interplay of the shadows over the surfaces on which they are projected, gives the subject being represented a character of being at once absent yet present. It may not be fully materialised or visualised, but it is nonetheless legible and given the recognition it calls for. In parallel to investigating the shadow play medium as a representational technique for invoking the past, this chapter also pursues the *shadows* themselves and their significance in a selection of works, mapping the *invisible* that these dematerialised ghostly spectres invoke in the present. By examining the memory-work that these selected artworks perform, this chapter also maps the range of *les lieux de mémoire,* 'sites of memory', in Malani's art practice, where the shadow play—by enabling a representation of collective and personal memories in the present—also acts as a medium that militates against forgetting.

4.1. On the Shadow and the Medium of Shadow Play

> "A shadow is an image cast by an object intercepting or impeding light; a shadow, however, does not have a separate existence but depends for its existence, its nature, and its form upon the source of light that creates it and the surface upon which it is cast." (David Currell)[500]

The shadow play is an ancient form of storytelling, with a long history in Asia. Shadow theatre is known as a traditional form of art as well as a living tradition in China, India, Indonesia and Cambodia, amongst other countries.[501] Its origins are not yet fully understood, but there is a general consensus that it was born in central Asia, in either China or India, in the first millenium BCE.[502] It is probably derived from the night theatre, in which narrative scenes painted on cloths are illuminated with an oil lamp or candles, often accompanied by songs. The figures on cloths were gradually replaced by flat puppets made out of colourfully painted materials, which were performed behind a thin screen, lit from behind. The puppets were held close to the screen and their arms were manipulated with attached canes, while their legs swung freely from the knees.[503] This form of shadow theatre is a widespread living folk tradition in Asia to this day.[504] The puppets vary in size and mode of construction, while the theatre itself performs a range of social functions.[505]

In India, the shadow theatre has had a long tradition, again varying from region to region. In many parts of India, the shadow theatre was performed by local artist families during

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[500] See Currell, *Shadow Puppets and Shadow Play,* p. 7.
[501] The existence of the shadow theatre or shadow puppetry has been confirmed in both ancient Chinese and Indian written materials. The most significant centres of the shadow theatre in that early period were probably in China, India and Southeast Asia (Inge C. Orr, "Puppet Theatre in Asia," in *Asian Folklore Studies,* Vol. 33, No. 1 (1974), pp. 69-84). While the shadow play is an Asian invention, it has a long history in Europe as well. European merchant ships sailing through Asia brought Asian artistic and cultural practices back to Europe, and the shadow theatre has been known in various European countries, including Italy, France, Germany, and England, since the seventeenth century. For a comprehensive account of the subject of shadow theatre in the West, see, for instance, Max von Boehn, *A Photographic Guide to the History of Shadow Puppet Theatre in the West,* Worcestershire: Read Books Ltd., 2011.
[502] Chen, "Shadow Theaters of the World," in *Asian Folklore Studies,* pp. 25-64.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Orr, "Puppet Theatre in Asia," in *Asian Folklore Studies*, pp. 69-84.

major festivals in the country.[506] Although it was widely believed by Western scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the shadow theatre had become extinct in India, this was proved otherwise in the 1930s as new evidence emerged about the living tradition of shadow puppetry in regions such as Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.[507] The puppets differed in style from region to region, but most puppets in India were made from tanned and painted deer skin, with articulated joints to give puppeteers more scope. The eyes were placed frontally on the puppets' profile so as to throw ingenious shadows of mythological heroes and villains, all of whom were familiar to their audiences through the well-known epic stories re-told through generations. Central to these plays were the shadows which portrayed the characters from widely known stories of the Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.[508] It is intriguing to see how closely some of the earliest surviving drawings in India, the rock-cut paintings in the ancient sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro[509] (dating from around the third millennium BCE), are akin to shadows (Figure 4.2.). This aligns with Stoichita's theory about the link between shadows and painting. We can see these paintings as the earliest examples of shadows themselves being "treated as the memory of a person absent."[510]

On the History of Shadow

In his account of the history of shadow, Stoichita argues that the primary function of shadow in early paintings was that of a mnemonic device, making what was absent become present for the viewer.[511] Stoichita further investigated the phenomenon where

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[506] Margaret A. Mills, Peter J. Claus, and Sarah Diamond (eds.), *South Asian Folklore. An Encyclopedia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka*, New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 543–544.
[507] Ibid.
[508] *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two major epics of ancient India, originally written in Sanskrit, and presenting the teachings of ancient Hindu wisdom in narrative, combined with philosophical and ethical elements. The most recent scholarship holds that the earliest versions date to between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE.
[509] Harappa and Mohenjodaro are two major archaeological sites in the present-day Pakistan. Built between 3000 and 1000 BCE, Harappa and Mohenjodaro are the remains of two probably the largest ancient settlements in the Indus Valley, and two amongst the world's earliest developed cities, contemporaneous with cities in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. For an account of the Harappan and Mohenjodaro civilizations, see, for instance, Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
[510] Dalmia and Hashmi, *Memory, Metaphor, Mutations*, p. 153.
[511] Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow,* p. 15. Stoichita made this argument based on his investigations and readings of Pliny's *Natural History* and the Greek philosopher Athenagoras' (133–190 CE) writings;

the shadow escorted the real figure, constantly changing, while an image of the shadow captured on the wall remained as a memento—an object or even just an essence, preserved as a reminder of that, which was absent.[512] The real shadow, then, accompanied the real figure, while its outline was captured once and for all on the surface, immortalising what had once been a presence.

Stoichita's arguments about the character of a shadow, and the early shadows from ancient Indian civilizations, take us back to the myth of *The Corinthian Maid*. Stoichita interlaced his account of this Greco/Roman tale with insights about memory and remembering. The surrogate image which the potter's daughter, Butades, created of her lover through the means of a shadow on the wall, had to serve two functions—reminding her of his presence (i.e. reflecting on its mnemonic function) and presenting the danger he would be in after going to war.[513] After Butades heard that her loved one had lost his life on a battlefield, the potter (i.e. Butades' father) created a semblance of the deceased soldier in clay, whose role was to be a substitute for the one who was loved, who had disappeared and was never to return.[514] This double had a soul—in the form of a shadow—and a body, in the form of a clay semblance.[515] The latter became an object of worship in the temple of Corinth, while the former—the shadow on the wall—was kept as a memento for something past and absent, yet asking for a recognition and hence a representation.[516] In this light, then, that which was absent and past became a shadow claiming remembrance, commemorated through a sequence of visual strategies in the present.

In her compelling account of the performance of memory in contemporary art, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (2006), Lisa Saltzman also turns to the tale of Butades. She points out that what inspired the birth of pictorial—and later also sculptural—representation was the anticipated absence, whereas she makes an illuminating comment that this was

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alongside Pliny's *Natural History* (see footnote 489). For Stoichita's broader discussion in this respect, see Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow,* particularly pp. 11-20.

[512] Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, pp. 15-17.

[513] Ibid. pp. 18-19.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Ibid.

[516] Ibid.

”a mythic moment when imminent loss drives the impulse to record and remember.”[517]

In this light, the tale of Butades also illumines my own account of Malani's work in the shadow play medium and the memory-work that her artworks perform, presenting and conceiving memory in the visual of the present. This tale of compensation for loss is, in fact, an allegory, reflecting on a performance of memory through a visual work of art. The story of a father and daughter who both tried to capture the essence and form of someone and something absent, offers a platform from which to locate and discuss representational strategies in the visual, thus, those that communicate the essence of that which is absent and past, yet continuously present. The representational strategies for capturing and invoking the *invisible* in this ancient myth—the shadows, projections over the surfaces, silhouettes and casts—can be recognised in a range of works of art and monuments created around the turn of the twenty-first century, serving as a memento in the present. Several monuments created after World War II[518] in Europe and after the Vietnam War[519] in the United States act as memorials through communicating absence. Amongst the most widely known is the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (2005) (Figure 1.4.) in Berlin, envisaged by the American architect Peter Eisenmann (b. 1932). By assigning to traumatic histories a monumental form, these works serve as visual objects that bear witness to what happened. Another such aesthetic strategy can be traced in the works of artists who turned back to the antiquated and spectral technique of the silhouette, in order to revisit those historical events whose legacies continued to haunt the present.[520] While some artists, those that were concerned with the recollections of traumatic pasts and their representations in the present, chose aesthetic

[517] Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, p. 2. Saltzman's account is compelling and unique for her reflections and arguments about the performance of memory analysed in a selection of contemporary artworks created in different media, including sculpture, video and painting.
[518] For the excellent accounts of monumental art and architecture in the context of the Holocaust memory, see the works of James E. Young in footnote 152.
[519] Amongst the most noted works in this field is Maya Lin's 1982 *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Figure 1.2.), conceived as a public architectural project of commemoration in Washington, D.C. In this regard, see p. 55 and footnote 169.
[520] The work of Kara Walker has been widely recognised and discussed for Walker's use of the silhouette as means of figuring the spectral bodies of traumatic chapters of history in the present. For a discussion of Walker's work *Gone, An Historical Romance of Civil War as it Occurred Between Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* (1994, silhouette work on paper) in the context of memory and the medium of silhouette, see Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter,* pp. 55-71.

processes that depended on yet also departed from the logic of sculptural casting.[521] As works of art, all these visual objects maintained a relation to the material body in the world, while at the same time they produced a relation in the negative, thus in a *void*. One such example of depicting the *void*, as absence, can be discerned in the Jewish Museum in Berlin (opened 2001), envisaged by the American/Polish architect Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946). With its fractured and interrupted *voids* (Figures 4.4.1. and 4.4.2.), it has a conceptual and a literal meaning. As a *void* it signifies absence—the absence of all Jews who perished in the Holocaust; as a fractured *void* it signifies history, a broken history—that of the German Jews and also the history of Germany itself, as both are intertwined in their existence.[522] The representational strategies presented above for encountering memories and giving them a recognition in the present, are of course not the only means for the recollection memoires in the visual.

As this chapter will show, Malani, too, has been deploying various representational strategies for engaging with the past in the present which have much in common with the visual strategies outlined above. They also share a common voice with the strategies of remembrance in the visual as outlined in the myth of *The Corinthian Maid.* What all share is the wish to capture something of a past, through means in the visual, for the time when memory is all that is left. In this light, then, Stoichita seems correct in maintaining that this visual encounter in the present also acts as a mnemonic device for the audience, leading towards a designated space in which remembering can take place.

Shadow Play as a Medium of Remembrance

Malani in effect re-invented the shadow theatre to serve the demands of her own art practice, deploying it as a medium of memory and intervention.[523] Her unveiling of the

[521] In this regard, it is right to mention the work of the British-born artist Rachel Whiteread, whose castings give material presence not to actual buildings but to their interiors, unmarked and empty places of absence. For a discussion of Whiteread's work in this regard, see Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory*, pp. 29-34.
[522] For a compelling discussion of Libeskind's work in this regard, see Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin," in Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*: *Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 49-71, particularly pp. 65-71.
[523] Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. A Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, p. 14. Huyssen justifiably argues that this is Malani's way of calling for the re-thinking of memory politics, human rights issues and social realities (ibid. pp. 14-15).

past in her shadow plays, as we will see in the following pages, involves the recognition of certain past events through images in the present. As we will see, there is often a crossover of personal and collective memories in her shadow plays, with the recollection of Partition never fully fading away. In this light, then, it is my contention that it is memory, which plays the central role in Malani's shadow plays. It is mediated in both content and medium.[524] Malani uses the elusive character of the shadow to acknowledge the slippery nature of memory; when two or more shadows meet in what we may call a 'palimpsestic encounter',[525] they act as a traumatic memory does—as (visual) traces of (collective) past and their residues that haunt the present.

In her shadow plays, Malani additionally deploys the shadows themselves to communicate the fragmentary nature of memory and its unreliability, by means of ghostly images displayed over the surfaces, representing vestiges of abject chapters of histories nationally and globally (see Figures 4.6.3., 4.6.4, 4.12.4, and 4.12.5.). In Chapters 2 and 3, we have seen how the artist's insights into the realm of memory—saying that memory is experienced on the skin, where it records experiences[526]—mirrored those of Charlotte Delbo.[527] Malani first explored the intersections between memory, remembering and forgetting in *Memory: Record/Erase* (Figures 3.2.6.–3.2.8.), as part of her theatre play *Naukari* in 1996.[528] There, the superimpositions and visible traces of erasures spoke of a thin and frail line between remembering and forgetting, that same sensitive line which Delbo unveiled in *Days and Memory,* while recalling (or subconsciously evading) her traumatic memories of Auschwitz.

To delve even deeper into the realm of memory and the potential of its performance in the visual, Malani introduced additional elements and techniques into her shadow plays, as we will learn closer in the following pages. Her re-invention of the shadow theatre tradition did not use puppets, but drew on another age-old popular technique, that of reverse painting on glass, which she applied to her work on Mylar cylinders. Malani's introduction to working with glass goes back to 1988, when she collaborated with the Indian artists Bhupen Khakhar (1934-2003) and Vivan Sundaram

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[524] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 56.
[525] The term 'palimpsestic encounter' with regards to Malani's work in the shadow play medium was coined by author of this study.
[526] For a reference in this respect, see pp. 135-136 and footnote 450.
[527] For Delbo's work in this regard, see pp. 45-46; pp. 105-106; p. 136; and footnote 17.
[528] In this regard, see again pp. 132-136.

(b. 1943) on a glass-panel mural at Shah House in Bombay.[529] It was then that she learned about *Hinterglasmalerei*, the technique of reverse painting on glass, and the use of reflective surfaces and superimpositions. The latter she recognised as future visual elements to be implemented and used in her work in the shadow play medium. To her reverse painted Mylar cylinders she also added newer materials and simple mechanical devices, such as light projectors, turntables, videos and speakers. The images are depicted in a narration-like repetitive loops over the cylinders, which are fitted with motors to enable them to rotate slowly.[530] These installations are often accompanied by the artist's voice (i.e. Malani's voice), either as a narrator or a singer. The audiences are invited to move freely around the hanging, rotating Mylar cylinders painted in reverse (see Figure 4.12.10., installation view), enabling them to experience different perspectives of the micro and macro narratives projected from the cylinders and the video projectors in a world, where images and shadows meet on the surrounding surfaces in the darkness. The creation of images through the art of shadows and their relation to darkness was described by the artist in an interview:

> ”Darkness is more potent than light. It just needs a shadow and you can obliterate light. [...] If you take that further with ideas: how quickly something that has to do with enlightenment or revelation can be completely destroyed, and very quickly by the 'shadow of doubt' or a moment of skepticism. I think that that's one aspect of the shadow. Because a shadow is very strong, it has no materiality and yet it is so strong.”[531]

As we will see when discussing the actual works in this chapter, Malani communicates with her audiences in her shadow plays through fragments from myths, archives and contemporary life, and through the emergences and disappearances of their traces in a world of darkness where these shadows reside. The latter here reference an extensive opus of Asian as well as European stories and myths, many of which the artist had deployed already in her previous paintings and drawings, theatre plays and video plays. In the tradition of ancient Indian shadow theatre, Malani regularly uses the characters

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[529] Pijnappel, ”Selected Biography,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 70.
[530] Malani creates her Mylar cylinders with inner motors, enabling them a slow rotation of 4 revolution per minute (abbreviation 4 rpm).
[531] The artist quoted in Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. A Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, p. 25.

from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*,[532] combining their stories with Greek mythology. To these she adds contemporary images from more recent chapters of history (see Figures 4.9.4. and 4.9.5.), all that meet their audiences through memory fragments inviting a recall. Illuminated, and with their sounds and movements, my contention is that these fragments act as mnemonic means for the recollection of memories, while at the same time, they

> ”interrogate the deep structures of histories by brushing lived experience against the grain as they focus on dispossesion, defacement, violence and scarring in the present.”[533]

I argue here further that Malani's shadow plays have been chiefly concerned with the long-term residues of the historical trauma of Partition and post-Partition India, with the artist's own history of migration and exile always in the background. In parallel, these works also trace past and on-going violence against women in India, bringing to the surface again and again the outrages experienced during Partition, those which accompanied the riots following the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque, and those which followed the attacks on Muslim minorities in the North Indian region of Gujarat in 2002.[534] In this respect, Malani's shadow plays could also be seen as a compelling response (i.e. in the visual) to Michael Rothberg's call for an acknowledgement of the on-going, everyday traumatising violence in the present, which requires representation just as much as any specific event-based individual and collective past traumas do.[535] However, my contention here is that the point of Malani's unveiling of violence in the visual is to point to its repetition in the present, alluding to collective and traumatising chapters of histories repeating themselves. In this regard, her shadow plays also act as a representation of traumatic memories in the visual, while at the same time aiming towards a

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[532] For a reference, see foonote 508.
[533] Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 57.
[534] In 2002, following the death of Hindu pilgrims who were travelling by train to Indian city of Godhra on February 27, a series of riots erupted, resulting in mass killings of Muslim minorities in the Gujarat region, in North India. For an account of the incident in the context of religion and history, see, for instance, Siddharth Varadarajan (ed.), *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy,* London and New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2002.
[535] In this respect, see Michael Rothberg quoted in Katherine Isobel Baxter, ”Memory and photography: re-thinking postcolonial trauma studies,” in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2011), pp. 18-29, pp. 18-19.

"deeply textured understanding of the present in the past and the past in the present."[536]

In the coming pages we will become acquainted with five selected works in the medium of shadow play and examine the artist's use of the techniques and strategies mentioned for communicating the past in the present. In parallel, we will trace the presence—or absence—in these works of the two headline concepts of this study, trauma and memory. And finally, the works will also help us pursue the actual *shadows* in their narratives, as they map the *invisible* in the present.

4.2. Coming to Being: *The Sacred and the Profane* (1998)

> "The artist is a witness to a memory of loss. One has to renew oneself without nostalgia. How then to militate ones way from historical sites to contemporary episodes that run in repetitively compulsive cycles."
> (Nalini Malani)[537]

Malani produced her first work created entirely in the shadow play medium, titled *The Sacred and the Profane*, in 1998 (Figures 4.5.1.–4.5.4.), building on her experience with the Mylar cylinders that she created as part of her theatre play *Naukari* (see Figure 3.2.3.) and video installation *The Job* (see Figure 3.2.5.) in the two previous years. *The Sacred and the Profane*, with a duration of five minutes, and comprising four rotating Mylar cylinders painted in reverse, sound and spotlights, effectively combined two traditional Indian artistic techniques: the shadow play medium and the *Kalighat Pat* technique, which had originated in West Bengal.[538] The nineteenth century Kalighat painting

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[536] Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. A Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, p. 49.
[537] Nalini Malani in an interview with Johan Pijnappel; see "Interview with Nalini Malani from *Icon India* catalogue produced for the occasion of the Indian show at the 51st Venice Biennial," in *Icon India,* 2005 (www.nalinimalani.com/texts/venice.htm accessed on January 22, 2022).
[538] The *Kalighat Pat* technique, also called the Kalighat painting technique, is characterised by bright colours and bold outlines. It evolved as an independent genre of painting in India in the nineteenth century in West Bengal. For a general account of the history of Kalighat painting, see Jyotindra Jain, *Kalighat Painting: Images from a Changing World,* New Delhi: Grantha Corporation Press, 1999.
Interestingly, for Malani, the Kalighat painting marked the beginning of modernism in Indian art (in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of The Dead,* Volume II, p. 146).

technique—the *Kalighat Pat*—evolved at a time when court painters had become unemployed after royal patronage dried up. The painters had then begun using mythical figures to depict contemporary social and political happenings as well as religious subjects. This instantly recognisable technique in India, and its connection to social criticism, quickly reached the attention of a wider public. As will be discussed in more detail later, the images Malani chose for the cylinders in *The Sacred and the Profane*, depicting erotic incidents from the lives of demons, gods and their companions taken from the Hindu text *Bhagavata Purana,*[539] were intended to satirise what she saw as the aggresive and hypocritical way in which the Hindu religion was promoted by nationalist political currents.

The four cylinders were hung next to each other, partially overlapping and partially in sequence (Figure 4.5.1., installation view), to form a zig-zag corridor. This resembled the method which Malani had used already with the vertical Mylar sheets created for her installation *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl*, exhibited at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay in 1991 (see Figure 2.16., installation view). Each cylinder was lit from within and each cast a series of shadows over the surrounding surfaces. All four rotated continously, at 4 rpm,[540] drawing from another ancient tradition, that of Tibetan prayer wheels.[541] This enabled multiple objects to be viewed at the same time through the interplay of shadows projected over the surfaces (Figure 4.5.4., installation detail), and inviting a reflection on how history, too, runs in continous cycles between the past and the present—an all-too salient point, given the anti-Hindutva subject-matter of *The Sacred and the Profane*.

By covering the cylinders of *The Sacred and the Profane* with sensuous stories from *Bhagavata Purana,* superimposed on each other and mingling freely—seemingly without a regard for any moral censorship (Figures 4.5.2. and 4.5.3., both installation details)—Malani was responding in particular to Hindu nationalist efforts to cleanse Hinduism by

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[539] *Bhagavata Purana* is one of the eighteen *Mahapuranas* of Hinduism*,* the great ancient texts originally written in Sanskrit and discussing various subjects, amongst which cosmology, astronomy, philosophy, music, dance, and yoga. For an English translation, see, for instance, Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey (eds.), *The Bhagavata Purana: Selected Readings,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

[540] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 530.

[541] Tibetan prayer wheels or Buddhist prayer wheels express a desire for change in Buddhism. The prayer wheels are also used as an aid for meditation by the Buddhist monks and nuns, and as means for accumulating wisdom and good karma in one's lifetime to serve the following one. For more about this subject and symbolism, see, for instance, William Simpson, *The Buddhist Praying-Wheel,* London and New York: The MacMillan Co., 1896 (republished by Elibron Classics in 2006).

removing undesirable passages from its sacred texts. In an interview given to *ArtAsiaPacific,* the artist candidly shared her thoughts about the flexible and open character of Hinduism and the existence of many stories in its texts which Hindus often refuse to acknowledge.[542] In *The Sacred and the Profane,* Malani said, she had turned in particular to the many erotic tales of gods, demons and consorts in *Bhagavata Purana,* which Hindu nationalists had been trying to erase.[543] Malani cited the story about the male Hindu God Vishnu, one of the major deities in Hinduism, who changed gender and took the form of a beautiful female, Mohini, and seduced another male Hindu God, Shiva, in a coupling that resulted in a child named Ayyappan.[544] Despite the fact that there were shrines devoted to Ayyappan throughout the Indian region of Karnataka, the artist explained, there was a general unwillingness to accept the god's unorthodox parentage, and the conventional understanding was that Ayyappan was born from a coupling between female and male, Parvati and Shiva.[545]

In her first work in the shadow play medium, therefore, Malani combined two well-known techniques in India—the *Kalighat Pat* and the shadow theatre—in a response to growing Hindutva[546] orthodoxy. What she saw as the re-inventing of ancient texts to serve the nationalist political agenda fed into one of the main concerns driving her work: its recognition of unaltered history.

We also, however, see a further dimension here, connected with the cyclic repetitions of the shadow images. As Mieke Bal convincingly argues in *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays,*[547] the figures depicted on rotating Mylar cylinders, despite their similarities with Malani's earlier painted works, have been re-invented and ”designed, distributed and painted for movement.”[548] Although the images had been painted as still figures, the main agenda of these figures was to keep moving, something which the newly invented medium enabled. As a result of an innovative representational strategy, the shadows originating from the cylinders were in continuous movement. These cyclic

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[542] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Asia Pacific;* see”Her Cassandra Complex: Nalini Malani,” in *ArtAsiaPacific*, Issue 63, May/June 2009
(http://96.126.110.91/Magazine/63/HerCassandraComplexNaliniMalani accessed on January 22, 2022).
[543] From the above interview with the artist.
[544] From the above interview with the artist.
[545] From the above interview with the artist.
[546] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 288.
[547] For Bal’s *In Medias Res,* see p. 14 and footnote 302.
[548] Bal, *In Medias Res*, p. 44.

repetitions can also be understood as the artist's reference to the history of Nehru's India in the 1960s, when Indian society was notable for its rich cultural diversity.

In the darkness where these shadows came to life, another layer of shadows was added: those coming from the audience. Every element in the room interacted with every other one.[549] In *The Sacred and the Profane*, the images on the cylinders and their shadows, while they were seen and experienced as such in the present time, were inextricably linked with the past—with past memories and historical inheritance. The figures and their shadows, taken from Hindu mythology, spoke of stories from Hinduism, unaltered: as such, the installation, as a visual work of art, offered a space for a critical reflection on the ways certain histories were being altered in the present. It was there, I contend, that the artist communicated the frail bond between the past—*them* and *then*—and present—*us* and *now.* In this regard, Bal's contention is that Malani's works in the shadow play medium require a 'durational looking'—a time spent in close observation and a recollection—allowing these plays their ephemeral nature, i.e. between image, memory and history, to come to the surface.[550]

4.3. *Transgressions* (2001), *Gamepieces* (2003) and *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007) – on a Path of 'Multidirectional Memory'[551]

> ”Malani's shadow plays strike me as a kind of writing in images and sounds that interrogate the deep structures of history.”
> (Andreas Huyssen)[552]

The year 2001 saw an important new departure in Malani's mature creative practice. Building upon her earlier shadow play medium to which she added an element of video, she developed a new artistic medium, which she called the video/shadow play.[553] This

[549] Bal argued persuasively that this is one of the aspects which distinguishes Malani's work in the shadow play medium from the work of Kentridge (Bal, *In Medias Res,* p. 46).
[550] Ibid. p. 45. The phrase ‘durational looking’ was coined by Mieke Bal in relation to Malani’s work in the shadow play medium.
[551] For Michael Rothberg's concept of 'multidirectional memory', see p. 47; and footnotes 147 and 149.
[552] Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 57.
[553] Bal has drawn an interesting parallel between Malani's invention of this medium and Hannah Arendt's statement that ”action in the world [means] to start something new” (Hannah Arendt quoted in Bal, *In*

became a medium which she has since used extensively to engage more closely with national and global pasts and unveil these in the visual of the present.

In Malani's first work in the video/shadow play medium, *Transgressions* (2001), she added three video projectors to the three elements that she had used previously: multiple Mylar cylinders (i.e. *Transgressions* comprised four reverse-painted rotating Mylar cylinders and had a duration of seven minutes), spotlights and sound. *Transgressions* was followed by the video/shadow play *Gamepieces* (2003) and the video/shadow play *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007). The main concerns of all three works were the history of Western imperialism, Orientalism,[554] globalisation,[555] and the aftermaths of wars.

Transgressions (2001)

The work *Transgressions* (Figures 4.6.1.–4.6.5.) was initally shown on the occasion of the exhibition *Unpacking Europe* (2001) at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, in Rotterdam, in 2001; the work was later purchased by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and exhibited at their venue in 2017.[556] At the Stedelijk Museum, the three video projectors and the four rotating cylinders of *Transgressions* were first given an introduction by an ephemeral wall drawing/erasure performance (Figures 4.6.6. and 4.6.7., details/movie stills), in a separate large room, spanning about three metres in

Medias Res, p. 22). For the original, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanowich, 1951.

[554] For a classic account of this subject, see Edward Said, *Orientalism,* London: Routledge, 1978.

[555] With her work *Transgressions,* Malani referred to early times of globalisation as it was experienced in India, when many different products were available on the market and when the English language became connected to future prosperity, taking place over national and regional languages (Nalini Malani in an interview with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAbr15WdAOk accessed on January 22, 2022)). For an intriguing conversation on this subject between Malani and the Indian/American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (b. 1949), see Arjun Appadurai, "Arjun Appadurai in Conversation with Nalini Malani about their Collaboration for the dOCUMENTA (13) Series *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts,"* in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, pp. 36-45; independently, see also Appadurai's work on the subject of globalisation in Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

[556] The work *Transgressions* (2001, video/shadow play medium) exists in three variations: one forms part of the art collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, one is part of the collection of the Asia Society Museum in New York, and one is in the collection of Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) in New Delhi. There are only minor variations between the three versions of the same work. This chapter discusses the variation in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum and exhibited at their venue in 2017 under the title *Nalini Malani: Transgressions* (2017).

height and seven metres in length. Malani, who called the wall ”a wall of the dispossesed,”[557] filled it with images originating from the world of the most deprived. In the version captured on film that was produced by the Stedelijk Museum in the same year of the exhibition[558] (see again Figures 4.6.6. and 4.6.7.) we see on one side, as the main protagonist, a denuded man, who is holding the globe, which is half broken—the artist's reference for a divided world between the rich and the poor—while on the other side, there are faces of people with large eyes, including a little girl, all of whom have experienced the most severe deprivation.[559]

In the main exhibition space, the four cylinders rotated slowly at 4 rpm. They were painted with figures in reverse and flowing vertically. When filmed footage from the three video projectors hit the cylinders from different angles, complex compositions of images and shadows were cast over the surrounding surfaces. The light coming from the video projectors was directed in such a way as to make the images on the cylinders cast palimpsestic shadows, which were joined by the images coming from the video projectors and sometimes also with the shadows of their audiences. These shadows, originating from different sources and accompanied by sounds and distorted voices coming from the speakers, which overlapped, merged and separated,[560] conflating the images (Figures 4.6.1. and 4.6.2., installation view), gave these *new* plays between shadows more complexity of character. In my view all of these elements together derived a new meaning from the space and time in which they were presented, spawning new alliances and new scenes. Consequently, this also affected their intent of unveiling traumatic memories and their related historical events.

Those who looked at *Transgressions* found themselves meeting past moments of different times and different places, in constant movement. This further invites a discussion on the notions of space and time in the work. In his seminal work on memory, *Matter and Memory* (*Matière et Mémoire*, 1896),[561] Henri Bergson discussed the

[557] Nalini Malani discussing her work in a filmed footage about the exhibition *Nalini Malani: Transgressions* shown at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in 2017 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj0b9ULNSqU accessed on December 23, 2021).
[558] See the above-mentioned filmed footage and URL link.
[559] From the above filmed footage accessible by the above URL link.
[560] For a discussion of Malani's use of distorted and manipulated voices in her works, see Bal, *In Medias Res,* pp. 49-51.
[561] For a reference on Bergson's work in this respect, see p. 39 and footnote 105.

relationship between memory, movement and the perception of time. In his discussion of their relationship, he wrote:

> "[...] we have been progressively narrowing the interval between the two terms [those of memory and matter], which it is usual to oppose to each other – qualities and sensations, and movements. Qualities are heterogenous, movements homogeneous. [...] We are fain to put qualities, in the form of sensations, in consciousness; while movements are supposed to take place independently of us in the space."[562]

In Bergson's discussion, then, memory, movement and the perception of the two in time and space cannot exist without each other, all of which is also closely linked to our experience of time and space in the present. Bal's insistence that Malani's shadow plays and video/shadow plays demand 'durational looking'[563] chimes in with Bergson's understanding of the relationship between memory, movement and time. The audience of these works, then, enters as it were a large span of time and meets different pasts simultaneously. This requires of the audience a 'durational looking'—leading, then, towards 'durational encounters'[564]—with the contents residing in the world inhabited by shadows, in a space designated for this purpose by the artist. The combination of cylinders, videos and sounds was deployed in *Transgressions,* I argue, to give form to the notion of time and space. As the images moved on multiple video screens at the same time, multiplying the overlapping shadows that recalled memories, the images together with the shadows created a heterogenous, multiple and layered space for the audience to remain, recollect, and reflect—this way engaging with a range of memories and their related histories from a different time and space.

In an interview,[565] Malani referred to the images painted on the cylinders in *Transgressions* as "tattoos projected on the white European skin"[566] (Figure 4.6.4.,

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[562] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p. 267.
[563] In this regard, see p. 161 and footnote 550.
[564] The phrase 'durational encounters' was coined by author of this study, by analogy with Mieke Bal's phrase 'durational looking'.
[565] Nalini Malani in an interview with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, on the occasion of the exhibition *Nalini Malani: Transgressions* (2017) at the Stedelijk Museum (www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAbr15WdAOk accessed on December 23, 2021).
[566] From the above interview with the artist. It is not precisely known why Malani referred to these images as 'tattoos'. The images depicted on the cylinders and in their projections communicate fragments of Western and Asian history, particularly that related to Western imperialism and colonialism. Hence, a reference to the European white skin, thus of those who invade and conquer foreign lands.

installation detail). My contention here is that several of these images act as mnemonic means in Malani's *Transgressions,* unintentionally, inviting her audiences to recall memories related to different historical chapters, experienced by the non-Western lands— at that time unmarked and with their very own identity—and later tainted by Western imperialism and colonialism. In this light, then, the *Transgressions* acts as the artist's stinging satire on imperialism, colonialism and globalisation as experienced in her native India. In the voice of a child pleading to learn English, we hear another Malani's reflection on past and present globalisation; in *Transgressions*, native languages were disappearing beneath the earth (Figure 4.6.5., installation detail), and being replaced by the English language—an *esperanto* in the age of globalisation.

Gamepieces (2003)

The second work that Malani completed in the video/shadow play medium, *Gamepieces* (2003) (Figures 4.7.1.–4.7.5.), was the first in which she coupled a specific soundscape with her visual work to reactivate the past. For this work, Malani returned to the point in World War II when the two nuclear bombs, *Fat Man* and *Little Boy,* destroyed the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945.[567] *Gamepieces,*[568] created in 2003 for the 8th Istanbul Biennial titled *Poetic Justice* (2003)*,* was a site-responsive[569] video/shadow play installation exhibited inside the walls of the sixth century Yerebatan Cistern, the largest of the several hundred ancient underground basilica cisterns beneath the city of Istanbul, in Turkey.

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[567] The written accounts of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are many; for an account of the subject in the light of the military intervention of the United States in World War II, see, for instance, J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction – Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs against Japan*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997 (revised in 2016); or Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1995; for a collection of essays and memoirs from before and after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, see Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschulz (eds.), *Hiroshima's Shadow*, United States: Pamphleteer's Press, 1998; for a collection of rarely seen historical footage of the atomic blast and its aftermath in post-bombing Nagasaki, see Susan Southard, *Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War,* United Kingdom: Souvenir Press Ltd., 2015.

[568] Under discussion in this chapter is the version of *Gamepieces* inaugurally created for the 8th Istanbul Biennial, which took place in Istanbul, in 2003. In 2007, *Gamepieces* was acquired by MoMA, New York, and was exhibited at their venue in 2015/2016. The architecture, the setting and the visitors together determine how the installation, i.e. *Gamepieces* as the video/shadow play, functions at each venue, something which is characteristic for all of Malani's works created in this medium.

[569] The 'site-responsive' work is also referred to as the 'site-specific work'. Both terms are in use.

Gamepieces, twelve minutes long, comprised six rotating Mylar cylinders painted in reverse, four video projectors, spotlights—and sounds such as are connected in human minds with wars, conflicts and violence (Figure 4.7.1., installation view). These elements worked in close communication with their exhibition environment, in which the shadows and images originating from the cylinders and videos were superimposed on each other, sending ghostly images related to global histories in *Gamepieces*, moving over the rough surfaces of underground, ancient walls. In this historic environment of mythical meaning and shadowy surfaces, Malani's usual set-up, positioning each video projector so as to display its images over two cylinders, was replaced by an empty space between two rows of three cylinders, which enabled new kinds of palimpsestic plays between shadows and images, invoking the past in the present.

Gamepieces took as its main focus the aftermath of war, combining documentary footage with video animation and the medium of painting. The seemingly frail creatures depicted on Mylar cylinders, and the demon-like abominations from the four video projectors together gave birth to ghostly spectres that invited their audience into a space of historical trauma. *Gamepieces* started with images of seemingly idyllic white clouds, which, however, soon turned yellow in a reddening sky. This change occured as a consequence of the nuclear disaster and its aftermath, shown on the middle screen. This was then followed by animations with monochrome outlines of people, and groups of people running away from something or someone (Figure 4.7.4., installation detail). The projected images overlapped with shadows of the images depicted on cylinders, in actions accompanied by sounds. In Istanbul, Malani combined a simulation of the noise of the explosion of the two nuclear bombs with other sounds such as those of rifles, shootings, and human screams, to trigger memories. My contention is that the sounds and the images in *Gamepieces* worked together on two levels. In the first place, they functioned as mnemonic means for the audience's recall, and secondly, while recalling the past, they created an atmosphere of danger and fear in the present. The latter—a creation of an acoustic atmosphere haunted by memories—speaks compellingly to another complex memory experience created by the American sound artist Bill Fontana (b. 1947) in his work *Distant Trains (Entfernte Züge,* 1984) (Figure 4.8.). In this installation, Fontana had taken sounds recorded in the main railway station in Cologne—Cologne Hauptbahnhof, one of Germany's busiest railway stations—and played them

over hidden (i.e. buried) loudspeakers in the large, waste-ground ruins of the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin. This site, which before the war had been one of the busiest train stations in Europe, had become an empty field surrounding the remaining façade, "a space haunted with sounds and acoustic memories."[570] The site was loaded with significance from the past—both individual memories and collective history—since it had not only been bombed twice during World War II, but had also been the starting or ending point of many individual journeys during the time of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain.[571] Fontana had thus created a simulation which was at home in its setting although it belonged in the past. With her work *Gamepieces*, Malani created an atmosphere that was burdened by the past in a similar way. In her Istanbul setting, the site she selected—an ancient underground basilica—was also haunted with sounds and thus acoustic memories (i.e. from its own history), with added elements of shadows, images and sounds, evoking the aftermath of the bombing of the two Japanese cities.

The intention of both artists—Fontana and Malani—in creating and deploying sounds as mnemonic means in their artworks, was to reactivate the past through a recollection of memories, thus inviting a recall by their audience. In 1984, when *Distant Trains* was created, its emotional impact was all the more powerful, as many from the first generation—thus, the primary owners of memories—were still living.[572] In Malani's *Gamepieces,* the relationship between the site and its associations to the past was accomplished by presenting the shadows of history in an ancient underground setting burdened by its own memories and history. The sounds permeated the environment, as in Fontana's work, while they also intensified the work's impact by overlaying the present with the past.[573]

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[570] Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory,* p. 50.
[571] With regards to my contextualisation of Fontana's *Distant Trains* in the framework of political history, i.e. that of Cold War era, this is indeed only a subjective observation of Fontana's work in the broader context of memories and historical events of the twentieth century. When Fontana's *Distant Trains* was created in 1984, the Cold War era was still on-going.
[572] For primary and secondary memory (i.e. witnesses), see LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, pp. 17-22; for the concept of 'postmemory', see footnote 187.
[573] For a broader discussion of sound and memory in contemporary art, see Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory*, pp. 29-51.

Malani's *Gamepieces* contained a variety of images from a picture archive[574] covering Indian and non-Indian chapters of history. These images were generated by video projectors and met shadows on the surrounding surfaces—as it were, on the axis between the hunter and the hunted. We can also read this as Malani's metaphor for an exploitative relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, and between those in possession of power in society and those without it. Both are aspects which she had already brought to the fore in her theatre play *Medeamaterial*,[575] in collaboration with Samarth. The images and the shadows met to tell stories from the past, independently and gradually exploding into many stories, in a space—as a site—offered for a critical reflection upon the past in the present. In this regard, Huyssen convincingly argues that Malani's works in the shadow play medium (i.e. also the video/shadow play medium) act as a register ”of the very structure of political memory.”[576] In *Gamepieces,* memories and historical events were recollected from boundaries between East and West, and between North and South, bringing into their narratives past relationships of a geographical and political character, such as that between England and India, or Pakistan and India. In *Gamepieces* they were presented to their audiences as traces in the visual, thus, traces acting as registers of past narratives, evoking what Huyssen calls ”the very structure of political memory.”[577] These memory and history traces oscillated between emergence and sudden vanishing through the means of images and shadows, and in their compulsive repetitions. All of which plays an important role in the acts of remembering and forgetting.

In this light, then, the palimpsests of shadows and images in *Gamepieces* also illuminated the notion of *contemporary.* Their reflections that were brought from the past, also communicated a message of threat in the present. Bal called these reflections or shadows the 'fugitive shadows',[578] while Huyssen saw them as 'emerging and

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[574] The 'archive' and the 'archival' as subjects in contemporary art have been theorised recently by Ernst van Alphen; see Ernst van Alphen, *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media,* London: Reaktion Books, 2014. According to van Alphen, the archive and the archival, both which have a long history, have been re-invented as an artistic mode in contemporary times. In his work, van Alphen discusses several subjects including storage, listings, classification and various other aspects with regards to the archival and the archive, all of which have been deployed in contemporary arts.
[575] For a discussion of *Medeamaterial* in this regard, see pp. 127-131.
[576] Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 51.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Bal, *In Medias Res,* p. 45.

vanishing shadows.'[579] Within any temporal dimension, however, these palimpsests of images and shadows—as the recollections of memories—cast themselves over the present and the future in Malani's *Gamepieces*.

Remembering Mad Meg (2007)

In her third video/shadow play, *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007)[580] (Figures 4.9.1.–4.9.6.), Malani made another recollection of past events, those tainted by violence and trauma, however in a new departure she also used her work to advocate for active resistance against the repetition of cyles of violence in the present.[581] Linked with this was a broadening of the memory realm in Malani's works and of the potential that her shadow play medium offered, in this regard allowing the acts of memory and remembering to transcend the local and national to become global.

Remembering Mad Meg, inaugurated as a solo exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, in Dublin (formerly the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, founded as a home for retired soldiers in 1684), was a site-responsive work, staged in the space of the museum, that was entwined with history from a period when Britain had colonised Ireland and when ideological racism remained largely unquestioned in many colonial powers.[582] The work was a continuation of Malani's on-going series, *Stories Retold*,[583] begun in 2002, in which she has been offering interpretations of largely female historical and mythical figures.

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[579] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 51.
[580] Since its inauguration at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, in 2007, *Remembering Mad Meg* has been exhibited on several occasions: at the Arario Gallery, New York, in 2008 (as a solo exhibition and as part of the artist's on-going series *Stories Retold,* and at the Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris, in 2017/2018 (as part of Malani's retrospective between Paris and Torino). Each time, *Remembering Mad Meg* was exhibited as a site-responsive work, comprising different numbers of cylinders and video projectors, and different duration. The present chapter discusses *Remembering Mad Meg* as it was exhibited at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2007, in the city of Dublin, Ireland.
[581] In this respect, Bal argues persuasively about Malani's shadow plays and video/shadow plays in the context of political art and through a discourse between Theodor Adorno and the French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman (b. 1953); in this respect, see Bal, *In Medias Res,* pp. 37-44.
[582] In this regard, see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804,* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, for a compelling discussion of the subjects of racism, the colonial mentality, and the capacity to resist domination.
[583] *Stories Retold* is an on-going series of reverse paintings on Mylar sheets, that the artist begun in 2002.

Remembering Mad Meg, with a duration of three minutes, comprised eight rotating Mylar cylinders painted in reverse, two video projectors, spotlights and sound. The images and the shadows coming from the videos and the cylinders encountered each other on the surrounding surfaces of the historical space, that of a museum and founded as a home for retired soldiers in 1684, accompanied by a series of spotlights that struck more than one cylinder at a time. The images, cast over the cylinders, walls and other surrounding surfaces, were mythical, historical and also contemporary in character. Some sources were clearly recognisable, such as the details from the Dutch painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder's (ca. 1525/30 – 1569, born in Breda or Brueghel in the present-day Netherlands) painting *Mad Meg* (*Dulle Griet*, ca. 1562, oil on canvas) (Figures 4.11.1. and 4.11.2.)[584] and those from the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya's (1746-1828) etching work *A Heroic Feat! With Dead Men!,* Plate no. 39 of *The Disasters of War* (etched about 1810/1820; published 1863, etching) (Figure 4.10.).[585] These were accompanied by archival and mythical materials of both Indian and Western origins. In parallel, additional elements were added, in the first instance seemingly disconnected from the overall story, including images of items such as an iron instrument, perhaps a historical reference to the nineteenth-century mechanical inventions, and reflecting on the idea of 'progress'. There were also more contemporary references, including an animated instruction manual in which a figure tries to communicate with signs, seemingly in an unknown language (Figure 4.9.3., installation detail). My contention is that all these were deployed by the artist to refer to different times and places in the past, as a reflection on the frail relationship between progress and decline.

The title of the work, *Remembering Mad Meg,* was derived from Brueghel's oil-on-panel work *Mad Meg*, originally *Dulle Griet,* a figure from the Flemish folklore (Figure 4.11.2., detail).[586] The central character of Malani's *Remembering Mad Meg* was a mature woman (Figure 4.9.4., installation detail), Mad Meg, same as in Brueghel's work; Bal called

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[584] Malani's reference to Brueghel's *Dulle Griet* has been discussed on a few occasions; see, for instance, Bal, *In Medias Res,* pp. 345-367.

[585] Francisco De Goya's work *A Heroic Feat! With Dead Men!,* Plate no. 39 of *The Disasters of War* is part of the series *The Disasters of War (Los Desastres de la Guerra),* consisting of eighty-three prints created between 1810 and 1820, as the artist's visual protest against violence of the 1808 Second of May Uprising in Madrid, and subsequent Peninsular War (1807-1814). *A Heroic Feat! With Dead Men!,* Plate no. 39 is part of the collection of the National Galleries Scotland.

[586] Pieter Brueghel the Elder's work *Dulle Griet* belongs to art collection of Museum Mayer von den Bergh, in Antwerp, Belgium.

her an ”emblem of the contagiousness of violence.”[587] Mad Meg, which appeared as a deviant creature like the tropes of androgynous mutants in some of Malani's earlier works,[588] tried along with her army of women to put an end to evil and violence; on the other hand, however, she became a victim of repudiation herself, recalling Medea's destiny in *Medeamaterial.*

The world of shadows on the surfaces invited their audiences into an *underworld*, the one inhabited by Mad Meg. She carried a sword (see Figure 4.9.4., installation detail) and she and her female companions seemed to be walking through a post-apocalyptic field in lands devastated by war (Figure 4.9.6., installation view). The images of their babies appeared as ephemeral creatures floating in the air, each separated from its mother's body yet connected to her by an umbilical cord (Figure 4.9.3., installation detail). Another female figure stumbled on crutches (Figures 4.9.5., installation detail), after losing her leg—presumably as a consequence of war—seemingly without hope for any brighter future. All these images (i.e. coming from the video projectors) and shadows (i.e. coming from the images depicted on cylinders), served, I argue, as Malani's references of the meaninglessness of wars and their aftermaths. Further images evoked power relations in the globalised world: a big fish eagerly ate small fish, while a military tank destroyed everything on its path, reducing the land and its people to ashes. In this post-apocalyptic atmosphere, the sounds and movements of fragments taken from archival and mythical national and global contexts were deployed as mnemonic means. Occasionally, the shadows and the images joined with the shadows of the audience, resulting in a sea of interrelated images and functioning as associative past narratives. In this light, my contention is that the memories recollected and originating from different sources—archival, mythical, recent historical and also personal—spoke as a union, as a 'multidirectional memory'[589] in *Remembering Mad Meg.*

The audience of *Remembering Mad Meg* was thus invited to recollect both individual and collective memories from a variety of sources, which acted, I suggest, as

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[587] Bal, *In Medias Res*, p. 360.
[588] Here I am referring particularly to Malani's works *The Mutant A Series* (1993, created in parallel to *Medeamaterial*) and *The Mutant B Series* (1996, created on the occasion of group exhibition *Body as Site* (1996), for the second edition of Asia/Pacific Triennial in Brisbane). For a discussion of *The Mutant A Series,* see, for instance, Sambrani, ”Nalini Malani: The Medea Project and Beyond,” in *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt,* pp. 19-21; for a discussion of *The Mutant B Series,* see, for instance, Bal, *In Medias Res,* pp. 153-163. The main subject in *The Mutant B Series* was that of the developing countries being used as a toxic dumping ground and a site for chemical and nuclear experiments done by wealthy nations.
[589] For a reference on Rothberg's 'multidirectional memory', see p. 47 and footnotes 147 and 149.

what Rothberg calls a 'multidirectional memory.' The acts of memory that are not dependent on a particular time frame, but maintain an ever widening circle of temporal and geographical extension, are encompassed under the term 'multidirectional' by Rothberg. His 'multidirectional memory' is—as a notion of memory—made of different levels of past relating to different characters and different places. In this light, then, the historical space of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, where the work was exhibited, added an additional layer to the realm of memories in Malani's *Remembering Mad Meg*. Having acted as a home for retired soldiers for over 250 years during the age marked by colonialism and widespread ideological racism, the museum carried its own history and related memories. Malani's work responded to these, adding its own layers of memories through a work created more than three centuries later.[590]

In *Remembering Mad Meg,* it was difficult for its audience to disentangle which images originated from which source. The eight cylinders were hung lengthwise side by side in the long corridor of the main hall (Figures 4.9.1. and 4.9.2., both installation views), with two videos projecting images to hit the cylinders from the side, so casting images over the surfaces of the surrounding walls. As a result, the rotating cylinders cast shadows which met with the video images. Shadows and palimpsestic images conjured up many ghostly spectres, unveiling and recollecting the memory traces from national and global pasts. Together with the shadows of their audience and the history of the setting, they set in train multiple memories that were not dependent on a particular time frame, but maintained an ever-widening circle of temporal and geographical extension. In the light of Rothberg's argument on the notion of memory constituted by different levels of past relating to different characters and different places, these memory acts, I suggest, can be understood as 'multidirectional' acts.

My further contention is that the element of sound in *Remembering Mad Meg* acted as an additional mnemonic device, as an aid to help the recall of memories. For the soundscape

[590] In this light, Bal is correct in her arguments about Malani being a "fundamentally collaborative artist," one who takes the setting seriously and acknowledges partnership between the two parties (Bal, *In Medias Res,* p. 361).

of *Remembering Mad Meg*, Malani deployed the voice of a woman reading from Heiner Müller's *The Task* (*Der Auftrag*, 1979),[591] to communicate

> "human pain and anguish countered by the soothing sound of monsoon rain."[592]

The soundscape, I argue, is what supported the artist's main method of representation—the shadow—in inviting the audience into a designated space of remembrance. Malani achieved this by creating an atmosphere which—by means of shadows, sounds and their setting—facilitated affect and led the viewer into a particular—acting as site—thus, a space of remembrance.[593] This recalls the way in which Fontana's *Distant Trains* discussed earlier deployed sounds as mnemonic means for a recall of memories in his work. Both artists, Fontana and Malani, created an atmosphere that offered their audience a space where emotions could come to surface, those accompanying memories. Bal justifiably calls this atmosphere a source from which such works emanate.[594]

The creation of atmosphere where affect can take place in *Remembering Mad Meg* was closely linked to the enabling of a space for remembrance. Many concrete events were referenced in the work—specifically those relating to past violence in the wake of Partition and post-Partition India, and the repetitive cycles of violence haunting the recent past as well as the present—events which were perceived by their audience through the means of affect. The latter (i.e. affect), as compellingly argued by both Bennett and Bal,[595] is an intensity that arises through a balance "between isolation and togetherness,"[596] facilitating the production of emotions. The sounds, the lights, and the historical setting—thus, all that accompanies the world of shadows in most of Malani's shadow plays and video/shadow plays, enables the atmosphere for the affect to grow in a created space—acting as site—where the remembering can take place. What *Remembering Mad Meg* added to Malani's works in the shadow play medium and the video/shadow play medium, I argue, was an understanding of memory as necesarilly

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[591] Heiner Müller's *The Task* (*Der Auftrag*, 1979), also known as *The Mission: Memory of a Revolution,* is a postmodern play written and first published in 1979. Its first theatrical production and staging took place in 1980 at the Volksbühne in then-East Berlin.
[592] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 57.
[593] For a discussion of a selection of contemporary works of art in the context of affect and memory, see Bennett, *Empathic Vision,* pp. 22-45.
[594] Bal, *In Medias Res,* p. 367.
[595] See Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, pp. 22-45; and Bal, *In Medias Res*, pp. 360-362.
[596] Bal, *In Medias Res*, p. 368.

'multidirectional.' We shall see this specifically in her subsequent work *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012).

4.4. *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012) – Performing 'Multidirectional Acts of Memory'[597] in the Visual

> "In *In Search of Vanished Blood* it is a way of registering and visually transforming the real violence and mutilations of the human, in specific historical and by now global contexts." (Andreas Huyssen)[598]

As we have seen, in the early years of the twenty-first century, the eliciting of memories through a visual narrative had become an important part of Malani's art. In her video/shadow play *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012)[599] (Figures 4.12.1.–4.12.11.), commissioned in 2010 by dOCUMENTA (13), an exhibition platform of international contemporary art that runs every five years in Kassel, Germany, she continued to explore mnemonic means for a recollection of traumatic memories in her work and art practice. *In Search of Vanished Blood* was created for Kabinet No. 4 at dOCUMENTA Halle,[600] a space that enabled Malani to devise a 360-degrees painted environment with the video/shadow play as its centrepiece. *In Search of Vanished Blood* was Malani's fourth and most complex work in this medium, eleven minutes long, and comprising six video projectors, five reverse-painted rotating Mylar cylinders, spotlights, and sound. The space descended through a narrow corridor and led towards a room of ten metres in height, where Malani

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[597] The phrase ('performing') 'multidirectional acts of memory' with regards to Malani's work *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012) was coined by author of this thesis and by analogy with Michael Rothberg's term 'multidirectional memory.'

[598] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 54.

[599] After its inauguration in Kassel, *In Search of Vanished Blood* was shown on several occasions: at the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh, in 2014, and on the occasion of Malani's retrospective between Paris and Torino, in 2017/2018. This chapter discusses the work as it was exhibited at dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012.

[600] dOCUMENTA Halle is the exhibition and event centre located at Friedrichsplatz in Kassel, Germany. The building was designed and realised by the architecture company of Jourdan & Muller (PAS) in 1992. The centre is now owned by the State of Hessen and managed by the dOCUMENTA and Museum Fridericianum GmbH.

placed the work as a 360-degrees video frieze floating above the audience (Figure 4.12.4., installation view).[601]

The title and main text of *In Search of Vanished Blood* was taken from the poem *Lahu Ka Surag* (1965),[602] written in Urdu language in 1965 by the Pakistani revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984),[603] which evoked the violence that accompanied the 1971 partition of Bangladesh from Pakistan.[604] The other two sources for the work were Christa Wolf's *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* (1983),[605] and *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge,* 1910) by the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). For the soundtrack of *In Search of Vanished Blood*—which was pre-recorded and recited either by a chorus or the artist herself, and transmitted through speakers—Malani used extracts from Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*,[606] with which she had already engaged more than a decade earlier, along with the one-act play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) by the Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) and the short story *Draupadi* (2010) written by the Indian writer and social activist Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016) and translated by the Indian literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (b. 1942).

Malani used the exhibition space in Kassel on various levels, enabling her video projections and cylinders to work individually and collectively, as one unit. In parallel, she also created a theatrically choreographed combination of stop-motion animations, between the video screens and their projections. These elements enabled the artist to

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[601] Most parts of the work *In Search of Vanished Blood* were created *in situ* by the artist.

[602] The poem *Lahu Ka Surag* was translated from Urdu into English under the title *In Search of Vanished Blood,* in a translation by the Indian/American Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali (1949-2001). The poem was written as a reflection on the many disappearances in Kashmir and the violence accompanying the partition between East and West Pakistan.

[603] Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a Pakistani left-wing intellectual and poet, writing in languages Urdu and Punjabi. For an account of his work and a selection of poems, including *In Search of Vanished Blood,* see *Faiz Ahmed Faiz - The Rebel's Silhouette. Selected Poems* (translated by Agha Shahid Ali), Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995; for another selection and translation of Faiz's poems, see also *Yaqub's Selection & Translation of Poems by Faiz Ahmed Faiz*, England: Jacobs New Agents, 1987.

[604] In December 1971, East Pakistan was separated from West Pakistan; the latter became the newly founded and independent state of Bangladesh. For a historical and political account of the subject, see, for instance, Anam Zakaria, *1971 – A People's History from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India,* London and New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2019; for a discussion on the partition of Pakistan in the light of violence against women with public secrecy and denial accompanying the events, see Nayanika Mookherjee, "'Remembering to forget': public secrecy and memory of sexual violence in the Bangladesh war of 1971," in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* Vol. 12, Issue 2 (2006), pp. 433-450.

[605] In this regard, *In Search of Vanished Blood* is discussed again in Chapter 5, in the framework of the myth of Cassandra and Christa Wolf's novel *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* (1983).

[606] For a reference in this regard, see pp. 137-144.

superimpose images over the bodies of those who figured in the videos[607] (Figure 4.12.7., installation detail), a device that was introduced for the first time in *In Search of Vanished Blood.* The cylinders were painted with various human faces and with images that referenced other known artworks: the running dogs from the work by the British photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904)[608] (Figure 4.12.11., installation detail and view), the work of the French painter Francis Picabia (1879-1953), and Goya's *The Disasters of War* (see Figure 4.10.). The projections were not synchronised, which created "a fast changing kaleidoscopic movement of repetitive images,"[609] with ghostly spectres on the surfaces bringing in archival, mythical and historical references. The space of Kabinet No. 4 enabled the audience to walk around freely under the cylinders (Figure 4.12.10., installation detail and view), unknowingly adding their own shadows to the work. These intersected with the images projected from the videos and the shadows originating from the cylinders to create a multilayered national and global historical context. The voice of Cassandra—the mythical priestess and seeress who was fated never to be believed[610]—was transmitted by speakers hanging above the cylinders.[611] The projected images, some of which were in continous motion, were "superimposed palimpsest-like by the shadows,"[612] cast from the figures depicted over the cylinders painted in reverse.

The recurring themes in *In Search of Vanished Blood* were the curse of the gift of prophecy, past and on-going cycles of violence, past and present traumatic experiences of women arising from their position in the patriarchal society—ranging from rape to everyday oppression—and the failure of human to human relationships. The shadows and the images, in motion, played a central role in the work. They were presented in

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[607] A similar device had been used in 2009 by the Finnish National Theatre in Helsinki, Finland, when they staged the play *The Unknown Soldier* (2009), which included screened close-ups of actors playing the Finnish soldiers from World War II. Their faces were used as surfaces for the projections of raped and murdered bodies of female soldiers of Soviet origins—bodies that were not revealed until decades after the war ended. For a short yet illuminating discussion of this subject, see Gluhović, *Performing European Memories,* pp. 3-7.

[608] Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) was a British photographer known for his pioneering work in photographic studies in motion, amongst which dogs and horses. For an account of Muybridge's work, see, for instance, Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West,* New York, United States: Viking Penguin, 2003.

[609] Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, p. 53.

[610] I discuss *In Search of Vanished Blood* in the light of Cassandra's myth in Chapter 5.

[611] Cassandra's prophecies in *In Search of Vanished Blood* were recited by the artist herself, with a distorted however still recognisable voice. The sound was pre-recorded and transmitted through speakers.

[612] Huyssen, *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani. Shadow Play as Medium of Memory*, p. 53.

fragments, constantly crossing, converging and overlapping (Figures 4.12.2. and 4.12.3., both installation details) as visual traces of the past haunting the present. Huyssen's point that the mythic materials that cast shadows over the images in *In Search of Vanished Blood* (Figures 4.12.3. and 4.12.6., both installation details) were those that concerned pertinent matters in the present, is a perceptive one.[613] Their reflections and encounters—taken from mythical, archival, and historical backgrounds, national and global—circled and played over the surfaces, in a Machiavellian[614] dance, once, twice, multiple times in *In Search of Vanished Blood* (Figures 4.12.2. and 4.12.4., both installation details).

As with some of Malani's previous works in this medium (e.g. *Remembering Mad Meg*), *In Search of Vanished Blood* referred to different times and multiple spaces. Its audience was transported now to a time and space (i.e. timespace) of Indian or Greek mythology, now to post-Partition India—into a space where it was invited to recall the memories and witness the violence perpetrated upon its own people. Where some of Malani's earlier works in this medium had focused on national borders, these were not emphasised in *In Search of Vanished Blood,* which was squarely placed in the age of globalisation and capitalism, witnessing their destructive consequences in the agrarian sectors of the society. In this regard, my contention is that Malani's previous work in the video/shadow play medium, *Remembering Mad Meg,* was important for its introduction of a path for the 'multidirectional acts of memory' in Malani's video/shadow plays, an aspect that *In Search of Vanished Blood* built upon. These acts were not dependent on a particular frame of time and space, while they maintained an ever widening circle of temporal and geographical extension. The notion of 'multidirectional memory' brought to the forefront in my discussion of *Remembering Mad Meg,* is also central to *In Search of Vanished Blood.* As well as the micro and macro narratives in the work, the multidirectional soundscape featured human voices and background noises from different times and places, recalled from either history or fiction. The palimpsests of shadows and images, which together gave birth to ghostly spectres, those originating from abject histories, required attentive deciphering from their audience in *In Search of Vanished Blood.* The work created a space which was both fictional and real—inviting its audience into a path where remembering can take place.

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[613] Ibid. pp. 52-54.
[614] 'Machiavellian' goes for cunning, scheming and unscrupulous, especially in politics.

In Search of Vanished Blood contained a wealth of traces and fragments from different chapters of history presented through narratives, both micro and macro, this way inviting a recall of memories. In this regard, Bal convincingly argues about memory being ”the best tool against oblivion and the inevitable subsequent repetition.”[615] The work of the American cultural theorist Susan Rubin Suleiman (b. 1939) is of interest for further discussion of Malani's work in this regard. In her work *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (1990),[616] Suleiman asks illuminating questions in relation to memory narratives and their role in the present. Amongst these are:

> ”How does one create a future that will acknowledge the past and incorporate the past – the past that includes, in our very own century, some of the darkest moments in human history – without repeating it?”[617]

and

> ”How does one look at the past with understanding, yet critically, in the etymological sense of 'critical' (from Greek *krinein,* to separate, choose), which has to do with discrimination and choice *in* the present?“[618]

For Suleiman, these are the questions that demand urgent answers in the present time. My contention here is that the narratives in *In Search of Vanished Blood* ask similar questions in the visual language. Both Suleiman and Malani saw the present time as one of urgency, a time in need of memories and history presented through narratives.

The narratives in *In Search of Vanished Blood* used the world of shadows, of ghostly spectres, to evoke memories among their audience—leaving it no choice but to perform the acts of memory as opposed to denial and amnesia, whether cultural, social or political.[619] In her attempts to evoke memories for those who either forgot, suppressed or denied them, Malani developed a multilayered medium, adopting various

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[615] Bal, *In Medias Res*, p. 112.
[616] See Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990.
[617] Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde,* p. xv.
[618] Ibid.
[619] For an excellent discussion in this respect, see Huyssen, ”Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia,” in *Present Pasts,* pp. 11-29.

representational strategies, to speak of the past in the present. In this regard, Huyssen's statement that her shadow plays and video/shadow plays are a medium of memory itself seems extremely apposite.[620] By using an imaginative mix of local and foreign traditions and visual strategies, and by translating or appropriating what already exists, Malani created a unique artistic medium. Through the many alternating narratives observed between images, shadows, and their palimpsestic encounters, *In Search of Vanished Blood* may also be seen as situated between emergence and vanishing, between compulsive repetition and avoidance, characteristics which at the same time also characterise memory often interwoven with trauma. In this light, Bal suggests that different acts of memory in *In Search of Vanished Blood* together offer

> ”a culture of repeated violence with a memory strong enough to hold the repetition at bay.”[621]

I would, however, assert that *In Search of Vanished Blood*, in its own performance of 'multidirectional' acts of memory, stands itself as a 'site of memory' in the present, within which the medium of shadow play[622] also acts as a medium against forgetting.

To recapitulate: in this chapter I have investigated five of Malani's works created in the shadow play and video/shadow play medium, focusing on the *shadow* as a visual strategy, enabling a medium for invoking the *invisible.* My main questions behind these investigations were: how do the intimations of the two concepts, trauma and memory, in Malani's works relate to the shadow play and video/shadow play medium? Which are her strategies for unveiling the past and inviting a recall of memories from her audiences? And, what kind of memory-work, if any, do these artworks perform in the *now*?

I answered these questions by giving particular attention to the practice of shadow play or shadow theatre in the five works, arguing that the *shadow*, as a concretised form, is part of a wider logic at work in Malani's art practice.

The shadow play *The Sacred and The Profane* (1998) was Malani's first work created fully in the shadow play medium. By recalling unaltered stories from Hindu texts,

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[620] In Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, pp. 46-59.
[621] Bal, *In Medias Res*, p. 117.
[622] The medium of shadow play here goes broader and also including the video/shadow play medium.

the work brought to the forefront the subject of Hindu nationalism in the present. Here, the artist presented for the first time a world inhabited by the palimpsests of shadows, originating from the images depicted on cylinders, and representing unaltered national materials in the present. This was also the first time in the artist's practice that the *shadow* itself was deployed as a mnemonic device for a recall, an element used in all subsequent works created in this medium.

In *Transgressions* (2001), *Gamepieces* (2003), and *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007) Malani added the element of video to the rotating cylinders of her earlier work. This gave birth to a video/shadow play medium, recognised as such for the first time in *Transgressions.* By marking the *invisible,* this new medium enabled traumatic national and now also global histories a recognition through visual means. Recurring broader subjects in these works were Western imperialism, the violence of colonialism, the traumatic aftermaths of wars, and violence against women and other fragile minorities in society. The newly re-invented medium allowed the artist a specific kind of engagement with the subjects she unveiled and represented, those that are *absent* and *past*, yet continously present. By presenting fragments and traces of that which is *absent* and *past*, Malani offered them as visual agents of memory and trauma in the present.

In *In Search of Vanished Blood* the artist used the video/shadow play medium for the fourth time in her artistic path, and created one of the most complex works in her oeuvre. Recurring subjects in *In Search of Vanished Blood* were past and present violence, the wars and their consequences, and the gift of prophecy, that of the mythical character Cassandra. Here, the historical subjects were often interwoven with intimate pasts, originating from different times and places. With its 'multidirectional' references, *In Search of Vanished Blood* registered many different memories at the same time. I suggested that for its own performance of 'multidirectional' acts of memory, *In Search of Vanished Blood* can also be understood as a *vehicle* for remembering, as a 'site of memory', a 'site of remembrance' in the present.

It seems appropriate to end this chapter by making a closer connection with Pierre Nora's notion of a *lieu de mémoire,* a 'site of memory', thus a repository "where memory crystallises and secretes itself."[623] For Nora, *les lieux de mémoire,* 'the sites of memory',

[623] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations,* p. 7.

are plenty and they differ in form, symbolic value and function. By Nora's broader definition, artworks and monuments in themselves constitute the 'sites of memory', and in my view, all five works discussed in this chapter act as repositories of memories in different contexts. Additionally, Nora also contends that the larger web of collective memories is held together by

> ”an invisible thread, linking apparentely unconnected objects.”[624]

Nora notes further that this 'invisible thread' acts as

> ”a differentiated network to which all of these separate identities belong, an unconscious organisation of collective memory that it is our responsibility to bring to consciousness.”[625]

The aim of not only this chapter but this study as a whole is to map the range and variety of *les lieux de mémoire,* 'the sites of memory', in Malani's oeuvre and to examine the memory-work that her artworks perform in the present. So far, I have followed a trajectory that has led from individual memories and representations of female trauma towards national and global—socially and politically—oriented memories and histories. This foregrounding continues in the next chapter, which is also the final chapter in this study. The chapter returns to some works already discussed and considers some new ones; the five selected works are discussed in the context of the myth of Cassandra as retold by Christa Wolf. The myth of Cassandra, the seeress who looked to the past and foresaw the darkness of what lay ahead, has been one of the most widely used subjects in Malani's art practice, closely connected with her own awareness of the past and prescience of the future.

[624] Ibid. p. 23.
[625] Ibid.

5. The Myth of Cassandra as a Medium of Memory

> "In India more than ever times are changing and with it the terms of our struggle for existence. In the face of immense aggression and violence the human voice of Christa Wolf remains a source of inspiration."
> (Nalini Malani)[626]

We have already seen how Nalini Malani has taken inspiration for her art from works of contemporary literature. In her mature creative period, one novel has been particularly important for the artist: the retelling by the German writer Christa Wolf (1929-2011), *Cassandra* (*Kassandra*, 1983),[627] of the myth of Cassandra, the mythical Trojan princess who was endowed with the gift of prophecy, yet fated never to be believed. Although Malani depicted Cassandra in anthropomorphic form for the first time only in 2009, on the polyptych *Cassandra* (2009), as an archetype, the seeress Cassandra had informed many of her works created from the 1990s onwards.[628] In 2012, the theme of Cassandra's story was present in almost every room of her retrospective exhibition *The Rebellion of the Dead* (2017-2018) in Paris and Torino, acting as a red thread connecting her works. I will argue here that Malani has deployed this retelling of the Greek myth in her art practice as a medium of memory.

The seeress Cassandra, who was raped and taken prisoner after the sack of Troy, is mentioned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer (ca. 750 BCE – unknown) and features in the fifth century Greek tragedy and in later literature. Malani first engaged with Cassandra's story in the 1980s on reading Christa Wolf's retelling of the myth. Wolf's novel *Cassandra*

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[626] Nalini Malani quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Arjun Appadurai, and Andreas Huyssen, *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2012, from the opening page without a page number. The above publication was published on the occasion of the exhibition *In Search of Vanished Blood* at dOCUMENTA (13), in Kassel, in 2012.
[627] Christa Wolf, *Cassandra* (translated from German by Jan van Heurck), London: Daunt Books, 2013 (originally published in German, in 1983 as *Kassandra* by Luchterhand, München). In Homer's *Iliad* (dated to ca. eight century BCE) and in Aeschylus' (ca. 525-24 BCE – 456 BCE) *Oresteia* (dated to ca. fifth century BCE), Cassandra was a minor character. It was Wolf who gave Cassandra the protagonist role for the first time, balancing the prophetess' gift of foreseeing the future against the way her seeings were ignored, so bringing an era to an end. This made Wolf herself a timely author, since the work was written a few years before the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.
[628] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Interview Magazine*; see "Nalini Malani Tells a Story," in *Interview Magazine*, June 28, 2016 (www.interviewmagazine.com/art/nalini-malani-ica-boston accessed on December 28, 2021)

was published in the period when Germany was still divided into East and West.[629] The aforementioned alignment of India in the 1980s[630] to the Eastern Bloc of the Soviet Union brought Wolf's work to the attention of then-young Malani, together with that of several other German authors, such as Heiner Müller and Bertolt Brecht. *Cassandra* remained of particular interest to the artist, and she has used the myth and Wolf's version of it in many of her works since the early twenty-first century.

The present chapter discusses a selection of works from Malani's overall oeuvre that are informed by the myth of Cassandra. I shall refer to these as the *Cassandra Series.*[631] From the first work that had a kinship with the myth, in which Malani addressed the question of violence against women, she has been expanding its reach. Most recently, she has used it to speak out about violence against the environment and nature.[632]

Malani's affinity to the myth of Cassandra, as I will argue in this chapter, has been closely linked to her unveilings of tainted collective memories and particularly trauma experienced by women in her visual language. I suggest that it was two aspects in particular of Cassandra's story that has resonated strongly with Malani: the fact that the seeress was raped, tied in with the artist's concern with past and present violence perpetuated against women, in India and globally, and the curse which meant that Cassandra's prophecies were never believed, linked with something that Malani has called a 'female thought',[633] an intuition, that is ignored, silenced or denied. The myth of Cassandra has underpinned Malani's denouncement of the rampant violence against women in India, which has continued unabated since Partition, and has been gaining pace since the 1990s with Hindutva on the rise. In parallel, Cassandra's story has also been deployed by Malani to speak of female insights—thus, in the visual—those that need to

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[629] At the Potsdam Conference that took place between July 17th and August 2nd in 1945, after Germany's surrender at the end of World War II, Germany was officially separated into spheres of influence between the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc. For historical and political accounts of this subject, see, for instance, Frank Bösch (ed.), *A History Shared and Divided: East and West Germany since the 1970s* (translated from German by Jennifer Walcoff Neuheiser), New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2018; for a collection of essays on the subject, see Edwina Moreton (ed.), *Germany Between East and West,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987 (revised edition 2010).

[630] In this respect, see also footnote 380.

[631] The selection and classification of Malani's works under *Cassandra Series* was made by author of this study.

[632] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Asia Pacific;* see "Her Cassandra Complex: Nalini Malani," in *ArtAsiaPacific*, Issue 63, May/June 2009 (http://96.126.110.91/Magazine/63/HerCassandraComplexNaliniMalani accessed on December 22, 2021).

[633] From the above interview with the artist.

be given attention, if humankind is to survive.[634] Cassandra's prophecies regarding the Trojan war—so says the myth—turned out to be true. After ten years of a devastating war, the city of Troy fell to the Greek army, and Cassandra was taken prisoner, raped and enslaved. In Wolf's retelling of the myth, the novel starts with Cassandra shackled outside the gates of a foreign fortress, pieceing together the fall of her beloved city, and reflecting on the past and the destiny of everyone involved.[635]

Malani first started working with the subject of Cassandra in her mature creative period. As with many of her earlier projects, the subject first emerged in drawings. She went on to make larger pages, which became an artist book, titled *Nalini Malani*: *Listening to the Shades* (2008). This accompanied her exhibition of the same title, a project on which she collaborated with Robert Storr.[636] The initial drawings led to paintings, which were initially used to complement the shadow play medium, and later followed by individual painting installations. The installations of paintings culminated in her most complex work created in the video/shadow play medium, *In Search of Vanished Blood*, commissioned for dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012.

In the artist book *Nalini Malani*: *Listening to the Shades,* Malani made an illuminating comment on why she had turned to myths and the mythical in her works, explaining why it was particularly the myth of Cassandra that was able to convey her intended message:

> "Cassandra for me represents today the insights people have, but are hard put to collate and act upon. Profound insights that individuals have that can be good for the future of humankind are not paid heed and we continue in the direction of death and destruction, with no thought towards a humane and progressive future. [...] One has to make the myth

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[634] From the above interview with the artist.
[635] See Wolf, *Cassandra,* pp. 7-16.
[636] Robert Storr, the American contemporary art curator and art critic, was appointed Chief Curator and Director of the 52nd Venice Biennial, which took place in Venice, in 2007. This was the first time Malani worked with Storr, who selected Malani's eleven-panel polyptych *Splitting the Other* (2007, medium of painting, installation) as part of the main group exhibition at the Gardini pavillion. For a reference on Malani's and Storr's collaboration and work, see also p. 90.
In Venice, Malani chose the octagonal room in the Italian pavillion at the Giardini venue, for which she created a 360-degrees painted environment showing fourteen painted panels together. For a discussion of *Splitting the Other*, see Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* pp. 82-83; see also *Nalini Malani: Splitting the Other: Retrospective 1992-2009,* Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010 (exhibition catalogue).

pertinent to the time, germane to the contemporary we are living in to activate it. I see myself working in this line."[637]

The present chapter discusses five works from the artist's overall oeuvre as follows: *The Tables Have Turned* (2008, shadow play installation), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007, video/shadow play medium), *Listening to the Shades* (2008, medium of painting, installation), *Cassandra* (2009, medium of painting, installation), and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012, video/shadow play medium). It investigates these works in different media in the light of their deployment of myth, arguing that this allowed the artist a specific kind of visual engagement with collective memories and historical traumas, which supported her main concern—an open reflection on violence in the present.[638] After an introduction to the myth of Cassandra and Wolf's work of this name, the chapter briefly outlines the relationship between myth, memory and contemporary art. This is then followed by a discussion of the five selected works. I shall show the progression of Malani's use and re-use of this particular myth, in which Cassandra not only stands for past and present violence perpetuated upon the most disenfranchised groups in society, but also acts as an allegory for global warming and violence perpetuated against the environment. In this way—thus, by examining the memory-work that these works perform—this chapter also looks at the ways in which these selected works act as repositories "where memory crystallises and secretes itself,"[639] as *les lieux de mémoire* in the present.

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[637] Robert Storr, *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades,* Milano: Charta, 2008 (as an artist book this publication does not contain page numbers). The quote is taken from Nalini Malani's essay "Cassandra" at the end of the book.

[638] Arjun Appadurai, who collaborated with Malani on a project "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts" on the occasion of her exhibition *In Search of Vanished Blood* at dOCUMENTA (13), offered an interesting exegesis on the misinterpretation of the Gandhian principle of non-violence, *ahimsa,* based on the need to take action as a call for violence; see Appadurai, "Arjun Appadurai in Conversation with Nalini Malani about their Collaboration for the dOCUMENTA (13) Series *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts,"* in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* particularly pp. 38-41. This dovetails with Malani's outcry against the aimlessness of war and the need to resort to brutality to sort out human differences. Additionally, for Appadurai's work in this regard, see also footnote 555.

[639] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations,* p. 7.

5.1. Myth, Memory, and Contemporary Art: On Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*

> "I wanted to become a priestess. I wanted the gift of prophecy, come what may."
> (Cassandra in Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*)[640]

Christa Wolf was a German writer who grew up under the regime of Nazism and became an adult under Communism. She was born Christa Ihlenfeld, in Landsberg an der Warthe in Brandenburg, the present-day Gorzów Wielkopolski in Poland. At the start of World War II, Wolf was a member of the Bund Deutscher Mädchen, the female counterpart of the Hitler Youth.[641] She was ten years old when she watched the SS, the *Schutzstaffel* or Protection Squads,[642] marching through her birth town on their way to invade Poland, and sixteen years old at the end of World War II, when her family tried to flee the advancing Soviet army. In 1951, she married Gerhard Wolf (b. 1928) and became Christa Wolf. As a writer, Wolf was devoted to pursuing and uncovering the truth, and in the years after the reunification of Germany, she has been recognised, alongside the German novelist and poet Günter Grass (1927-2015), as one of the nation's most important post-war writers. Amongst her major works are *Der Geteilte Himmel* (1963),[643] *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968),[644] *Kindheitsmuster* (1976),[645] *Kein Ort Nirgends* (1979),[646]

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[640] Wolf, *Cassandra*, p. 55.
[641] Hitler Youth was the youth organisation of the German Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's political party in Germany. It originated in 1922, and was the sole official boys' youth organisation in the period between 1936 and 1945 in Germany, partially acting as a paramilitary organisation. For an account of the Hitler Youth, see, for instance, H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945,* New York: Cooper Square Press, 1975.
[642] *Schutzstaffel* or Protection Squads (abbreviation SS) was initially established as Adolf Hitler's personal guard unit, and later became the elite guard of the Nazi regime, as an executive force to deliver all security related matters with no legal restrains, active during World War II. For a reference, see, for instance, George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1939-1945,* Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1966; or Adrian Weale, *The SS: A New History*, Paris: Hachette Digital, 2010.
[643] Translated into English as *Divided Heaven* (1965); revised edition as *They Divided the Sky* (2013).
[644] Translated into English as *The Quest for Christa T.* (1970).
[645] Translated into English as *A Model Childhood* (1980); revised edition as *Patterns of Childhood* (1984).
[646] Translated into English as *No Place on Earth* (1982).

Kassandra (1983),[647] *Was Bleibt* (1990),[648] *Medea* (1996),[649] *Leibhaftig* (2002),[650] and *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010).[651]

In 1980, Wolf travelled to Greece with her husband and, finding herself in the world of the ancient Greek myths, was inspired to start writing *Cassandra.* Hers is a retelling of the ancient myth of the fall of Troy,[652] from the point of view of Cassandra,[653] the daughter of Priam, King of Troy. Aeschylus' play *Oresteia* (dated to ca. fifth century BCE) and Homer's poem *Iliad* (dated to ca. eight century BCE) both mention Cassandra as one of king Priam's daughters.[654] Wolf however charts Cassandra's individual path and her exploration of self—as a seeress and a priestess—in the male-dominated Trojan society.

In Greek mythology, Cassandra was the daughter of Queen Hecuba and King Priam of Troy, and a sister of Hector, a hero of the Greco/Trojan conflict.[655] She was approached by the god Apollo, who tried to win her virtue by promising her a gift of prophecy. According to Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* Cassandra promised herself to Apollo, but took back her word after receiving the prophetic gift.[656] She took the vows to become a priestess, thus enraging Apollo, who cursed the gift he had given her, so that nobody would believe her foreseeings. In this sense, Cassandra has been portrayed in most works, previous to Wolf's retelling, as a tragic character, a madwoman, carrying pain and frustration inside

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[647] Translated into English as *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* (1984); revised edition as *Cassandra* (1984).
[648] Translated into English as *What Remains* (1990); revised edition as *What Remains and Other Stories* (1993).
[649] Translated into English as *Medea: A Modern Storytelling* (1998).
[650] Translated into English as *In the Flesh* (2005).
[651] Translated into English as *City of Angels or, The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2013). Wolf started writing *City of Angels or, the Overcoat of Dr. Freud* during a period of research in Los Angeles, California, at the time of the 1992 revelations of 'The Stasi' in before 1989 East Germany. The Stasi, active in East Germany (1949-1998/90), is known as one of the most repressive and effective intelligence and police agencies existing in Western history. Known as Wolf's final work, which was ten years in the making, critics hailed the *City of Angels or, the Overcoat of Dr. Freud* as Wolf's final reckoning, a courageous act of remembrance, and a necessity to memory. For a historical account of The Stasi, see, for instance, Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990* (translated by David Burnett), New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014 (originally published in German, in 2001 as *Mielke- Konzern. Die Geschichte der Stasi 1945 – 1990* by Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart); or John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police,* United States: Westview Press, 1999.
[652] More widely referred to as the Trojan War, the latter was one of the most important events in Greek mythology and has been narrated in many works of literature and art, in Greece and beyond its borders. Probably the most notable account is Homer's *Iliad,* dated to ca. eight century.
[653] In this regard, see also footnote 627.
[654] In addition, see again also footnote 627.
[655] See, for instance, Homer, *Iliad,* London: Penguin Classics, 1987.
[656] See, for instance, Aeschylus, *The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides,* New York: Penguin Classics, 1977.

her. In this context, she has been known primarily as a foreteller of the future whose prophecies are never believed.

Wolf's work is a feminist revision of Cassandra's story, a retelling that charts Cassandra's explorations of questions of identity and self, and her personal arc from a naive child of privilege, raised to *see nothing* and *know nothing*, to an individuated and self-realised woman in a patriarchal society. For Wolf's Cassandra, the gift of prophecy has landed her with two life burdens, that of *seeing the truth* and that of *foreseeing the future*, hence also carrying the weight of responsibility for others.

Wolf's *Cassandra* is set at the close of the Trojan War. Cassandra relates how she had foretold the fall of Troy yet had been unable to prevent its destruction because she had not been believed. The novel starts at the point when Cassandra has been captured with other Trojan women and taken to Mycenae, the city governed by king Agamemnon.[657] Her future was uncertain. As Cassandra narrates her own story in Wolf's retelling of the myth, she looks back to the time before the war started and reflects on how it all commenced. She describes her complex relationships with her father, King Priam, and her mother, Queen Hecuba, with her many brothers, Hector, Troilus, Aisakos, Helenus, and Paris, with her sister Polyxena, her lover Aeneas, her maid Marpessa and many other characters who shaped her life and identity. From there, Cassandra reflects on her departure from the society where she was living in abundance, without understanding the undercurrents and intricacies of what was really going on, and on the journey of discovery and self-realisation on which she is embarking. After leaving the society from which she has become estranged, she discovers in herself a place not merely of refuge, but also of vitality and resistance to the oppressive order of the royal house. Initially locked into certain perceptions of self and others, Wolf's eponymous heroine interrogates her own position in society and reflects in-depth on enduring pain and loss, on past and present events, and on her own prophecies about the future. In this light, Wolf's work *Cassandra* resonates with a key insight in the work *A Room of One's Own* (originally published in 1928) by the English modernist writer Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), namely, the courageous words:

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[657] In Greek mythology Agamemnon was the king of Mycenae, the principal city of Greece at the time. He led the Greek army to victory over Troy. For an account of the archeological site of Mycenae and the research conducted in the field of legends surrounding the famous Greek site, see, for instance, Elizabeth French, *Mycenae: Agamemnon's Capital – The Site and its Setting*, The University of Michigan: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2002.

> "[...] and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and (then) I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; [...]"[658]

Both authors, Wolf in *Cassandra* and Woolf in *A Room of One's Own,* reflected on the position of individuated women in the society, and the ways in which they are perceived as a massive threat to society as a result of their individuation and thus newly gained 'freedom'.[659] Wolf's Cassandra became a warrior princess, whose bellicose actions exemplify what Christa Wolf called

> "the way of carrying all inventions, circumstances, and conflicts to extremes until they have reached their maximum negative point: the point at which no alternatives are left."[660]

In this sense, then, Wolf's *Cassandra* also compellingly addresses the individual transformation of women living in patriarchal societies, where their actions are often perceived as critical for the social order. Instead of letting these individuated women be heard, the society silences them, ignores and mocks their insights, and often punishes them in fiercely violent ways.

The traits discussed above also resonate closely with Malani's Cassandra, acting as an overarching idea, a red thread, persisting through the works in *Cassandra Series*,[661] works under discussion here. For Malani, Cassandra, as a seeress, has become an archetype,[662] one that found a strong voice in her visual representations of women's distress and their cries to each other and to the world to end the cycles of violence. In parallel, she has used Cassandra's story to speak of female intuition. Malani built on the insights of the feminist philosophers, the Belgian-born Luce Irigaray (b. 1930) and the American-born Judith

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[658] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own,* London: Penguin Books, 1945, pp. 25-26.
[659] For a compelling discussion of Wolf's *Cassandra* and the German playwright and poet Heinrich von Kleist's (1777-1811) *Penthesilea* (1808) in the context of transgressive female characters in the theatre, see Jean Wilson, "Transgression and Identity in Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Wolf's *Cassandra,*" in *Women in German Yearbook,* Vol. 16 (2000), pp. 191-206.
[660] Christa Wolf quoted in Wilson, "Transgression and Identity," in *Women in German Yearbook,* p. 201.
[661] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 631.
[662] Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Asia Pacific;* see "Her Cassandra Complex: Nalini Malani," in *ArtAsiaPacific*, Issue 63, May/June 2009 (http://96.126.110.91/Magazine/63/HerCassandraComplexNaliniMalaniaccessed on December 22, 2021).

Butler (b. 1956),[663] who have both investigated the nature of insights, which originate in an intuitive part of the brain, coded as female. In her work with the myth of Cassandra, Malani took the notion of intuition further, suggesting that it is not merely a female prerogative, but exists in both females and males.[664] For Malani, it is a matter of how much space and attention one is willing to give to these insights, and what message these insights might be delivering for the present and future time.[665] The power of intuition and its importance for the future of humankind are the central concerns for her works from the *Cassandra Series,* under discussion here.

Myth, Memory and Contemporary Art

Before going any further, I would like to clarify a few points regarding the word 'myth' and the way in which it is being used in the present chapter and the study overall. In this chapter, 'myth' and the 'mythical' are being used in relation to the story of Cassandra, a mythological character, as known from the Greek mythology. In parallel, it also turns to a particular textual source, that of Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*, as a main written source for Malani's visual artworks that are selected and classified in the present chapter under *Cassandra Series*. Myths are historically constituted yet they are at the same time dynamic in character,[666] and they may acquire different meanings at different places and times in history, as in Wolf's retelling of the story of Cassandra. Different representations of any myth, either in visual, verbal or written materials, could be a subject of change in accordance with these contingencies. That said, however, such permutations should not be seen as diversions from any putative 'original'. Even those texts which we think of as primary mythological sources were themselves generally versions of stories from an essentially oral tradition.[667] Hence, this chapter draws from a written source, *Cassandra,*

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[663] From the above interview with the artist.
[664] Malani has called these elements 'Cassandra and Apollo' elements (Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art Radar Journal*; see "Indian artist Nalini Malani talks myth, metaphor and women," in *Art Radar Journal*, March 21, 2014 (https://artradarjournal.com/artist-nalini-malani-talks-myth-metaphor-and-women-interview/ accesed on December 22, 2021).
665 From the above interview with the artist.
[666] Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch, "Introduction," in Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth,* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 1-10.
[667] In this respect, see also G. S. Kirk, *Homer and the Oral Tradition,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

a novel written by Christa Wolf and reused by Nalini Malani, in full consciousness that this same myth has been given other interpretations before Wolf's and later Malani's work. In this light, then, this chapter and this study overall also remains mindful of the possible meanings that this myth, thus the myth of Cassandra, has accrued both before and after any secondary retellings, in this case in its retelling by Wolf in the novel and by Malani in the visual.

Myth is a field that has been widely investigated,[668] and the many landmark studies have also examined the relationship between the myth and the visual arts.[669] The classical myths have been widely explored in relation to the visual works of art. The British art historian James Cahill (b. 1970) argues that this occurs

> ”because it does [i.e. the myth] what art [i.e. visual works of art] does; like art itself [i.e. visual works of art], it resonates across time, metamorphosing into new forms and reinventing itself, while retaining a recognizable bone structure. Like art [i.e. visual works of art], it [i.e. the myth] has the capacity to compress past and present.”[670]

This helps to articulate the functioning of a myth, thus as ”a medium between human existence and the reality,”[671] enabling it (i.e. a myth) to act as a medium of memory in the visual plane as well as in words. Myth can therefore be *in service* to art, which uses it as a means not only for telling or retelling stories concerning the past and the present, but also for communicating meanings that lie *elsewhere*. According to art historians Isabelle Lorring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch,[672] myths have had an enduring appeal to the visual

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[668] For a compelling investigation into the history of myth, see Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth,* Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd., 2005; for a discussion of classical mythology and the visual arts, see James Cahill, ”This Thing of Darkness – On the Shifting Role of Myth in Art,” in Diane Fortenberry and Rebecca Morill (eds.), *Flying too Close to the Sun: Myths in Arts from Classical to Contemporary,* London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2018, pp. 8-16; additionally, see also a collection of essays in the context of myth and mass culture, in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (translated by Annette Lavers), London: Vintage Classics, 2009 (originally published in French, in 1957 as *Mythologies: Essais* by Les Lettres Nouvelles, Paris).

[669] One of the more recent accounts in the field is a collection of essays jointly edited by art historians Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch; see Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth,* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011.

[670] Cahill, ”This Thing of Darkness,” in *Flying too Close to the Sun*, p. 15.

[671] Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, pp. 6-7.

[672] For a reference on their jointly edited collection of essays, see footnote 669.

artists particularly because the real subjects of mythological stories reside *elsewhere*, beyond what one initially encounters.[673] In this regard, the two scholars wrote that

> ”myths are stories whose real subjects lie elsewhere, somehow unbound by the minor narrative through which deeper meanings are inevitably conveyed. [...] Myth's insistence that its meaning and subject lie elsewhere functions as an invitation to the reader or viewer to interpret, that is, *to construct* meaning; and while this kind of (consciously felt) rerouting may not be the effect of myth exclusively – for example, allegory, which all myths may be, also takes as its defining characteristic the manifest elsewhere of meaning [...].”[674]

The arguments of Lorring Wallace and Hirsch illuminate the ways in which myths are used in the works of several contemporary visual artists, including those of Malani. Contemporary visual artworks are in many ways allegorical, again sharing a characteristic with myths;[675] both—the visual works of art and the myths—are

> ”made to speak of other things, or to encrypt hidden meanings.”[676]

In this light, then, the use of myth in contemporary visual art practices can also be translated as a representational strategy of the artist. In this regard, it is my contention that that for several contemporary visual artists, myth has been a medium for conveying meanings behind past or contemporary events—thus, separate from those behind the myth's existence. Those who have used myths in their works to speak of either personal or collective past closely linked to pain, loss and alienation include the Japanese artist

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[673] Loring Wallace and Hirsch, ”Introduction,” in *Contemporary Art,* p. 5.
[674] Ibid. pp. 5-6. At present there are several working definitions of myth in circulation; see, for instance, Barthes' aforementioned *Mythologies* (1979); and Armstrong's *A Short History of Myth* (2005).
[675] Loring Wallace and Hirsch, ”Introduction,” in *Contemporary Art,* p. 6.
[676] Cahill, ”This Thing of Darkness,” in *Flying too Close to the Sun,* p. 13.

Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929),[677] the American-born Félix González-Torres (1957-1996),[678] the Russian-born Vadim Zakharov (b. 1959),[679] the French/American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010),[680] and the Israeli/French artist Bracha Ettinger. The morphing[681] character of myth enabled these artists to adapt the story of their interest to any time, place and culture. My contention is that the mythical in their works[682] resonates with their audiences as a memory image.

One visual artist whose use of the mythical in her work chimes with that of Malani is Bracha Ettinger. In her series titled *Eurydice* (1992-1998, reworked photographs with oil on paper and mounted on canvas)[683] (Figures 5.3.1. and 5.3.2.), the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice[684] acts as an emblem of both personal and universal loss, representing the Shoah in the post-Holocaust era. The French art historian Marissa Vigneault (b. 1971) understood Ettinger's 'Eurydice-as-a-victim' as a medium for the audience's recall of

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[677] See, for instance, Yayoi Kusama's work *Narcissus Garden* (1966, installation) (Figure 5.1.), which inaugurated in Venice in 1966. Kusama used the classical myth of Narcissus to reflect on the vanity and self-obsession engendered by consumerism and capitalism. For a discussion of *Narcissus Garden* in the context of mythical, see Jody B. Cutler, "Narcissus, Narcosis, Neurosis: The Visions of Yayoi Kusama," in Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth,* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 87-109.

[678] Félix González-Torres deployed the classical myth of Orpheus in his work *Untitled - Orpheus, Twice* (1991, installation). The myth, which speaks of Orpheus' attempts to try to get back his deceased wife from the underworld after her death, was used by González-Torres to speak of loss, pain and alienation – past and present – following his longtime partner's death. For a discussion of González-Torres' work in this context, see Jennie Hirsch, "Double Take, or Theorizing Reflection in Felix González-Torres," in Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth,* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 135-159. For a reference on the myth of Orpheus, see footnote 684; for González-Torres' work in the context of trauma and memory, see also p. 53 and footnote 162.

[679] Vadim Zakharov examined the potential of deploying mythical materials in the visual with his installation performance *Danaë* (2013, installation) on the occasion of the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013. Zakharov used the ancient myth of Danae to reflect on the roles of women in past and present-day societies.

[680] See Louise Bourgeois' work *Maman* (1999-2002, bronze sculpture) (Figures 5.2.1. and 5.2.2.), created as part of the artist's inaugural commission for the *Unilever Series* (2000) at the Tate Modern in London. Bourgeois' *Maman,* in the form of a giant spider, is one of the world's largest sculptures to date. The work took the myth of Arachne, a woman transformed into a spider as a punishment for having challenged the Greek goddess Athena to a weaving contest. Bourgeois used the myth to speak of her complex relationship with her own mother, who was also a weaver (i.e. as a reference to the role of a spider).

[681] The term 'morphing' means undergoing a gradual process of transformation.

[682] See footnotes 677-680, and 683-684.

[683] Bracha Ettinger's *Eurydice* (1992-1998, reworked photographs with oil on paper and mounted on canvas) is a series of photographs mounted on canvas, where Ettinger deployed the myth of Eurydice and Orpheus. For a discussion of Ettinger's work in the context of trauma, memory and history, see Marissa Vigneault, "The Porous Space of Bracha L. Ettinger's *Eurydices,*" in Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth,* Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 111-133. For the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, see footnote 684.

[684] The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice tells a story of Orpheus, the son of the god Apollo, and his wife Eurydice. After a short marriage, Eurydice dies and is taken to Hades, the underworld. Orpheus goes to Hades to get his beloved wife back, yet he is unsuccessful as he loses his faith on that path. For an early telling of the myth, see the Roman poet Ovid's (ca. 43 BCE – 17 CE) work *Metamorphoses* (ca. 8 CE).

traumatic past events.[685] For Vigneault, Ettinger's works with the myth of Eurydice are also visual objects that bear witness to the *invisible* and the *unrepresentable* in the present.[686] Ettinger's works with the myth of Eurydice show, I suggest, the capacity of a myth to engage with histories and their related memories, and to represent these in the visual of the present. Malani's works created in the context of the myth of Cassandra function in a similar way. We shall discuss some of these works in more detail now.

5.2. *The Tables Have Turned* (2008) and *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007) – The Visual Repositories of Violent Pasts

> "I often discover that the subject I pick up is vaster than just one artwork. Cassandra has been one such work in progress and spanning over many years."
> (Nalini Malani)[687]

In the light of what Malani has said about the powerful impact on her work of Wolf's *Cassandra*,[688] it is interesting to trace the influence of the novel on her works created since the early twenty-first century. In *The Tables Have Turned* (2008)[689] (Figures 5.4.1.–5.4.5.), a site-responsive installation work in the shadow play medium, Malani gave point to her message in the visual language through innovative use of a recording of passages from Wolf's novel. There were also multiple correspondences with Wolf's *Cassandra* in her work of the previous year, *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007) (Figures 4.9.1.–4.9.6.), examined in the previous chapter through the lens of its medium, the video/shadow play medium, along the lines of Krauss' dictum 'the medium is the memory'.[690] This chapter

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[685] Vigneault, "The Porous Space," in *Contemporary Art,* pp. 111-133, particularly p. 113.
[686] Ibid.
[687] Nalini Malani discussing her work in a filmed footage about the exhibition *Nalini Malani: Transgressions* shown at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in 2017 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj0b9ULNSqU accessed on December 22, 2021).
[688] For a reference in this regard, see the above interview with the artist.
[689] *The Tables Have Turned* (2008) inaugurated at the 16th Biennial of Sydney, in 2008, and has since then been exhibited at various venues globally, each time adjusting to the exhibiting site as a site-responsive work. This chapter discusses *The Tables Have Turned* as an installation that was created in 2008 and inaugurated at the 16th Biennial of Sydney in that same year.
[690] Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory,* p. 19. For a discussion of Krauss' work in this regard, see pp. 109-110.

first examines *The Tables Have Turned* in which a recording of Alaknanda Samarth[691] reciting selected verses from Wolf's *Cassandra* accompanied Malani's installation of reverse painted Mylar cylinders. With *The Tables Have Turned*, therefore, Malani explicitly deployed the myth of Cassandra, as a means of unveiling memories of violence and oppression against women, and of putting forward female insights on which the survival of humankind depends.

The Tables Have Turned (2008)

The Tables Have Turned (see Figures 5.4.1.–5.4.5.), Malani's fourth work in the shadow play medium, was inaugurated as a site-responsive installation at the 16th Biennial of Sydney, titled *Revolutions: Forms That Turn,* and curated by the American/Italian contemporary art curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (b. 1957).[692] The site-responsive shadow play had a duration of seven minutes and comprised thirty-two cylinders made from reverse-painted Mylar sheets positioned on simulated turntables and rotating at 4 rpm, accompanied by lights, coloured electric wires and sound (Figure 5.4.1., installation view). This was a practice with which Malani had first experimented eight years earlier, in 2000, with her work *Dissonance* (2000, shadow play installation), exhibited at the 7th Havana Biennial in Cuba,[693] where she had fixed her Mylar cylinders to record turntables instead of hanging them from the ceiling, as was her usual practice. In *The Tables Have Turned,* she upgraded the number of cylinders, while the narratives depicted over the cylinders deployed the myth of Cassandra after its retelling by Wolf.

The Tables Have Turned was an installation created specifically for a circular air-raid shelter with a diameter of seven metres, stationed at the Cockatoo Island in the Sydney

[691] The collaboration between the two artists, Malani and Samarth, goes back to 1992/1993, when the two created the theatre play *Medeamaterial* at the Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay. For a reference in this regard, see footnote 420; for a discussion of *Medeamaterial* in this context, see pp. 127-131.
[692] This was Malani's first collaboration with Christov-Bakargiev. The two collaborated again in 2010/2012 on the occasion of dOCUMENTA (13). In 2010, Christov-Bakargiev was appointed Chief Curator of dOCUMENTA (13); the latter commissioned Malani's work *In Search of Vanished Blood* for its 13th edition that took place in Kassel, in 2012.
[693] The work *Dissonance* (2000, shadow play installation) was installed in an ancient castle of the eighteenth century Fortalezza de San Carlos de la Cabaña, in Havana, Cuba, in 2000. It comprised only four cylinders painted in reverse and mounted on the actual record turntables. The work was accompanied by the fusion of the voice of a classical Indian singer M.S. Subbulakshmi (1916-2004) and the American jazz and swing music singer Billie Holiday (1915-1959), singing about an erotic devotion to an ideal man.

area, in Australia. Cockatoo Island carried its own memories connected to war—for during both World War I and World War II, ships damaged in battles had been repaired in the island's dockyards—so that the main environment itself was redolent of destruction and violence as consequences of wars and conflicts, and thus spoke compellingly to Malani's visual references of them. Although Cassandra was not present as a female figure depicted on the cylinders, the myth of Cassandra resonated strongly in *The Tables Have Turned*, which took wars and their consequences as its main subject. Recordings of sounds were combined with the voice of Samarth reciting a selection of words and sentences from Wolf's *Cassandra.* As with most of Malani's works created in the shadow play or video/shadow play medium, the use of sound was amongst the key elements also in *The Tables Have Turned.* Sound was deployed independently, that is, from a long-playing record-player. This linked up with the artist's use of the turntables—thus, objects that are inevitably intertwined with a notion of music and sound—on which the Mylar cylinders were positioned and balanced. Using the same technology (then practically obsolete) for playing recorded sounds and as wheels for the distribution of images of war and destruction, was, I contend, another of Malani's representational strategies for delivering her message in the visual language. By bringing in the voice of Samarth speaking as Wolf's—by now, Malani's—Cassandra, *The Tables Have Turned* employed sounds as the companions to war. This was made clear at one point when Samarth—as Cassandra—spoke: "Events that aroused the craving for more events, finally for war."[694]

My contention is that the myth of Cassandra here also stood for the silenced female voices—those that, if they were paid heed to, could direct events in a different turn, according to Malani.[695] As part of the overall exhibition *Revolutions: Forms That Turn*, *The Tables Have Turned* also invoked a possibility of a revolution, a revolt, which could equally have been Cassandra's revolt of thousands of years previously.

Each of the thirty-two turntables in *The Tables Have Turned* carried a cylinder of Mylar, painted in reverse with depictions of various micro and macro narratives. The turntables

[694] Alaknanda Samarth recited this sentence at the end of *The Tables Have Turned.*
[695] For a reference in this regard, see, for instance, Nalini Malani in an interview with *Apollo;* see "Nalini Malani turns to a Greek myth to retell Indian tragedies," in *Apollo,* November 2, 2018 (www.apollo-magazine.com/nalini-malani-turns-to-a-greek-myth-to-retell-indian-tragedies/ accessed on December 22, 2021)

were positioned randomly on the floor (Figure 5.4.2., installation view from a bird's-eye perspective) and connected between each other with electric wires of different colours and with halogen light bulbs, all which engendered the world of shadows. The atmosphere in the space was that of a bird's-eye view over a grand metropolis, a big city district such as New York's Manhattan[696] or Hong Kong's Kowloon, with endless skyscrapers and ever-changing, never-ending lights. The images depicted in reverse on the cylinders spoke allegorically or directly of wars and their consequences. These were, I suggest, amongst the most explicit references to wars and subsequently to violence from Malani's works in the *Cassandra Series.*

In *The Tables Have Turned,* the audience was confronted by skulls of unknown origins seemingly living a life of their own (Figure 5.4.5., detail), by frantically fleeing dogs in the style of Eadweard Muybridge[697] (Figure 5.4.3., detail), by depictions of human brains and intestines living their own seemingly disconnected lives, by explicit acts of violence such as that between two male figures taken from the work *Cain Killing Abel* (1511, painting on wood) by the German painter Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)[698] (Figure 5.4.4., each work, Dürer's and Malani's, respectively), and by figures of mournful and muted women (Figure 5.4.3., detail). As was the case with most of Malani's works in the shadow play medium or video/shadow play medium, the narratives in *The Tables Have Turned* were not linear, however this was also irrelevant for the artist's message. On the contrary, the more chaotic the narratives that confronted the audience, the more compellingly they spoke of the chaos and violence and their related memories recollected and recalled from past experiences of wars and their aftermaths.

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[696] In this regard, see the excellent essay "Walking in the City" by the French philosopher Michel De Certeau (1925-1986), in Michel De Certeau,"Walking in the City," in Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, Volume I, pp. 91-111. Poised between poetry and semiotics, De Certeau's "Walking in the City" explores an aspect of daily urban life through observations of New York's Manhattan district at night from the top of the former World Trade Centre tower.

[697] For a reference on Muybridge's work, see p. 176 and footnote 608.

[698] Malani turned to Albrecht Dürer's work *Cain Killing Abel* even before creating *The Tables Have Turned,* reusing the scene and depicting the violent act in her video/shadow play *Gamepieces* (2003). For a discussion of *The Tables Have Turned* in the framework of Malani turning to Dürer's work, see Bal, *In Medias Res*, pp. 312-316; for a discussion of *Gamepieces* in the light of memory, trauma and the video/shadow play medium, see pp. 165-169.

Remembering Mad Meg (2007)

Remembering Mad Meg (Figures 4.9.1.–4.9.6.), created one year before *The Tables Have Turned*, was Malani's third work created in the video/shadow play medium.[699] The rotating Mylar cylinders, installed in sequence in a long dark corridor at the former British military hospital (Figures 4.9.1. and 4.9.2., both installation views), invited their audience to pass through a world of shadows and images crowded on top of each other, ”emulating a war-like zone” as Pijnappel suggests.[700] The central character on the cylinders, that of Mad Meg (Figure 4.9.4., installation detail), depicted several times through the narrative, was accompanied by many different images of women. They were depicted several times in the narrative and over various cylinders, led by the furious Meg with a sword in her hand. Together these women appeared to be marching over a ruined, post-apocalyptic land, trying to put an end to destruction and violence. This, I contend, is a strong echo of Cassandra's army of women within Trojan society. In Wolf's retelling of the myth, Cassandra had tried to prevent the fall of her beloved city with a group of female companions: her soul-mate, Myrine, her maid, the slave Marpessa, and Penthesilea, a female warrior of Amazonian origins.[701] On this path, however, both Malani's Mad Meg and Wolf's Cassandra became victims of violence and were ostracised by the society they tried to preserve.

It is my further contention that Malani clearly interweaves Wolf's retelling of the myth of Cassandra with the story of Mad Meg, who, as mentioned in Chapter 4, above,[702] was named after Brueghel's painting *Dulle Griet* (Figure 4.11.1.). *Dulle Griet*, a figure known from the Flemish folklore, has been best known as a peasant woman from Brueghel's time, who, possessing female insights and powers, had visited the gates of Hell and came out unharmed. In Brueghel's painting (Figure 4.12.2., detail), she is larger than the other figures and objects, she appears as an older, slightly wrinkled woman, equipped with a sword in one hand and a basket of kitchen utensils in the other, frantically running

[699] For a discussion of *Remembering Mad Meg* in the context of memory, trauma and the video/shadow play medium, see pp. 169-174.
[700] Pijnappel, ”Selected Biography,” in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* p. 83.
[701] In this respect, see Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*; for another discussion of female characters in relation to Cassandra's myth, see Wilson, "Transgression And Identity," in *Women In German Yearbook*, pp. 191-206.
[702] For a reference in this regard, see pp. 170-171.

across the painting, possibly into the mouth of Hell.[703] Brueghel's setting is peopled by demons and animalised people, some sort of a universe of monsters. In this aspect, *Dulle Griet* evokes the horrors of wars and their aftermaths in a similar vein as do the paintings *The Harrrowing of the Hell* (ca. early sixteenth century, oil on canvas)[704] (Figure 5.5.1.) and *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca. 1503-1504, oil on canvas)[705] (Figure 5.5.2.) by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), evoke the visions of Hell on Earth as the consequences of wars. With regards to Brueghel's *Dulle Griet,* the American art historian Margaret A. Sullivan (b. 1965) puts forward an argument, supported by solid literary sources, demonstrating that the painting was created as an allegory of sin, specifically greed and violence, in the society observed by Brueghel at the time.[706] Likewise, the environment presented in Malani's *Remembering Mad Meg* spoke compellingly to both Brueghel's and Bosch's settings of wars and their aftermaths. As I have shown in Chapter 4, Mad Meg was depicted over the cylinders independently and resembling Brueghel's *Dulle Griet* (see Figures 4.9.4. (i.e. for Malani's Mad Meg) and 4.11.2. (i.e. for Brueghel's *Dulle Griet*)), while she was also portrayed in company with other figures and objects where groupings resembled Bosch's vision of Hell (see Figures 4.9.6. (i.e. for Malani's Mad Meg) and 5.5.2. (i.e. for Bosch's work; see the right side panel of the triptych)). Malani depicted her Mad Meg as a furious woman, a madwoman, fighting

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[703] Some historical references argue that the direction, where *Dulle Griet* was headed, was the gates of Hell, from where she returned unharmed; for a reference in this respect, see, for instance, *Pieter Brueghel: The Dulle Griet in the Mayer van den Bergh Museum, Antwerp* (publication in 1900 for the Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, with an introduction by Leo van Puyvelde), London: Percy Lund Humphries & Company Ltd., 1900, particularly pp. 4-8.

[704] *The Harrrowing of the Hell* (ca. early sixteenth century, oil on canvas) depicts a turbulent scene of Christ's descent into Hell and is thought to be related to a lost painting created by the fifteenth century artist Hieronymus Bosch. There are no authenticated depictions of the subject by Bosch today, though the four seemingly different paintings of this, or closely related subjects, were recorded in early references. The first one, described as *The Descent of Christ our Lord to Limbo*, was given by Phillip II of Spain to the Escorial outside Madrid in the year 1574; the second recorded was of *Christ after the Resurrection in Limbo, with Many Figures,* owned by the king at his death; the third was listed in the year 1595' inventory of Archduke Ernest of Austria (1553-1595) in Brussels; and the final, fourth one, was recorded by Karel van Mander in his *Het Schilder-Boeck* (1604) (in Lorne Campbell, *The Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen. The Early Flemish Pictures,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 11).

[705] *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca. 1503-1504, oil on canvas), asigned to Hieronymus Bosch, is a folding triptych, with its left and right panels folding inwards. The triptych reveals three panels, on the left, the Garden of Eden, in the centre, the Garden of Delight, and on the right, Bosch's vision of Hell. Each panel vibrates with the activities of many small figures indulging in every possible vice, perversion, and torture. For a recently published account (very comprehensive in nature) of Bosch's work, see Larry Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch,* New York and London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2021.

[706] Margaret A. Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Brueghel the Elder's *Dulle Griet,*" in *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 59, No. 1 (March, 1977), pp. 55-66; p. 55; additionally, see also a comprehensive account of Brueghel's work by the same author, in Margaret A. Sullivan, *Brueghel and the Creative Process 1559-1563*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018 (first published in 2010).

the world with her attitude and tools. In this, she resembled both Brueghel's *Dulle Griet*, and also Wolf's Cassandra, who says—in Wolf's retelling of the myth—"[...] yes, it was then that I heard them say: 'She is out of her mind.'"[707]

Malani's Mad Meg may have seemed mad to the outside world, yet like Wolf's Cassandra and Brueghel's *Dulle Griet*, she also displayed fearlessness and rebellion towards any form of oppression. In Wolf's retelling, Cassandra reflected further on her madness and fears, and on their transformations within herself:

> "Who lives will see. It occurs to me that secretly I am tracking the story of my fear. Or more precisely, the story of unbridling: more precisely still, of its setting free. Yes, it is true, fear too can be set free, and that shows that it belongs with everything and everyone who is oppressed. The king's daughter is not afraid, for fear is weakness and weakness can be amended by iron discipline. The madwoman is afraid, she is mad with fear. The captive is supposed to be afraid. The free woman learns to lay aside her unimportant fears and not to fear the one big important fear because she is no longer too proud to share it with others."[708]

Just as myth acts as a cross-generational and a cross-cultural repository of shared memories, crossing time, space and cultures,[709] *Remembering Mad Meg* also bridged times and places, local and global, through and with its central character. My contention is that Malani added the story (and destiny) of Wolf's Cassandra to that of Brueghel's *Dulle Griet,* using the life stories of both female characters as a means to speak of past and present oppression and violence, and the potential to resist them. In this light, I argue that *Remembering Mad Meg* deployed the mythical as well as the archival[710] for unveiling violence and the associated wounds in her visual language. In parallel, it is my contention that by unveiling and illuminating these subjects, the artist invited her audiences into performing acts of remembrance in the present. In the previous two chapters, I argued that Malani has been putting to the forefront acts of remembrance—thus, the memory acts—in several works created since the 1990s. In this light, I argue that Malani uses the

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[707] Wolf, *Cassandra,* p. 65.
[708] Ibid. p. 53.
[709] Alessandra Campoli, "Art, Myth, and Memory: An Investigation into the Relationship Between Ancient Myths, Collective and Cultural Memory in the Visual Arts," in *Visual Review,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (2020), pp. 199-206, p. 200.
[710] For a recent study on 'archive' and 'archival' in contemporary visual arts, see footnote 574.

actual word 'remembering' in the titles of two works, *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* (1998, video play medium)[711] and *Remembering Mad Meg,* to enhance these acts—thus, the memory acts. While the 'remembering' in her 1998 video play *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* constituted an invitation to its audience to perform memory acts dating back to Partition and its traumatic aftermath, *Remembering Mad Meg* invited their audience into those memory acts that were inextricably linked to violence, past and present, locally and globally. The many mutilated and otherwise injured women in *Remembering Mad Meg*, depicted over and over again on the cylinders, were deployed, I suggest, as mnemonic means inviting a recollection of memories and, at the same time, enabling these memory acts to take place. In the words of Bal, there was a particular density of female figures in Malani's *Remembering Mad Meg*,[712] whereas I suggest here further to Bal's contention that this was one of Malani's representational strategies serving also as her visual metaphor for the large numbers of women affected nationally and globally by oppression, ostracism and violence. The girls and mature women depicted over the cylinders and through the world of shadows and through their palimpsestic interplays on the surfaces, were both women from Mad Meg's army, uninjured, and women scarred and injured, as shown in o particular through the means of their shadows (Figure 4.9.5., installation detail). These latter, resembled Malani's mutant figures, known in her work since the 1990s,[713] and shown here as visibly injured creatures, affected by the chemical and nuclear trials. This mixture of suffering and violence display the complex mix of wounding in human activity, with suffering hidden behind meanings in their visual narratives, which is characteristic of Malani's work in the past more than two decades of creation. On a more subtle, less visible level, the audience was to see in the women depicted the loss of femininity, one of the potential consequences of wars and violence. Here, I suggest, Malani was making a point about all the losses that are less visible yet equally important.

And which memory acts did Malani invite her audience to perform in *Remembering Mad Meg*? Unlike Brueghel's *Dulle Griet,* who was ridiculed as a

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[711] For a reference on Malani's *Remembering Toba Tek Singh,* see footnote 294.
[712] Bal*, In Medias Res*, p. 347.
[713] I am referring here to Malani's *The Mutant A Series* (1994) and *The Mutant B Series* (1996); see footnote 588.

madwoman,[714] Malani's Mad Meg was presented as a woman fighting for a justifiable cause. The scenes of horror, where Mad Meg walked, constituted Malani's allegorical setting for a post-apocalyptic world, *her* vision of Hell on Earth—as a seeress Cassandra—threatening the present and future. This, for Malani, I argue, was also a world inhabited by all the Mad Megs who were oppressed and denied their difficult experiences and visions—in short, it was a world of Cassandras. In this light, then, Malani's *Remembering Mad Meg,* through its central character and her army of women, also recalled the frail relationship between violence and madness,[715] where both madness and violence are age-old syndromes that existed and were known through centuries. The artist used the madness of a woman known from a Renaissance painting, Brueghel's *Dulle Griet*, and her story known from the Flemish folklore, to speak of a contemporary woman driven to madness by violence and its denial. Neither age-old syndrome—i.e. either madness or violence—calls for any local or national specificity. In this regard, the two have been present and familiar for centuries, just as myths have been. In this light, then, the memory acts that are called forth in *Remembering Mad Meg* are not only those of *remembering* violence and the madness it may bring with it. The audience was prompted to recall and *remember* the memories linked to violent acts against women and their political appropriations and denials.[716] The two female figures deployed in *Remembering Mad Meg*—the Flemish *Dulle Griet* and the mythical/Wolf's Cassandra—bind together these memory acts asking for a recognition in the present.

In this light, then, *Remembering Mad Meg* invited its audience to perform acts of recall—thus, the memory acts—just as *The Tables Have Turned* did. The main elements that the two works share—i.e. the images depicted on cylinders, and their palimpsestic life in the world of shadows—took the role of mnemonic means, inviting their audiences into performing these memory acts by eliciting memories of wars and their aftermaths.

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[714] For a compelling discussion of Brueghel's *Dulle Griet* in the context of misogyny, see Bal, *In Medias Res*, pp. 348-359; see also Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Brueghel the Elder's *Dulle Griet,*" in *The Art Bulletin,* pp. 55-66.

[715] For a discussion of the relationship between madness and violence in the context of treating madness as a symptom through analytical psychotherapy, see Françoise Davoine, *Mother Folly: A Tale* (translated into English by Judith G. Miller), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014 (originally published in French, in 2013 as *Mère Folle* by Gallimard, Paris). Interestingly, Davoine's work has Brueghel's *Dulle Griet* on its cover. Following Davoine's work *Mother Folly: A Tale,* Mieke Bal and film director Michelle Williams Gamaker made a cinematic work titled *A Long History of Madness* (2011), where the two authors addressed the sensitive relationship between violence and madness.

[716] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 776.

In this light, then, memories that were brought to the fore in both *Remembering Mad Meg* and *The Tables Have Turned* were registered between the past and the present known to their audiences, and also in times and places unknown, as in the mythical.

5.3. *Listening to the Shades* (2008) and *Cassandra* (2009) – The 'Sites of Wounds'[717]

> "That was how we lived in the hour before dark. The war, a wounded dragon incapable of further movement, lay heavy and faint over our city."
> (Cassandra in Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*)[718]

In 2007, Malani began working on a large scale project *Listening to the Shades* (2008) (Figures 5.6.1.–5.6.6.), in parallel to her work in the shadow play medium. *Listening to the Shades* was inaugurated in 2008 at the Arario Gallery in New York,[719] accompanied by the artist book *Nalini Malani*: *Listening to the Shades*, produced in collaboration with the curator Robert Storr.[720] *Listening to the Shades* entailed forty-two Mylar sheets painted in reverse, each measuring 45 x 66 cm, envisaged as one painting installation. In this body of forty-two paintings, which spoke of memories and their related historical events intertwined with wars, conflicts and violence, the myth of Cassandra allegorically represented the female insights that were silenced and ignored through centuries.

Only a year after Malani created *Listening to the Shades,* 2009 saw her second large painting installation from the *Cassandra Series*, a thirty-panel polyptych titled *Cassandra* (2009) (Figures 5.7.1.–5.7.6.), inaugurated at the Lelong Art Gallery in Paris.[721] In the

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[717] The term 'sites of wounds' was coined by author of this study, by analogy with Pierre Nora's 'sites of memory'.
[718] Wolf, *Cassandra,* pp. 194-195.
[719] Since its New York inauguration in 2008, the body of forty-two paintings titled *Listening to the Shades* was exhibited at other venues globally, including on the occasion of Malani's retrospective between Paris and Torino, in 2017/2018.
[720] *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades* was published as an artist book, accompanying the exhibition *Listening to the Shades*. *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades,* as an artist book, comprises an essay written by Robert Storr, and images of all forty-two paintings from the exhibition *Listening to the Shades*, and created by Malani. For Malani's collaboration with Storr, see footnote 636.
[721] The Lelong Art Gallery is known for predominantly showing works created by female artists, including the German/American artist Kiki Smith (b. 1954), the American-born Nancy Spero and the Cuban/American artist Ana Mendieta. As a meditation on feminine resistance, works from Malani's *Cassandra Series* resonate with several works created by the American artists Kiki Smith and Nancy Spero, respectively. See Kiki Smith's *Pool of Tears 2* (2000, etching, aquatint, and drypoint with watercolor additions) (Figure 5.8.), and Nancy Spero's *Picasso and Frederick's of Hollywood* (1990, handprinted collage on paper) (Figure 5.9.) from the *Goddess of Nut II* series (1990).

painting installation *Cassandra*, the myth of Cassandra was expanded to also represent the global cry of women to each other, reflecting not only on wars and violence amongst humans, but also on an on-going violence against the environment and nature in contemporary times.

An overarching idea of the myth of Cassandra, following Wolf's retelling of the myth, was used by Malani in both *Listening to the Shades* and *Cassandra,* where the artist's main concern in both was primarily past and present violence, and the wounds that violence inflicted. Malani's starting historical reference was, as in many of her earlier works, the 1947 Partition and the violence it brought with it, especially against women.[722] Subsequent historical references were the events surrouning the destruction of Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya, in 1992,[723] and the riots that took place in Gujarat, in 2002,[724] both of which were accompanied by heavy bouts of violence against women and other vulnerable minorities. To these, Malani added more subtle layers of references to violence and an on-going daily oppression, including violence against the environment and nature. Huyssen, discussing his notion of 'present pasts', convincingly argues that Malani's work in this regard speaks of

> "the violence of the past, that, after all, is well and alive in the present."[725]

Listening to the Shades (2008)

For the exhibition *Listening to the Shades* at the Arario Gallery in New York, the gallery walls were painted deep blue, creating an atmosphere of darkness.[726] Once again, the installation was accompanied by the whispering voice of Alaknanda Samarth speaking the words of the prophetess Cassandra. The painted Mylars were hung in a linear way,

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On the occasion of Malani's exhibition *Cassandra* at the Lelong Art Gallery in 2009, the gallery published a publication *Nalini Malani: Cassandra*, New York and Paris: Galerie Lelong, 2009 (exhibition catalogue).
[722] For a reference in this regard, see footnote 776.
[723] For a reference on the events in Ayodhya, see footnote 292.
[724] For a reference on the events in Gujarat, see footnote 534; for the work *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* created in the context of the Gujarat events, see footnote 298.
[725] Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 51.
[726] For Malani's reflections on the subject of darkness, see pp. 156-157.

with a clear beginning and end, and with irregular clusters of Malani's earlier works between them.[727] As a joint body of works, they acted as an almost twenty-five-metre-long storyboard without a continous overall narrative, a format used in Malani's earlier work *Splitting the Other* (2007).[728] Memories originating from collective and individual traumatic pasts, often those of wars and conflicts leading to violence and inflicting wounds, have each been given separate frames in *Listening to the Shades*. In the artist book that Malani created together with Storr,[729] these frames have the following titles: *Mind Muscle; Rehearsal Chamber Space for Thought; Hearing Listening; The Act is Final; Linkage: Parasitic, Symbiotic, Commensurate; Why War?; Rape* (Figure 5.6.1., detail)*; Witness Damage* (Figure 5.6.2., detail)*; Vision Prophecy; Cassandra* (Figure 5.6.3., detail)*; Deviants Parade; Nurturing Nature; Gendered Thought;* and *Breath.* Each frame investigated memories of events past through mythical means, in an allegorical treatment of aggression, violence and oppression—and the subsequent wounds. As in several of Malani's previous works, the narrative order was not relevant for the artist's message. Malani declined to be the narrator of a linear story, as she had done in most of her works since the 1990s, leaving it to her audiences to create their own understanding of the stories told and re-told.

An on-going element depicted several times in the compositions of *Listening to the Shades* was the human brain (Figures 5.6.1. and 5.6.3., both details). Mindful of its links to memory and trauma, my contention is that Malani depicted it across the forty-two panels in a range of shapes and forms—from a boxing glove to a rehearsal space for thinking processes—showing it, I suggest, as a container of the past and a foreteller of the future. Pasts in *Listening to the Shades* did not refer to any specific memories or historical references. The work communicated past memories and fragments from national and global histories as one collective unit, an aspect, I contend, that derives from Malani's use of myth and its character traits. Myth and mythology have been called

[727] For a discussion of *Listening to the Shades* (2008) and *Cassandra* (2009) in the light of Malani's use of 'filmic view', see Pijnappel, "Selected Biography," in *Nalini Malani – In Search of Vanished Blood,* particularly pp. 84-85.
[728] For the work *Splitting the Other* (2007), see footnote 636.
[729] For the artist book *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades* (2008), see footnote 637.

> ”an art form that points beyond history to what is timeless in human existence, helping us to get beyond the chaotic flux of random events, and glimpse the core of reality."[730]

In this light, then, the fluid and changeable character of myth and the way it conveys timeless meanings in any given time and space, gave an added dimension to *Listening to the Shades.* Just as myth can be translated from one place to another, with its existence outside time,[731] the forty-two paintings of *Listening to the Shades*—with their candid illumination of past and present violence—operated on this axis out of time and space.

The painted panels in *Listening to the Shades*—depicting scenes, groupings and individual objects—were all linked thematically. The myth of Cassandra was a red thread connecting items and scenes in the compositions, alluding time and again to violence and wounds. In the frames titled *Why War?* in the artist book *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades,*[732] we see at first seemingly disconnected micro narratives, with a human brain, floating figures in the air, some of them winged, and something that appears to be either a human intestine or an umbilical cord, seemingly disconnected from other groupings (Figures 5.6.4. and 5.6.5., both details). My contention is that the items and people in these scenes have subtle yet complex connections with each other, while they also have links to both trauma and memory. The human brain is disconnected from the cord, so it is not receiving the information it should be fed—a wound which is irreparable. Human beings that are able to fly are doing so at the expense of those who are left in the sky, powerless and without wings. Meanwhile, the matter filling the cord or intestine appears dark and heavy, symbolising another wound, perhaps speaking of the burdensome state of affairs in the past and persisting in the present. In very different ways, these individual objects and collective groupings of figures all communicate the human activity of wounding amongst each other, past and present.

Why War? is followed in Storr's and Malani's sequence by *Rape.*[733] My contention is that in *Rape,* Malani's main concern was the violence perpetuated upon women in her native India. During Partition, and again during the state-sanctioned violence of Hindus upon Muslims in 1992, and in Gujarat in 2002, the heaviest toll of violence was paid by

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[730] Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, p. 7.
[731] Cahill, ”This Thing of Darkness,” in *Flying too Close to the Sun,* p. 11.
[732] In *Nalini Malani: Listening to the Shades* (publication/artist book has no page numbers).
[733] See the above footnote.

women.[734] This was manifested through the rape of young girls and women from tribal communities in regions that were most heavily affected by violence.[735] Malani was incensed by the ways in which violent outrages not only took place, but were also apparently sanctioned and hushed up by the political leadership,[736] and was furthermore infuriated by the ways in which female bodies were treated and abused.[737] This subject was first handled in depth in Malani's work *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* (2005, video play medium),[738] and has since then become an on-going concern and subject of representation in her work. My contention here, though, is that Malani's works in this regard were never merely *representations* of trauma and the associated wounds. By deploying the myth of Cassandra, Malani

> ”extended the story of violence against women politically and historically beyond current events,”[739]

making her work to also allude to the political realities that allowed such events to take place. For instance, in several groupings of figures and objects in *Listening to the Shades,* a woman's body is the main subject (Figure 5.6.6., detail). These women figures often appear hunched and fearful, some of them, seemingly in pain, on the ground. In one of these groupings, we see a man walking carelessly over a prone, anxious woman (see the previous Figure). Given Malani's outspoken stance on the abuse of power,[740] this can be read as a visual representation of power relations in general, by extension from the relations between men and women in the patriarchal societies, as observed on her

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[734] I would like to remind the reader of the work by Veena Das, whose writings about violence and oppression against women influenced Malani's work. For a reference in this respect, see pp. 108-109 and footnote 330.
[735] As of this date, similar events are accompanying the civil war in the northern region of Tigray, in Ethiopia, where the systematic rape of young girls and women is being used as a strategy in war; see Emmanuel Akinwotu, "'Like I wasn't a person': Ethiopian forces accused of systematic rape in Tigray," in *The Guardian,* August 11, 2021 (www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/11/like-i-wasnt-a-person-ethiopian-forces-accused-of-systematic-in-tigray accessed on August 11, 2021; updated on January 28, 2022).
[736] Malani has mentioned her standpoints regarding this subject on several occassions. For a conversation between Malani and Appadurai on the occasion of dOCUMENTA (13) see footnote 555.
[737] See the above footnote; additionally, see also Das' work in this respect in footnotes 298 and 330.
[738] For Malani's *Mother India*, see footnote 298.
[739] Huyssen, ”Shadow Play as Medium of Memory,” in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 52.
[740] For a reference in this regard, see an interview with the artist in ”Nalini Malani Tells a Story,” in *Interview Magazine,* June 28, 2016 (www.interviewmagazine.com/art/nalini-malani-ica-boston accessed on December 22, 2021).

paintings created through the 1970s and 1980s. I suggest that these images are in fact the artist's visual unveilings of the political forces that not only allow violence to take place, but even use it as a strategy in their power plays.

If, however, we are to believe that Malani's female protagonists in her paintings in the 1970s and 1980s were never *just* passive victims and *mere* observers of their own lives and destinies,[741] we should also not think of the women in *Listening to the Shades* as *exclusively* victims of violence. Regardless of everything that she had to endure, Wolf's Cassandra continued to reflect:

> ”What will become of us? The men, weak, whipped up into victors, need us as victims in order not to stop feeling altogether. Where is that leading?”[742]

In this light, I further suggest that the depictions of several of Malani's women in *Listening to the Shades* also speak of Cassandra's fearlessness and against the slump into victimhood. In this regard, again, Wolf's Cassandra mused further:

> ”What I did not understand then, and did not want to understand, was that many were prepared to be victims, not only from the outside, but through something in themselves. Everything in me revolted against this.”[743]

In this regard, one woman in the sequence *Rape* is much bigger than the others. She too is hunched up, but she does not appear to be *merely* a passive observer. She seems connected to an umbilical cord, which may signify a deeper connection to inner self.[744] In this light, then, the wounded women that Malani's audience encountered through the micro and macro compositions of *Listening to the Shades* were at the same time also survivors.

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[741] In this regard, see pp. 102-109.
[742] Wolf, *Cassandra,* p. 175.
[743] Ibid. pp. 142-143.
[744] In the context of intuition and insights, and how these have been depicted in her works, Malani explained that to translate this aspect for a general understanding in contemporary times, she feels strongly that insights and intuition are given equally to men and women; she called these insights as premonitions and a common sense (Nalini Malani in an interview with *Art radar Journal;* see ”Indian artist Nalini Malani talks myth, metaphor and women” in *Art Radar Journal,* March 21, 2014 (https://artradarjournal.com/artist-nalini-malani-talks-myth-metaphor-and-women-interview/ accessed on December 22, 2021).

Cassandra (2009)

The exhibition titled *Cassandra* (Figures 5.7.1.–5.7.6.) was the second large painting installation of Malani which I have classified in the *Cassandra Series.* It was Malani's first solo exhibition in France, where she had studied between 1970 and 1972. The centrepiece of the exhibition that inaugurated at the Lelong Art Gallery in Paris was a polyptych titled *Cassandra* (Figure 5.7.1.),[745] consisting of thirty Mylar panels painted in reverse. The polyptych was accompanied by seventeen additional paintings created by Malani between the years 2006 and 2008. All the works were informed by Wolf's retelling of the myth of Cassandra. As we have seen, in Malani's earlier works, Cassandra figured chiefly as an allegory or as a 'female thought' through the means of various figures, narratives and compositions. On the polyptych *Cassandra*, Malani depicted the Trojan seeress in anthropomorphic form for the first time. As the central character in the narrative, the cursed prophetess Cassandra levitated in front of the yellow surroundings (see again Figure 5.7.1.), alongside different objects and compositions figuring as symbols and relating to the myth and its message in the present.

All thirty panels were painted in reverse on acrylic Mylar sheets, with some being painted on both sides. The thirty panels of *Cassandra* revealed once again memories and histories, nationally and globally, all which were represented in the framework of Wolf's timely retelling of the myth. Cassandra, the seeress and the priestess, was depicted on the polyptych twice, appearing first at the far left, just above the figure of the storyteller (Figure 5.7.5., detail), and again in the centre of the polyptych, as a tired, grey, and lifeless figure (Figure 5.7.6., detail). In this regard, my contention is that Malani closely followed Wolf's account of Cassandra's faith, in which Cassandra's will and identity fluctuate on an axis between a fearless seeress and tired, yet never silenced woman in captivity. Malani's Cassandra, after heralding her seeings to an inattentive, unbelieving world, reappeared in the centre of the polyptych after what appears to be the downfall of civilisation. The nightmarish compositions and groupings of objects depicted on the remaining panels (Figures 5.7.2.-5.7.4., details) tell us that her prophecies had already come true. Their

[745] This chapter takes under discussion the centrepiece polyptych titled *Cassandra* (2009), created in 2009 and inaugurated at the Lelong Art Gallery in Paris in the same year.

audience was invited to recall and witness various traumatic moments that can be interpreted either as past, as taking place in the present or as foreseen for the future.

Just as with Malani's earlier work *Listening to the Shades,* the floating images on the panels of the polyptych resisted any linear narrative. In this sense and in their visionary nature, Malani's *Cassandra* resembled the painted visions of Hell by Hieronymus Bosch, such as his vision of Hell depicted on the right-hand side panel of the triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (Figure 5.5.2.). As in Bosch's work, the polyptych *Cassandra* featured various groupings of many different figures and items. There were disconnected bodily organs, including intestines, human brains and kidneys (Figure 5.7.3., detail); there were also umbilical cords and mutant figures, both familiar from Malani's earlier works; and various human figures, male and female, and their disconnected body parts, such as arms and legs. Also depicted were various species from the animal world, such as earthworms (Figure 5.7.4., detail). Malani had depicted earthworms in several of her earlier works; they appear on the polyptych *Cassandra* in five stages of development, starting with their birth and moving towards the final stage of their existence, on the path towards extinction. This, I argue, was Malani's reflection on the many species being driven towards extinction by our contemporary way of living. The disconnected human organs and human limbs were, I suggest, Malani's representations of physical wounds, as an allegory of the wider consequences of wars and violence, while the grey, lifeless female figures that struggled to survive, let alone move, served as visual symbols of psychological wounds.

The male figures depicted at different points on the polyptych (Figure 5.7.3., detail), often appeared as powerful figures. One of them poured seemingly toxic material from his hands, bringing about the destruction of human beings and the environment. Another, depicted centre right (Figure 5.7.4., detail), was essentially destructive. The objects and suffering humans to his left testified to another destruction, perhaps that of planet Earth. There are few direct interactions between human figures, and those that the audience saw are violent. Above the groupings and compositions floats the figure of an angel. In India, this could also be a *Vidyādhara,*[746] the holder of wisdom in Indian

[746] The word 'vidyadhara' (in Sanskrit *Vidyādhara*) goes for a supernatural being in the Indian religions, those of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. A vidyadhara is known as a genie of the air, a bearer of wisdom, who possesses magical powers. *Vidyadharas* are usually depicted in groups of two or more. For a reference, see, for instance, Marilia Albanese, *India – Treasures from an Ancient World,* Vercelli, Italy: White Star Publishers, 2001, p. 36, p. 253.

mythology, known as the winged spirit with magical powers, and often depicted in Buddhist art as Buddha's faithful companion. However, in Malani's *Cassandra*, the *Vidyādhara* appears to be too late to avert disaster, as Cassandra was, although both possessed special powers. Although the two of them appeared active, the world was taking its path to destruction at its own pace in Malani's *Cassandra*.

My contention is that the polyptych *Cassandra*, as well as inviting its audience to recollect memories, also showed Malani's concerns about the future, with an emphasis on the state of the environment and of planet Earth. Ecological concerns were not new in Malani's work at the time of creation of *Cassandra*. They go back as far as the early 1990s, when she collaborated with the Indian nuclear physicist Winin Pereira (1928-1999) and the British environmentalist and journalist Jeremy Seabrook (b. 1939) on a project that resulted in the book *Global Parasites: 500 Years of Western Culture* (1994),[747] whose dust jacket featured a painting by Malani. Degradation of the environment and the consequences of ecological disasters first featured in her work *The Mutant B Series* (1996),[748] where she painted various figures that had mutated as a result of man-made nuclear experiments and subsequent destruction, focusing on the developing countries that were being used as nuclear dumps. In 1998, Malani worked with this subject again, creating documentary footages in her work *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*,[749] in an attempt to protest against the nuclear experiments of India and Pakistan. *Cassandra*, however, was unhampered by any national boundaries or specific historical references in this regard. It spoke to its audiences globally, building on Malani's earlier work, *Listening to the Shades*, in its concerns with violence against the environment and nature in the contemporary era. In this light, then, *Cassandra* was Malani's timely response, that once again resonated compellingly with words uttered in anguish by Wolf's Cassandra after the fall of Troy:

> ”We swiftly varied our mistaken judgments to avoid seeing the sinister reality behind the glorious facade. One example enraged me when I was still capable of feeling enraged: all the Trojans had cheered just as I did when the second ship set sail, yet later they insisted

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[747] *Global Parasites: 500 Years of Western Culture* (1994) was written jointly by Winin Pereira and Jeremy Seabrook, discussing Western imperialism and laying bare the foundations of the Western system with its opulence grounded in injustice and unsustainability. See Winin Pereira and Jeremy Seabrook, *Global Parasites: 500 Years of Western Culture,* Bombay: Earthcare Books, 1994.
[748] For Malani’s *The Mutant B Series,* see footnote 588.
[749] For Malani’s *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*, see footnote 294.

> that this ship was the beginning of our downfall. How could they have forgotten so quickly what they learned at the knees of their mothers and nurses just as I did: the chain of events ruinous to our city streched to remotest antiquity. [...] Why are we carried away by the very wishes that are grounded in error?"[750]

5.4. *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012) as the 'Site of Remembrance'

> "This is Cassandra speaking. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the name of the victims."
> (Cassandra and the chorus in Nalini Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood*, after Ophelia speaking as Elektra in Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*)[751]

As we saw in Chapter 4, Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood* (Figures 4.12.1.–4.12.11)[752] used and re-used many well-known sources from literature, poetry and theatre, including works by Faiz, Rilke, Beckett, Müller, and Devi,[753] with Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* running as a red thread through the whole. Malani re-used the myth of Cassandra and its retelling by Wolf as she did in her earlier works, returning to the themes that engaged her: wars and their aftermaths, memories of past and on-going violence, and the failure of human to human relationships. By unveiling wounds, and by reframing Cassandra's gift of foreseeing the future, I will argue here that Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood* acted on two levels—it brought to the forefront memories and historical events that call for remembrance, while at the same time it also made an appeal in the visual for re-imagining the future, in Elaine Scarry's sense,[754] to enable humankind to survive.

As we saw in the previous chapter, *In Search of Vanished Blood,* as installed at the Kabinet No. 4 at dOCUMENTA Halle, was a site-responsive video/shadow play that lasted for

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[750] Wolf, *Cassandra,* pp. 55-56.
[751] From Müller's original:

> "This is Elektra speaking. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the name of the victims."
> (Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts For the Stage,* p. 58).

[752] As in the previous chapter, the discussion here considers the work as it was exhibited at dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, in 2012.
[753] For more information about each author and their works as they were re-used in *In Search of Vanished Blood,* see pp. 174-176.
[754] For a discussion of Elaine Scarry's work in this respect, see pp. 74-75.

eleven minutes. With its pre-recorded video and sound material, the exhibition had a beginning and an end. The audience was however invited in or out at anytime of its duration. It started with skies turning yellow in a post-apocalyptic environment inside. In that atmosphere inside the space of the Kabinet No. 4, the audience encountered first the face and soon afterwards the figure of a woman accompanied by the pre-recorded voice (i.e. that of Malani speaking as Cassandra), which declared:

> ”This is Cassandra speaking.”[755]

To which the pre-recorded voices of a chorus responded:

> ”In the heart of darkness.[756] Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the name of the victims.”[757]

And Cassandra continued:

> ”I eject all the sperm I have received. I turn the milk of my breasts into poison. I take back the world I gave birth to. I bury it in my womb.”[758]

To which the chorus responded again and commented:

> ”Down with the happiness of submission. Long live hate, rebellion and contempt.”[759]

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[755] This sentence is heard as a pre-recording at the beginning of *In Search of Vanished Blood.* The voice is distorted, however it is recognisably Malani's voice.
[756] For a discussion of *In Search of Vanished Blood* in the context of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899), see Bal, *In Medias Res*, pp. 83-86. For the original, see Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* California: Coyote Canyon Press, 2007 (originally published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1899 and published as a book in 1902).
[757] A pre-recorded sentence at the beginning of *In Search of Vanished Blood.* The voices are distorted. Taken from Müller's theatre play *Hamletmachine*:

> ”This is Elektra speaking.”
> (Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts For the Stage,* p. 58).

[758] A pre-recorded sentence at the beginning of *In Search of Vanished Blood.* It is Malani's distorted voice. Originally taken from Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts For the Stage,* p. 58.
[759] A pre-recorded sentence at the beginning of *In Search of Vanished Blood.* The voices are distorted. Originally taken from Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts For the Stage,* p. 58.

This was originally the final monologue by Ophelia, speaking as Elektra, in Müller's *Hamletmachine*.[760] *In Search of Vanished Blood* deployed Müller's text and Ophelia's final monologue, and shared the lines between Cassandra—as Ophelia—and the chorus.

Just as Cassandra was given the leading role in Wolf's retelling of the fall of Troy, she was also the protagonist in Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood.* She spoke to the world and during the eleven minutes of the work, gradually unveiled her traumatic experiences through fragments to which the chorus responded. Cassandra's memories of being a victim of oppression and violence in *In Search of Vanished Blood* were intertwined with collective histories in a national and global framework. On the one hand, her disclosure of intimate memories acted as mnemonic means for a recollection of memories of the many girls and women nationally and globally who were victims of violence and oppression, while on the other hand, Cassandra's personal memories were embedded in the collective past of a nation. In my view, this is an important aspect of *In Search of Vanished Blood*, to which I will return later in this discussion.

In Search of Vanished Blood helped the audience in their recollection of memories in a twofold way—through fragments and traces presented in its micro and macro narratives and, subsequently, through their own acts of recall. The audience was invited to perform these acts with the support of different representational strategies, which *In Search of Vanished Blood* deployed as mnemonic means. The visitors walked under the five rotating Mylar cylinders in darkness (Figure 4.12.10., installation view), this way enabling them to meet the world of shadows. Populated by ghostly spectres and their palimpsestic interplays with images projected from videos, the darkness, where these encounters took place, was intentional.[761] I suggest that this was not merely in order to bring the *invisible* into the field of the visible through the means of shadows of history, but also to speak allegorically about the darkness of history that the world inhabited by these ghostly spectres—the shadows—revealed. Within the seemingly endless interactions between the shadows originating from images painted on cylinders and the stories originating from the video projectors, the memory traces and historical references were presented through multilayered narratives.

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[760] See again Müller, *Hamletmachine,* in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts For the Stage,* p. 58.
[761] For Malani's reflections on the subject of darkness, see pp. 156-157.

In Search of Vanished Blood disclosed its message gradually through its multilayered micro and macro narratives, using a range of visual and representational means. Narratives were conveyed through the world of ghostly spectres, where shadows of the images painted on cylinders met the images coming from the video projectors. Both the shadows and the images each carried different memory traces and together they unveiled past narratives, in which the memory traces resided and acted as the very first layer of mnemonic means. For painting the images on the cylinders in *In Search of Vanished Blood*, Malani again turned to the *Kalighat Pat* technique.[762] On one occasion, the artist offered her thoughts about how this technique connects to memory and recall:

> " [...] with a Kalighat stroke, I would like to make the viewer recall, maybe unconsciously, the resonance of the past from that period in the nineteenth century, injecting it into the present."[763]

I suggest here that Malani used this style of early-modern painting, widely known in India, as another subtle layer of mnemonics[764] in *In Search of Vanished Blood*. Painted in the *Kalighat Pat* over the cylinders were different individual objects, animals (Figure 4.12.5., installation detail), body parts and body organs—including human hands, brains and skulls—in a landscape where they at first appeared to live a life of their own. After remaining for longer, however, the audience realised that these individual objects, those that had seemed disconnected at first, in fact played a part in broader macro narratives, closely connected to Cassandra's message of a deteriorating world. It was there that shadows encountered images and stories coming from the video projectors, and unveiled memory fragments and historical references of wars, oppression and violence.

If landscapes with narratives in Malani's earlier video/shadow play *Remembering Mad Meg* had resembled war scenes known from the works of Hieronymus Bosch or Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *In Search of Vanished Blood* deployed even more vividly than her earlier works scenes of violence that were familiar from art of former centuries. Counting on her audiences to be acquainted with the more widely known chapters from art history as well as with the images distributed by the media in contemporary times,

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[762] For a reference on the *Kalighat Pat* in this regard, see p. 158 and footnote 538.
[763] Nalini Malani quoted in Bal, *In Medias Res,* p. 86.
[764] In this respect, see footnote 397.

Malani turned to Francisco de Goya, deploying his etching *A Heroic Feat! With Dead Men!,* Plate no. 39 of *The Disasters of War* (Figure 4.10.) in *In Search of Vanished Blood*, to invite a recall of more recent pasts nationally and globally. In parallel, she also mobilised images of more recent conflicts (Figure 4.12.9., detail) known from the media, to draw the attention of her audiences to the continuous cycles of violence in the present. My contention is that *In Search of Vanished Blood* presented these often seemingly disconnected images and compositions of shadows in the ways in which memory and trauma are experienced, namely, through fragments and in traces, marked by instability, transitoriness and structures of repetition, residing on the threshold between remembering and forgetting.

In parallel to the historical references and memory narratives in *In Search of Vanished Blood*, the soundscape was deployed as another layer of mnemonic means. Malani used both individual sounds—such as those of rifle shots and explosions—and the pre-recorded soundtrack with recitals from well-known literary sources, to deliver Cassandra's message. Amongst the textual sources were Müller's *Hamletmachine*, Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape,* and Devi's *Draupadi.*[765] For the initial acts of recall to take place, the first layer of acoustic mnemonic means in *In Search of Vanished Blood* comprised the sounds recognisable from warfare: gunfire and explosions. These were overlaid either with Cassandra's monologues or with dialogues between her and the chorus, to create one soundscape that helped Cassandra's message to be heard.

From the various literary sources used and re-used in *In Search of Vanished Blood*, I argue that it was the short story *Draupadi*,[766] written by the Indian writer and social activist Mahasweta Devi, which spoke most compellingly to Cassandra's message in the work. Towards the midpoint, Cassandra opened up about her traumatic experience of being gang-raped, to which the chorus mercilessly disclosed the deep-buried wounds she still carries as a result:

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[765] For works written by other authors, i.e. works that were re-used in *In Search of Vanished Blood*, see pp. 174-175.

[766] Mahasweta Devi's story *Draupadi* was first published in 1978, in Bengali language, in the collection of stories titled *Agnigarbha*. The English translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak came out for the first time in the *Critical Inquiry Journal* in 1981, and was published in the collection *Breast Stories*, in 1997. See Mahasweta Devi, "Draupadi," in *Breast Stories* (translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2010. Through Draupadi's suffering of violence and abuse, like those of Wolf's *Cassandra,* Devi's *Draupadi* is a narrative universal in its portrayal of women as the most violated victims in conflicts and wars.

> "How many came to make her? She sees her breast and understands that indeed, she has been made up right. Her breasts are bitten raw. Her nipples torn. How many?"[767]

In her unveilings of violence perpetuated upon women and other vulnerable minorities, Malani mobilised mythical characters of different origins[768] to convey her message in the visual. Draupadi was one such character, widely known in India as one of the heroines in the Hindu epic *Mahābhārata,*[769]and as the main female character in Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story*.* Draupadi's story and Devi's retelling of it were thus already in the collective consciousness. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Draupadi was a dark-skinned daughter of Draupada and was married to five brothers of the Pandava clan, thus living in polyandry.[770] Amongst the many narratives linked to different characters, this epic story spoke of Draupadi being involved in an incident which was a catalyst for the outbreak of war. Together with his uncle Shakuni, the wicked Duryodhana conspired against the five Pandava brothers, Draupadi's husbands, to win their kingdoms in a game of gambling. As the game proceeded, narrates *Mahābhārata*, the five brothers lost their kingdom and their wife.[771] Duryodhana won everything, including Draupadi, who became his slave, in this way sharing Cassandra's destiny. In Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story, Draupadi was named Dopdi and was the protagonist of the work. Devi portrayed her female protagonist as a fearless and an individuated woman within a male-governed society, like Wolf's *Cassandra*. If Draupadi in *Mahābhārata* was a submissive woman, oppressed in a patriarchal society, Devi's Draupadi/Dopdi did not stand for silence and submission. Subsequently, her words and actions became a danger to the patriarchal

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[767] This text was recited towards the midpoint of *In Search of Vanished Blood,* by a chorus as a pre-recorded text. Originally, this is a text taken from Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* (translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). For a reference on Devi's work, see the above footnote.

[768] Greek and Indian mythology, both used extensively in Malani's work, had remained close to each other from the period of Indo-Hellenic era or Indo-Greek/Graeco-Indian Kingdom (ca. 180 BCE – 10 CE), one that spanned the present-day Afghanistan and the Punjab region in the present-day India. For a comprehensive account of the subject, see Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies,* New York: Allworth Press, 2006.

[769] For the English translation, see, for instance, *The Mahābhārata* (an abridged translation into English by John D. Smith), London: Penguin Classics, 2009. In the English speaking world, the work is also commonly referred to as the Mahabharata.

[770] *Mahābhārata* names Draupadi as a dark-skinned daughter of Draupada and a wife of the five Pandava brothers; for a reference, see, for instance, *The Mahābhārata* (translated from Sanskrit by P. Lal), Calcutta: The Anukramanika in the Adi Parva, Volume I, 1968, p. 37. This translation comprises six volumes.

[771] For a reference, see the above footnote.

order, thus a danger to the society that took submission and silence as feminine ideals. True, Dopdi was an abused woman, but what made her a different character was her active response to this abuse and her resilience. In Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story, where women's bodies were the primary targets of violence in war, Dopdi's body became the *site* of exertion of authoritarian power as well as that of gendered resistance. In this light, Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood* used Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story, thus the story of Dopdi, to support Cassandra's message, with the two female characters sharing similar destinies and thus recalling similar difficult memories. My contention is that the references to Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi* added another dimension to Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood,* so that the violated, wounded female bodies—through Malani's visual language—came to act as 'sites of wounds' in the present.

The women whom the audience encountered in *In Search of Vanished Blood*[772] (Figures 4.12.3., 4.12.6., and 4.12.7., installation details), many of whom had bandaged or scarred faces, some were even covered in blood,[773] carried wounds in common with countless girls and women nationally and globally, all who shared Draupadi's and Cassandra's story and destiny. I contend that Malani's message in *In Search of Vanished Blood* was primarily to register violence that does not know national borders. As Malani's Cassandra herself put it at the beginning of the work—she spoke in the name of all the victims—of those who suffered in silence, of the many who didn't survive, and of those who still suffer in the present.[774] This claim to universality[775] is compellingly borne out by the many different women whose faces appear in *In Search of Vanished Blood*. In this light, my contention is that *In Search of Vanished Blood* wanted to cut through the silence

[772] *In Search of Vanished Blood* was also exhibited to commemorate one hundred years since the outbreak of World War I, on August 4, 2014, in Edinburgh. On that occasion, Malani created a site-specific installation of *In Search of Vanished Blood* unique to Edinburgh, adjusting the work from its previous exposure at dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012. One addition was the projection of many different faces over the western and the southern façades of the Scottish National Gallery building in Edinburgh.
[773] For a discussion of *In Search of Vanished Blood* in the context of 'bloody art' (i.e. phrase coined by Mieke Bal, respectively), see Bal, *In Medias Res*, pp. 83-141.
[774] Huyssen justifiably argues that this subject started manifesting in Malani's art trajectory as early as 1990s, after another violent boust of Hindu pogroms on Muslims, when again women suffered the most (Huyssen, "Shadow Play as Medium of Memory," in *Nalini Malani - In Search of Vanished Blood*, p. 51). In this regard, Huyssen contends that the narrative of violence uttered by Cassandra in *In Search of Vanished Blood* is at the same time the story as well as the history of violence against women, locally and globally, extended to also entail the political aspects of their origins (ibid.).
[775] In this respect, i.e. for universalism, see footnote 468.

and denial that had veiled these traumatic memories and historical events, to the point where violence[776] and the wounds it caused became accepted as part of everyday life.
By contrast to the abject pasts unveiled in *In Search of Vanished Blood,* the fearless and resilient character of Cassandra offered an alternative to silence and denial. Malani's Cassandra spoke out to the world, unveiling her memories, in a dialogue with the chorus, which speaks compellingly to a dialogue between Cassandra and her mother Hecuba—in Wolf's retelling of the myth—a few days before the fall of Troy:

> "'Now, Cassandra. You are going to be sensible, aren't you?' asks Hecuba.
> 'No,' responds Cassandra.
> 'You don't agree to the plan?' asks Hecuba again.
> 'No,' goes Cassandra.
> 'But you will keep silent?' asks the queen.
> 'No,' responds Cassandra.
> And the king, who was present there, ordered his guards: 'Seize her!'[777]

From which point, regardless of the consequences, Cassandra—again, in Wolf's retelling of the myth, and resembling Malani's Cassandra in *In Search of Vanished Blood*—continued in the same fearless direction, speaking ardently to herself:

> "A hundred times I said 'no' again. My life, my voice, my body would produce no other answer. 'You don't agree?' 'No.' But you will keep silent?' 'No.' No. No. No."[778]

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[776] During and after Partition, violence had reached unimaginable heights—especially violence perpetuated against women. Large numbers of women were raped, gang-raped, abducted and their bodies mutilated. Afterwards, the state of India demanded the return of women and children abducted from Pakistan, with the result that the many women who in the meantime had been forced to make new families with their abductors, were made victims for the second time, which in many cases led to suicide. For a compelling account of the subject, see the aforementioned Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000; for another account, see Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998. The 1990s were marked by new bouts of violence against women and other vulnerable minorities in the country, including the events that took place between 1992 and 1993 after the destruction of Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya, and again around the renewed state-sanctioned violence of Hindus upon Muslims in the region of Gujarat in 2002. For references on Ayodhya and Gujarat events, see footnotes 292 and 534. In addition, see also Alok Bhalla (ed.), *Stories About the Partition of India: Volumes 1:3,* New Delhi: Manohar, 2012; and Alok Bhalla (ed.), *Stories About the Partition of India: Volume 4,* New Delhi: Manohar, 2012.
[777] Wolf, *Cassandra*, p. 184.
[778] Ibid. p. 190.

On this note, *In Search of Vanished Blood* ended with one final glimpse over Cassandra's white-bandaged face, over which a text ran backwards (Figure 4.12.8., installation detail). This was a quote from Faiz's poem *Lahu Ka Surag*,[779] which had given the title to Malani's work:

> ”There's no sign of blood, not anywhere.
> I've searched everywhere.
> The executioner's hands are clean, his nails transparent.
> The sleeves of each assassin are spotless.
> No sign of blood: no trace of red,
> not on the edge of the knife, none on the point of the sword. The ground is without stains, the ceiling white.
>
> The blood which has disappeared without leaving a trace isn't part of written history: who will guide me to it?
> It wasn't spilled in service of emperors --
> -- it earned no honor, had no wish granted.
>
> It wasn't offered in rituals of sacrifice --
> -- no cup of absolution holds it in a temple.
> It wasn't shed in any battle --
> -- no one calligraphed it on banners of victory.
>
> But, unheard, it still kept crying out to be heard.
> No one had the time to listen, no one the desire.
> It kept crying out, this orphan blood,
> but there was no witness. No case was filed.
> From the beginning this blood was nourished only by dust. Then it turned to ashes, left no trace, became food for dust.”[780]

Faiz's poem passed slowly over Cassandra's bandaged face.[781] Her face was overwritten by the poem, yet still alive and breathing. The poem created a veil over it, just as violence

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[779] For a reference on life and work by the Pakistani intellectual and poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, including his poem *Lahu Ka Surag,* see footnotes 602 and 603.
[780] Faiz Ahmed Faiz, ”In Search of Vanished Blood,” in *The Rebel's Silhouette. Selected Poems* (translated into English by Agha Shahid Ali), Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, p. 37.
[781] This was also the emblematic image of Malani's work *In Search of Vanished Blood*, i.e. an image that has been reproduced in various publications discussing the work.

veils the spirit and body of its victims by leaving them both wounded. In this light, Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood* also acts as the 'site of wounds,' and thus the 'site of remembrance' in the present.

To recapitulate: throughout this chapter, I have foregrounded works that draw on the mythical, which I argued is one of Malani's strategies in the visual, to aid the recall of traumatic memories and their related histories. The five selected works created in different media, all, I argued, deployed the myth of Cassandra as a medium of memory, for the memory acts to take place. I suggested that in each work, the use of the myth of Cassandra allowed the artist a specific way to engage with collective memories and historical trauma in the visual, in which her main concern was the unveiling of violence and wounds: the violence inflicted to individuals and nations.

The Tables have Turned and *Remembering Mad Meg,* works that were created in the shadow play and the video/shadow play media, deployed the myth of Cassandra to speak of the past and present violence against women through fragments and traces, which were at once intimate and collective. The memory acts called forth in *The Tables have Turned* and *Remembering Mad Meg* were those of violent pasts and of their political appropriations, past and present. The two works, each with its own representational strategies in the visual, bound together these memory acts asking for a recognition in the present.

Listening to the Shades and *Cassandra,* the two painting installations, used the myth of Cassandra to speak primarily of wounds as a result of violence—wounds both personal and collective. With different representational strategies and mnemonic means deployed in the two works, the individual objects depicted and the collective units of images spoke of wounds in national and global contexts.

In Search of Vanished Blood deployed the myth of Cassandra amongst several other sources from literature, poetry and theatre, with Cassandra's story acting as a red thread connecting them all. *In Search of Vanished Blood* brought to the fore once again memories and their related historical events intertwined with violence and wounds resulting from conflicts and wars. These unveiled themselves to their audience gradually, through fragments and memory traces presented in narratives and with the audience being invited into performing acts of recall. To enable this, *In Search of Vanished Blood* deployed several layers of mnemonic means, complementing the myth of Cassandra with the story

of Draupadi as retold by Mahasweta Devi. Draupadi's body—Dopdi's body in Devi's retelling—became the site of exertion of authoritarian power and at the same time that of gendered resistance. Where Devi said in *Draupadi* that a consequence of war was that women's bodies became the primary targets of violence, Malani's *In Search of Vanished Blood* used Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story to support Cassandra's message of violence, inflicted wounds and their politically informed denial.

In conclusion, drawing once again on Nora's notion of *lieux de mémoire,* I suggest that all five works examined in this chapter act as repositories of memories in Nora's broad definition of the term, in which artworks in themselves constitute *lieux de mémoire.*[782] In parallel, I suggest that these works also act as 'sites of wounds', by unveiling intimate memories and bringing to the surface collective historical events intertwined with violence, both past and present.

[782] Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire,*" in *Representations*, p. 7, p. 23.

Conclusion

We have seen how, throughout her career, Nalini Malani not only engaged consistently with subjects related to both trauma and memory, but also, in increasing measure, with the collective suffering caused by massive historic fractures, such as those introduced by postcolonialism and the rise of nationalism in India and elsewhere. We have observed the scope of her work widen as she moved from short films highlighting the housing crisis and the oppression of women in 1970s India to works of inter-media hybridity in the teens of the twenty-first century that address past and present violence against minorities and women, crimes against the environment, and global wars and their aftermaths. As we have seen, however, while these works exist within political and social contexts, they also invariably draw their strength from personal, intimate memories. Here, memory and trauma are found at the intersection between the collective realm and the individual realm of lived bodily experience.

The works selected for this study make no distinction between the way their subjects relate to trauma and memory and the political agendas of remembering and forgetting, nationally and globally. They help make visible what is often suppressed, denied or intentionally forgotten, as well as the morbid symptoms of histories, amongst which violence and its political complicity feature most forcefully. These works display the artist's many decades-long engagement with the unveiling in art of the societal implications of political and domestic violence in India and elsewhere, through a recollection of memories and an insistence—to use Jill Bennett's words—"that we engage with the trauma of others."[783]

This way of thinking about Malani's work and art practice is enhanced by considering it in the light of the work of the French author Charlotte Delbo, who addressed the sensitive boundary between different kinds of memory and their accessibility, distinguishing between 'ordinary memory' and a 'deep-lying, sense memory'. In her final work, the memoir, *Days and Memory*, Delbo embedded her personal traumatic experience in the environment that she shared with those who experienced the

[783] Bennett, "*Tenebrae* after September 11: Art, Empathy, and the Global Politics of Belonging," in *World Memory*, p. 193.

trauma of concentration camps during World War II, thus transferring the traumatic memories of an individual into the realm of collective memory.

This study has shown the presence (or absence) of intimations of the two concepts—trauma and memory—in the selected works by the contemporary Indian artist Nalini Malani, through a systematic analysis of the subject matter, the medium of creation and the representational strategies used in the visual language of each work. This has also brought out the various trauma and memory discourses that these visual narratives disclose.

It was particularly important to begin by examining Malani's life milestones and key events, in order to set the groundwork for a further analysis of selected works in the framework of memory and trauma. Many of these events, which entailed fierce violence against women and minorities, became memories of the collective as well as traumatic historical events which Malani has used as a resource, deployed and recalled in her work through her different creative periods, in different thematic settings and with different representational strategies. Malani's life path and her formative years were irrevocably shaped by her experience of the 1947 Partition, a traumatic event *par excellence* in the history of the twentieth century India. Other elements that proved crucial for Malani's future and life-long artistic commitments were: the societal changes that marked her formative years, the transition from the optimism of the Nehruvian era of the 1950s and 1960s to the disillusionment during the 1970s, which prompted fierce changes in the overall socio-political climate and gave rise to more stringent and chauvinistic forms of Hindu nationalism. I have shown how from an early age, Malani responded to these changes with her choices of subject matter and of artistic medium. In considering her early use of the cinematic medium, I have drawn attention to the part this medium would come to play in the inter-media hybridity of her later work, assisting her representations of subjects closely linked to trauma and memory.

By examining several works from Malani's two decades of creation in the medium of painting (i.e. her 1970s and 1980s period of creation), I have shown the artist's initial interest in female inner suffering within the patriarchal society in India and her first introductions of trauma as the subject matter in her work. The depictions of female bodies in her early canvases were discussed through the lens of Charlotte Delbo's 'deep-lying, sense memory' described in her *Days and Memory,* where Delbo used the metaphor

of a snake that sheds its skin. Delbo saw the memory as something that changes through the passing of time, as the skin of a snake does, and she extended the metaphor of the snake shedding its skin with an image of the leftover of snake's skin retaining its memory—the traces of who that snake once was and the trauma it carried within. Through her descriptions of the snake's old and new skins, Delbo spoke of the traces of her own traumatic experience and its memory as something present in the body long after the actual experience. The shedding and disappearance of the 'skin memory'—the 'embodied memory'—was Delbo's metaphor for communicating the *visible* and *invisible* of the material traces of memory. By examining Malani's depictions of female bodies through such a lens, I have shown how the artist unveiled the *invisible* traces of trauma in her visual language at the time, positioning it within the domestic, cultural and socio-political framework of contemporary India. In this light, I argued that these early works—thus, the paintings—with their female protagonists constituted both a site of perception and experience, acting as the very first *lieux de mémoire,* Pierre Nora's 'sites of memory', in Malani's overall oeuvre.

Investigations followed of works from the artist's mature creative period, where in the early 1990s she began experimenting with new media. By examining a selection of Malani's first installation works created in the 1990s, I have shown her interest in new subject matters related to memory and trauma, and their inextricable link to the medium of their expression. By examining the relationship between the subject matter and the medium, I have shown how the expressive form of her chosen subjects in a certain medium and seen in the light of the two concepts— trauma and memory—provides a possible site for memory.

By foregrounding three of Malani's theatre plays and video plays (i.e. theatre/video plays) created in the course of the 1990s—*Medeamaterial, Naukari,* and *Hamletmachine*—I have examined the three selected works through the lens of a memory-theatre. By investigating their contents and their representational strategies, I have shown how all three works brought to the fore collective historical events of a traumatic nature. In each one, traumatic memories were recollected through fragments and interplays between performance, images and sounds. In parallel, I have also shown the artist's first use in this period of additional means for the recollection of memories of her audiences—the mnemonic means—namely, the painting medium and the use of mythical materials in *Medeamaterial,* and the sound in *Hamletmachine,* counting on its

emotional charge and its tenacious hold on the memory. Additionally, I have shown how *Naukari* was important for the innovation of a new representational technique closely linked to memory in the artist's practice, the drawing/erasure video animation *Memory: Record, Er*ase. I have argued that the artist came to use this technique as her strategy for communicating the elusive, fragmentary nature of memory itself, and the complex relationship between the remembering of a traumatic past and a desire to forget.

My investigation of Malani's use and re-invention of the ancient technique of shadow play led me to examine five selected works created in the shadow play and the video/shadow play media. My focus was on the *shadow* as the artist's visual strategy, thus a medium for invoking the *invisible* in relation to the past. I have shown how all five works—*The Sacred and The Profane, Transgressions*, *Gamepieces*, *Remembering Mad Meg*, and *In Search of Vanished Blood*—recalled traumatic memories and narrated their related discourses through the means of their medium—the shadow play—where the *shadow*, as a concretised form, is part of a wider logic at work in Malani's art practice. By investigating the relationship in the five works between thematic orientations and the medium of their creation, I have shown how this re-invented medium allowed the artist a specific kind of engagement with the subjects she unveiled, those that are *absent* and *past*, yet continuously present. By examining fragments and traces of that which is *absent* and *past* in these five works, I have also shown how Malani offered these as visual agents of memory and trauma in the present. An investigation of the subject matters in *In Search of Vanished Blood,* which is one of the most complex works in the artist's career, brought out the many different memories that this work is recalling and bringing to the fore. I discussed its 'multidirectional' references, and by drawing on Michael Rothberg's concept of 'multidirectional memory', I have shown how *In Search of Vanished Blood* registers different memories at the same time and thus invites its audiences to perform 'multidirectional' acts of remembering. I have also shown how each of the five works, in its own context, performs certain memory-work in the present, suggesting that all five act as *les lieux de mémoire,* the 'sites of memory', where the larger web of collective memories is held together by an object.

By foregrounding five selected works that draw on the *mythical*—the myth of Cassandra and its retelling by the German writer Christa Wolf—I investigated Malani's use of this myth as both a representational strategy and a mnemonic device, aiding a recollection of memories. By investigating the five works created in different media, I

have shown how all five deploy the myth of Cassandra as a medium of memory, enabling the memory acts to take place. In parallel, I have also shown that the use of this very myth allowed the artist a specific kind of engagement with collective memories and historical traumas, in which her main concern was the unveiling of violence, and the silences and political denials that accompany them. Returning to *In Search of Vanished Blood* and examining it through the fresh lens of the mythical, I have shown its deployment of different layers of mnemonics, thus, the aids for the recollection of memories, complementing the myth of Cassandra with the story of Draupadi as retold by the Indian writer Mahasweta Devi. Both works—*Cassandra* by Wolf and *Draupadi* by Devi—built on trauma experienced by their leading female protagonists: in short, women's bodies constituting the primary targets of violence in wars and conflicts. In this light, I have shown how *In Search of Vanished Blood* used Devi's retelling of Draupadi's story to support that of Cassandra—thus, to unveil the memories of violence experienced by the two female characters and the wounds it left behind. By drawing once again on Nora's notion of *les lieux de mémoire,* I suggested that all five works investigated in the final chapter act, in different contexts and through different media, as repositories of memories in Nora's broad definition of the term, in which artworks in themselves constitute the 'sites of remembrance'.

Despite the differences between the works selected for this study, the overlaps amongst them are many, while they cross national borders to also include global themes. I have shown how memory and trauma have a far-reaching political tenor in these works, while they also share a demanding relation to their audiences, insisting upon their collaboration, often through acts of recall. All of these works carry on overt dialogues with traumatic memories and often abject historical events known to their viewers. In their visual form, these selected works all deploy the many different and complex visual strategies that are used for placing the past in the present, and combining these with the aesthetic inheritances that are used to unveil and represent the subject matters related to trauma and memory.

My working hypothesis, that Malani's selected works have an inextricable connection not only with the two concepts, trauma and memory, but also with the political agendas of remembering and forgetting, has been borne out. The works selected for this study all display a preoccupation with subjects related to the two concepts of interest. These

subjects do largely exist within political and social contexts, while threading in a patchwork of personal, intimate memories. Memory and trauma, as they display themselves in these selected works, are on the one hand a product of the intersection between the local and the global—thus, the collective realm—and on the other hand that of the lived bodily experience—thus, the individual realm. These works all engage in various ways with subjects related to trauma and memory, addressing on the one hand individual suffering and its past and present consequences, and on the other, the collective suffering caused by tumultuous historical events. Another such subject discerned in Malani's work is trauma originating from the everyday violence experienced by individuals (often women in Malani's works) living under slavery, in patriarchal societies or authoritarian regimes. Within the individual and the collective realm, Malani's main concern is making discernible in her work oppression, violence and discrimination against women (and their related traumas).

In this light, Malani's selected works here engage not only with trauma and memory, more or less explicitly, but also help make visible what has often been suppressed, denied or intentionally forgotten. The selected works display the complex mix of wounding in human activity, demonstrating the artist's decades-long engagement with unveiling in art the implications of political and domestic violence in India and elsewhere, through a recollection of memories and an insistence that we engage with another's trauma. In this respect, Malani uses different representational and visual means to make us encounter the traumatic past in the present. Several of these works record the moment of trauma itself and act—as memories do—as persistent markers of a past that persists troublingly into the present. The works selected here bear witness on the one hand to Malani's life-long determination both to struggle, by means of art, against the inhumanity and brutality of oppression and violence due to failure of leadership, and to bring to the fore the unaltered chapters of history—in both aspects, these works perform an important memory-work in the present. The memory art in its broader sense fears the erasure of certain chapters of political, societal, or individual pasts, and this is precisely the field where Malani's work advocates and contributes: the selected works are intended to evoke the either erased or denied pasts and present unaltered historical events. In parallel, these works also reopen and recontextualise authorised memory-narratives, and by doing so, they also intervene in the politics of memory.

Could it be that studies such as the present one go beyond what is justified in making trauma a central category in wider memory discourses? Now that scholars in various disciplines have been engaged in critical work on trauma and memory for more than two decades, many have been tempted to consider trauma as the more or less overt centrepiece within memory discourses, whether they be culturally, socially, politically or historically oriented. From the start, memory discourses have tended to focus on the personal—on testimony and memoirs, primarily in relation to the Shoah—and more generally on subjective traumatic memories. Particular attention has been given to psychoanalytic aspects, with an emphasis on the authentic and experiential in therapy. At the same time, trauma has also been commonly a primary concern in the domain of collective memory and the related memory discourses. Initially, this was the case with memory discourses relating to the Holocaust, and has also been true of the memory discourses of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa, with their intense interest in testimony and survival witnessing, of race discourses in Australia related to the 'stolen generations' (i.e. children of Aboriginal descent who were removed from their families by the Australian government), of memory discourses during and beyond the wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, and of political discourses in Latin America relating to forced disappearances, *desaparecidos,* to name but a few. All of these, however, were concerned with many other questions beyond those around trauma: for instance, with human rights violations, justice and collective responsibility as well as political culpability. The privileging of trauma over memory tends to appear in those areas of collective memory discourses where nations or groups of people who suffered violence are trying to come to terms with historical events.[784] My concern, however, is that by overshadowing memory with trauma, by privileging the latter in all collective memory discourses, or by collapsing memory into trauma, we may be missing out on a wider understanding of memory discourses outside the realm of trauma, in a domain where memory itself is not confined only to pain, loss and suffering, nor to the abject and uncanny. Memories that concern colonialism, neo-colonialism and the neoliberal order

[784] Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* p. 9. One such example was the Srebrenica massacre during the Yugoslav wars (1991-2001), when in July 1995 more than ten thousand Bosnian men and boys were killed. The Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001) were a series of ethnic conflicts and wars for independence fought in the former Yugoslavia, resulting from the breakup of the Yugoslav federation in 1992. For an account of the subject, see, for instance, Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, London: Penguin Books, 1996; or Davor Marijan and Nikica Barić, *The Fall of Yugoslavia and the Creation of the Croatian State,* Zagreb: Croatian Institute for the History, 2019.

urge us to reflect on the concept of memory outside its co-existence with trauma. An even more burdening emergence is when the psychoanalytic understanding of the concept of trauma is transferred into the historical and political arena, resulting in the classification of entire chapters of histories as intrinsically traumatic. Where investigations of memory cannot do without the concept of trauma and historical trauma, additional support may be derived from the transnational discourses on human rights, rather than resorting to psychoanalysis and trying to analyse entire chapters of history in its terms. Retaining the explanatory power of memory, taken separately from trauma, involves allowing for a more nuanced and differentiated view, whereby other discourses, such as the human rights discourses or legal proceedings, can also offer major avenues for critical engagements with memory.

Returning to the visual arts in contemporary times, can we, for instance, consider a difficult memory—thus, an abject memory—in an artwork not only as a reflection on a traumatic past incident but as a reference to contemporaneous incidents relating to the continuity of events that are being recollected through memory acts? As yet, this remains relatively unchartered territory, beyond the scope of the present study. More in-depth and interdisciplinary studies are required in the future in disciplines and fields such as memory studies, trauma studies, psychology and not least the law and human rights, so as to equip researchers from other disciplines with the methodological tools to deliver more precise and rigorous findings.

In her final work, *Days and Memory,* while observing the memory traces fading with the passing of time, Charlotte Delbo spoke of her wider concerns about the role of memory in recalling past traumatic events and unveiling these in the present. With Delbo, Enwezor, Devi, Müller, Wolf, and others, I ask whether, in the wake of acts of unfathomable violence and oppression that push individuals and whole societies into muteness, amnesia and denial, there can be any possible value in silence. Should not the artist—should *we* not—in fact speak up and bear witness to what has happened? Nalini Malani's work is a timely reminder of how art can indeed give voice to the *invisible* and the *unspeakable*, even as it fully acknowledges the fragility of memory and the insurmountable burden of its politics. In the final instance, if art is sincere, it speaks to the necessity of keeping traumatic memories alive.

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URL: www.nalinimalani.com/texts/venice.htm

Appendix A: The Myth of Medea

In the myth of Medea, Jason is the only surviving son of Aeson, the king of Iolcus in Thessaly, whose throne had been usurped by his half-brother, Pelias. Jason, educated and brought up by the centaur Chiron, claimed his throne back from Pelias, who declared himself willing to give up the throne on one condition, that Jason brings back the Golden Fleece from the kingdom of Colchis. Jason, determined to get back the throne, summoned more than fifty men from various corners of Greece to join him on a death-sentence journey to the end of the Black Sea. The men were called the Argonauts, after their ship, the Argo. Arriving in Colchis, known as a barbarian kingdom, after a perilous journey, Jason claimed back the Golden Fleece, saying that it was his by birthright. The king of Colchis, Aeetes, imposed even more impossible conditions on Jason: to tackle two fire-breathing bulls, to sow a field with serpents' teeth and defeat the warriors that sprang up from them, and to slay the dragon which guarded the Fleece. Jason was on the point of admitting defeat when he was noticed by Medea, king Aeetes' daughter, a beautiful priestess and a mighty sorceress. Medea fell in love with Jason and used all her powers to help him obtain the Golden Fleece, while Jason in return swore by the Gods to remain faithful to her forever. Medea, Jason and the Argonauts left Colchis with their newly won Golden Fleece, followed by king Aeetes and his army. Some traditions say that Medea's brother, who was on the ship following the Argonauts, was killed by Jason, while others say that Medea killed her own brother and scattered his dismembered corpse in the ocean. In any case, the murder delayed the grieving Aeetes and his men, enabling Medea, Jason and the Argonauts to escape.

Back in Iolcus, Medea tricked King Pelias's daughters into killing their father, giving Jason the kingdom but making it an even more tainted place. The couple moved to the neighbouring Corinth, where they were welcomed by king Creon. There, Jason soon forgot his oath of constancy to Medea, and, driven by ambition to become king of Corinth, decided to marry Creon's daughter Glauce. Medea was banished from the city. On a visit to the underworld, Medea discovered the remains of one of Creon's own daughters, who had rebelled, and she realised that Corinth too was built on a lie, just as her native Colchis was—and as could be said of many civilisations before and after. Corinth was concealing the fact that its power was built on a sacrifice of the innocent and the more ethical. Medea, torn between the love she still had for Jason and emotions of rage, jealousy and hatred,

mixed a poisonous concoction and soaked in it a dress which she then sent to Glauce as a wedding gift. When Glauce dressed in it at sunrise, the dress burst into flames, forcing Glauce to throw herself into a well and die. Some traditions say that following those events, the people of Corinth stoned Medea's children to death, while other versions say that Medea poisoned her own children so as to save them from the destiny that awaited them, and to pay back Jason for his betrayal. Medea then disappeared from Corinth, while Jason, abandoned by the Gods, became a vagabond.[785]

[785] There are many written sources of the myth of Medea; its dramatisation by Euripides has been adapted, rewritten and reinterpreted many times. This summary took as a leading reference Euripides' *Medea* (first performed in 431 BCE). See Euripides, *Medea and Other Plays* (translated by John Davie), Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 49-91.