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(Foreign) Language against Forgetting

"The Eighth Life: (For Brilka)" a novel by Nino Haratischvili (2014) and "Maybe Esther A Family Story" a memoir by Katja Petrowskaja (2014) are both German language works. Both authors recount the passing on of memories and stories within a family over generations. In both stories, the family narrative is strongly influenced by the political events of 20th century world history. The personal confrontation with the consequences of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern and Western Europe proceeds differently in the families. Stalinism and Nazi dictatorship leave violent traces in the respective families but also in the individual biographies.

This paper will explore the question of how differently family history is passed on and how family stories, which are preserved in communicative memory and passed on orally (Welzer, 2011), relate to world history, which is stored in cultural memory (Assmann, A. 2018). "Families serve as a kind of switchboard between the individual memory and larger frames of collective remembrance." (Erl 2011, p. 315).

In both books, however, the remembering, telling and (re-)constructing of family histories is also contrasted with forgetting (Haratischvili) and silence (Petrovskaya). "The score of Forgetting" and the "Silence" in Katja Petrovskaya's family history create gaps that are filled by fictional stories. Language, also the "language of the mute", is the medium used to work against forgetting. Two different methods are shown of how language can function as a tool of emancipation and what functions language takes on in the individual, the familial and cultural memory. Notably, the works were not written in the mother tongue of the authors, but in German.

Assmann, Aleida (2018): *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. 1. Auflage. München: C.H. Beck.

Erl, Astri (2011): Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies. In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42 (3), S. 303–318. DOI: 10.3138/jcfs.42.3.303.

Welzer, Harald (2011): *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis. Eine Theorie der Erinnerung*. 3. Aufl. München: Beck (Beck'sche Reihe, 1669).

Katja Grupp is a professor at the Department of Language&Communication at the IU in Bad Honnef. After studying Slavic Studies, Economics and Eastern European History, she was a DAAD Lektor in Kaliningrad, Russia. Research interests: Cultural learning, culture and memory, culture and (non)translation, artefacts and memory.