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## Beyond Multidirectional Memory. Opening Pathways to Politics and Solidarity

### Abstract

Our paper responds to the ongoing crisis of memory politics that has brought the problem of the de-politicization of memory studies scholarship to the forefront. This reflexivity is manifested in the demand for theories that explicitly address the problems of politics and solidarity. A representative theory in this regard is Michael Rothberg's multidirectional memory that examines "the Holocaust in the age of decolonization" and offers a non-exclusive model of public remembering and reconciliation. While we acknowledge Rothberg's attempt to overcome the "competition paradigm" of contemporary memory, we argue that the model of multidirectional memory as a politico-ethical framework of solidarity ultimately fails because of its underlying social ontology and presentist-ahistorical method of interpretation. We give a critical analysis of his model while applying the same historical and empirical focus. By doing so, we show that the direct theoretical link between memory and solidarity is the outcome of a de-politicization of the historical record. Ultimately, we make a case for Leftist-antifascist internationalism, a paradigm he misidentified as multidirectional Holocaust memory.

Keywords: anti-colonialism; anti-capitalism; postwar memory; anti-racism; identity politics; socialism; antisemitism; Marxism; anti-imperialism;

Over the last decade or so, memory studies as a field has seen a rising awareness of a crises of a paradigm commonly described as cosmopolitan (Levy and Sznajder 2005) and once cherished for its promise to ensure a regime of human rights on a global scale. A sense of crisis—or, indeed, collapse—encouraged scholars in our field to rethink the memory/politics nexus by identifying the limits of cosmopolitan Holocaust memory (Bull and Hansen 2016, Gensburger and Lefranc 2020, David 2020, Spišiaková et al. 2020, Pisanty 2021). Concurrently, Michael Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) became a key reference point in transcultural memory studies (see Lorenz 2020: 39–42) and a popular model to respond to at least some the challenges posed by the current crises.

Since its publication, Rothberg's theory has been appealing to an increasing number of scholars working, especially, on pressing issues of postcoloniality, migration, and social conflicts known as memory wars. In response to these conflicts, Rothberg's account proposes a non-exclusive model of public remembering. Focusing on "the Holocaust in the age of decolonization," his concept of multidirectional memory calls attention to those cases in history when these "two memories" were mutually co-constitutive rather than competitive. Though Rothberg shows that public remembering can indeed be cooperative, his theory is short of an

explanation as to why and under which circumstances is that so and, more importantly, why memories still remain overwhelmingly exclusive (Arnold and Bischoff, 2022). We believe that these uncertainties result from some of the key presumptions in Rothberg's work. In this paper we revisit his 2009 book as a way to analyze some of the core historical-methodological problems which ultimately undermine multidirectional memory as a theoretical model.

More recently, the book's German translation (2021) started a fierce controversy which again showed the relevance of Rothberg's approach for contemporary debates on the legacy of the Holocaust and colonialism. Unfortunately, much of the recent controversy in Germany has been caught up in the old question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Our approach to a critical re-assessment of Rothberg's theory is different. While we acknowledge Rothberg's attempt to overcome the "competition paradigm" of contemporary memory politics, we argue that the model of multidirectional memory as a politico-ethical framework of cross-cultural solidarity ultimately fails because of its underlying social ontology and presentist-ahistorical method of interpretation.

His method is presentist in the sense that it takes for granted the currently dominant "vision and division of the world," as Pierre Bourdieu has termed it, namely, the universalism vs. particularism debate on cultural globalization. It was this debate that framed the controversies around the uniqueness of the Holocaust as well. It is ahistorical, because it does not tackle with the historical difference constituted by the postwar subjects of his analysis. All this results in imposing the social ontology of memory groups, as it became dominant in the United States during the "long 1990s," to the historical realities of the 1950s and 1960s.

Our criticism of Rothberg's model is based on historical arguments but provides an alternative conceptualization as well. We argue that his misreading of the past has some crucial consequences for his understanding of memory's potentials in our political present. This, in turn, calls for a historically more accurate interpretation of Rothberg's sources and a new conceptualization of cross-cultural solidarity. In what follows, we give a critical analysis of his model while applying the same historical and empirical focus. In doing so, we complete Rothberg's endeavor by going beyond the limitations of his model. Ultimately, we make a case for Leftist-antifascist internationalism, a paradigm he misidentified as multidirectional Holocaust memory. In doing so, we wish to contribute to scholarly responses to the ongoing crises of memory. By revisiting the postwar era, we would like to propose new ways to reformulate the memory/politics nexus in the present.

We will argue that in the age of decolonization, anti-colonialist positions were not uncertain outcomes of multidirectional "encounters" but were closely tied to political views. While Rothberg claims to have discovered a "marginalized" form of memory, it is not that "multidirectional memory" was marginalized but the political positions were that demanded decolonization—at least inside the restorationist, postwar regimes of colonial empires. While Rothberg understands multidirectionality as a post-Holocaust phenomenon, we claim that the link between the Nazi genocide and colonialism had been long established in Leftist

internationalism and antifascism. Consequently, we need to re-consider these legacies in order to understand postwar responses to persisting colonial rule. At the same time, the memory culture they generated needs to be re-historicized if we were to grasp memory's role in countering colonialism.

Ultimately, we argue that memories alone do not compel us to any particular political standpoint or action. What does, is previous—or otherwise obtained—political commitment. Without seriously considering the latter, any examination of what role memory may play remains necessarily unfounded, historically and conceptually.

### *Failures of Multidirectional Memory*

According to Rothberg, it was the French documentary *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) that made a considerable impact on his post-doctoral project that eventually culminated in *Multidirectional Memory*. Until that point he had planned to overcome the “zero sum game” of public remembering by a comparative study of the memory of genocidal antisemitism and racism, a “book about Blacks and Jews essentially.” It was this unexpected encounter with the documentary movie of Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch that drew his attention to the Algerian War and thus to the question of decolonization (Rothberg 2016). The film seemed to powerfully prove the thesis that „the Jewish experience of World War II emerges as part of a multidirectional network connecting it to movements of decolonization” (Rothberg 2009: 178). Indeed, the cover image of *Multidirectional Memory* is based on a still from the movie showing Auschwitz survivor Marceline Loridan as she is giving testimony on her suffering. In a central scene of the movie, Marceline, African students Landry and Raymond, and the film makers are sitting on the terrace of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and discuss questions of cross-cultural solidarity.

Looking more closely at the scene, one wonders why it struck Rothberg as a shining example of multidirectional memory. The scene begins with Marceline announcing that she would never marry a Black man—quickly adding that “it's not racism” and that she once danced with a Black man which was an extraordinary experience. Landry expresses his wish that in France Black men would be liked for other reasons than dancing well. Here, Morin intervenes and turns the discussion to the situation in Congo. He asks the participants if they feel concerned about what is happening in Africa. To the question, whether as someone coming from the Ivory Coast he is involved in what is going on in Belgian Congo, „Is there a racial solidarity?”, Landry responds affirmatively: “When Whites crack down on an African state, we all feel we share in the others' sufferings.” It is Marceline who continues by saying that she does so too, „if there is anti-semitism in any country at all, I feel involved, I can't tolerate it.” What the spectator witnessed so far is thus the parallel, that is non-multidirectional, expressions of ethnic-racial

solidarities. In the following, Rouch directly asks the African students if they knew the meaning of the tattoo on Marceline's arm. They did not, although Raymond had heard about the concentration camps from Alain Resnais's documentary film, *Night and Fog*, a few years before. The scene ends here and what follows is Marceline's monologue, a first person testimony on her deportation and survival.

As Benjamin Ratskoff recently observed in an in-detail examination of the scene, the status of juxtaposed „memories” are far from equal: “Put simply, Rouch stages the Black African students' ignorance of (Nazi) antisemitism, which in turn facilitates the articulation of Marceline's Jewish Holocaust survivor testimony. This hierarchy outlines an emergent pattern in which white European knowledge of antisemitism is authorized by a denial of a colonial gaze on Europe” (Ratskoff 2022: 2). First, “dialogue between Jewish and pan-African senses of diasporic solidarity is eclipsed by the solemn revelation of Marceline's persecuted past” (Ratskoff 2022: 2). Furthermore, the relation between Rouch, the director initiating the conversation, and Landry, the African student, reproduces the hierarchies of colonial subjugation: Rouch “silences Landry's interpretations of white colonialists and uses Marceline's body to authorize his superior knowledge of European society, including the postwar legacies of antisemitism and the Holocaust” (Ratskoff 2022: 10).

So how could the unfolding conversation and Marceline's subsequent testimony prove the dynamic of “multidirectional memory”? After all, in-group solidarities were clearly expressed non-inclusively in relation to others, and Marceline's testimony in the following scene is a monologue unrelated to the discussion about decolonization and international solidarity. Consequently, the eventual lesson of these scenes is that the experience of colonial suffering and the memory of Auschwitz did not provide a condition of possibility for a sense of commonality, neither multi-directionally nor uni-directionally.

Failures of multidirectional memory do not only appear in retrospect. The same year when the movie featured in France, David Rousset, the founding leader of the expert witness movement of the “concentrationary universe” wrote to Morin, disappointedly, that

“the truth was that experience of a certain depth is not directly communicable; that men are imprisoned in their own tragedy and are uninterested in their neighbor's tragedy; that victims are just as odious with regard to other victims as their masters; and that to move beyond this condition requires either a great deal of love or a creative effort at reflection” (quoted by Kuby 2019: 224).

The “suffering of others,” concludes Emma Kuby, “was not really accessible via memory of one's own losses. To comprehend it required strenuous processes of compassion and imagination rather than spontaneous acts of identification” (Kuby 2019: 224). As she shows, it was precisely the context of the Algerian war in which Rousset's moral regime of truth—based as it was on survivor testimony—eventually failed. Kuby rightly points to Rothberg's exclusive focus on

memory as a shortcoming: „Survivors of the Resistance deportation were indeed well represented in the antiwar and anti-torture movements that developed in France during the 1954–1962 conflict, but it is unnecessary to invoke memory to explain their presence. These were politically engaged, intellectually prominent figures with experience confronting state power” (Kuby 2019: 214–5).

We agree with her conclusion that “ideology, not experience, determined individual deportees’ responses to the Algerian War” (Kuby 2019: 195). We do not presume a direct link between memory (of suffering) and inter-group solidarity as we consider the latter as culturally and politically mediated. Looking beyond the artistic scenes of *Chronicle of a Summer* and considering the protagonists as historical subjects, Rothberg could have found the resources for multidirectionality, though these are not based on supposedly unmediated individual experience. As Philip Nord argues, Marceline Loridan was telling her story as one of Deportation, and not as a story of the Holocaust. Proving that no direct access to experiences exists, she told in a later interview about the filming of her monologue in *Chronicle of a Summer*: „Lines from *Hiroshima mon amour* kept coming to mind, she reported, and she had to keep pushing them down.” As „a woman of fiery temperament who had been in and out of the PCF” (Nord 2020: 113), the French Communist Party, Loridan made sense of her camp experiences in the cultural framework of antifascism. „For years, she kept a reproduction of a Picasso painting in her apartment, an ever-present reminder of what she had experienced in the camps. ‘The cries of Guernica, ’as she put it, ‘I saw them at Birkenau’. The Spanish Civil War was not a Holocaust referent, but it did loom large in the imaginary of the anti-Fascist Left” (Nord 2020: 115). Marceline’s testimony is yet another evidence that anti-fascist imaginary did not exclude the Jewish genocide (Kékesi and Zombory 2022). This imaginary is conjured up via Loridan’s references to Alain Resnais: from 1950 to 1960, Resnais elaborated an antifascist aesthetics, as the topology of his work clearly demonstrates: Guernica – Auschwitz – Hiroshima (Barker 2013: 131–156).

Devoting an entire chapter to Loridan’s later film making in his 2019 book *The Implicated Subject. Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, Rothberg returns to the two scenes of *Chronicle of a Summer*. This time his conclusions are far less definitive, as he notes that Marceline’s identity as a victim “does not exclude her from participating in the racial hierarchies of postwar France.” The way from trauma to solidarity is not unproblematic anymore but one possibility among others as Rothberg indirectly contends that the “experience of historical trauma does not inoculate subjects against implication in other regimes of power” (Rothberg, 2019: 163). Yet he still regards the terrace scene in identity terms as “the encounter between a female Holocaust survivor and colonized men of color” which supposedly leads to solidarity across difference, even if a “tensioned-filled solidarity.” For Rothberg, solidarity remains to be the problem of identity which obscures the historical role of Leftist political views.

This paper contributes to the study of the relationship between memory, politics, and solidarity by demonstrating that the thesis of a direct link between individual experience and cross-cultural solidarity is not tenable. We rely on Rothberg’s study to show that such a direct

link can only be stated at the price of a radical de-politicization of the historical record and argue that it is a presentist-ahistorical reading that makes Rothberg's central thesis possible. In what follows, we re-contextualize and re-politicize the three key pillars of multidirectional memory: Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), W.E.B Du Bois's *The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto* (1952), and Charlotte Delbo's *Les Belles Lettres* (1961). As for Rothberg's reading of Césaire, we demonstrate how it establishes a two-sided ontological universe in which politics is restricted to the relation of identity groups. In case of Du Bois, we revisit Rothberg's claim for a "directionality" leading from the memory of racism (and colonialism) to the Holocaust; while in the Delbo's case we probe into his complementary claim for a multidirectional exchange leading from the Holocaust to colonization.

By this triple case study we attempt to demonstrate that what Rothberg's pioneering study in fact encountered is not „multidirectional memory” but international (Leftist) antifascism. Furthermore, we claim that the exclusive focus on the debate on the Holocaust's uniqueness prevented him to see that what proved to be decisive in the emergence of Holocaust memory was not its relation to other „histories” of atrocity but the eventual separation of the Jewish genocide from the antifascist framework in which questions of commemoration were subordinated to transformative political action. In turn, the reason as to why an awareness of the interrelatedness of Nazi and colonial rule in fact progressively disappeared after the 1960s is the disintegration of the legacy of (Leftist) antifascism.

### *Césaire and the Marxist Challenge to Multidirectional Memory*

In Rothberg's reading, French Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire seeks in his influential *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) “to create an active memory of both colonial atrocities and Nazi genocide” (Rothberg 2009: 77). This interpretation implies a double retrospective move: first, the presupposition that Césaire was dealing with the relationship of two distinct “histories” of suffering, and second, that he formulated this relationship in the context of remembering. In fact, Césaire does not speak in a general way about the alleged relationship between the Holocaust and colonial violence, but holds up a mirror to the civilizatory subject from a clearly defined historical, social, and political position. His *Discourse* addresses the “so-called European civilisation,” “shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule,” unable to solve the two main problems it has itself created: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem (Césaire 2000: 31). Instead of dealing with Césaire's position in which there exists only one history in which class oppression and colonialism have the very same roots, Rothberg identifies the subject of civilization in Césaire's lecture as “the Europeans,” clearly separated from “outside Europe,” or as “Metropolis vs. periphery.” These distinctions do not play any conceptual role in Césaire's reasoning as he does not talk about Europe as an identity group but as an idea. By putting Europe into quotation marks, he targets the “very distinguished, very humanistic, very

Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century” as the colonizing subject (Césaire 2000: 36). While Césaire talks about how colonialism degrades the “civilizing” subject and results in “universal regression,” the notion of multidirectionality presupposes the existence of two separate “memories” bound by group boundaries.

Having arbitrarily identified in Césaire’s essay the ontological positions of the memory-political debate of the 1990s, Rothberg also makes their relationship temporal. This is how the “boomerang effect” becomes a temporal return in his reading, despite the fact that in the quoted passage Césaire establishes a simultaneity:

„and we must show that *each time* a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, *each time* a little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, *each time* a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread” (quoted in Rothberg 2009: 74, emphasis added).

The subject of this sentence is not „the Europeans” but a self-poisoned civilization degrading universally. According to Rothberg, this text “mimics the temporality of belated return” but it is unclear what exactly would this belatedness stem from. As if the fact that the Nazi conquest of the East occurred later than the conquest of Africa would imply that imperialism did not exist in the meantime, since it was only this way it could return in a temporal way. Through the arbitrary temporalization of Césaire’s argument, Rothberg presents the acute social problems Césaire attempted to tackle, capitalist and colonialist oppression, as problems of collective memory.

Not surprisingly, a subchapter on Césaire deals with Marxism. Indeed, Marxism as a diverse theoretical tradition together with communist internationalism as a social movement would have posed a real challenge to multidirectional memory theory. Rothberg’s book recurrently struggles with the fact that most of his protagonists were communist or Left-leaning intellectuals who explicitly related colonization to fascism in the name of international solidarity. Rothberg cannot help but recognize that “Communist internationalism can be a source of inspiration for grasping the interconnected, transnational, and frequently racialized dimensions of world history” (Rothberg 2009: 70). Yet he does not theoretically deal with this challenge as he weighs an arbitrary and simplified vision of Marxism against his own theory. The end result is a serious reduction of a complex history of intellectual traditions, labor movements, revolutionary parties, international organizations, and political regimes to a single caricature. When dealing with Marxism, Rothberg imposes the opposing positions of the post-Cold War debate on cultural globalization, universalism vs. particularism, on a diverse and fragmented intellectual and political tradition, squeezing it into the first category, namely, universalism. As a result, Marxism, communism and the French Communist Party become interchangeable synonyms as they all exclusively have one and only feature: cultural homogeneity. In relation to the supposed failure of Marxism in acknowledging the particularity of distinct groups of historical suffering

(paradigmatically the particularity of the Holocaust), Rothberg calls for “the need for a multidirectional trauma theory in the era of Holocaust and decolonization: a comparative theory that would track the interconnectedness of different perpetrators and different victims in overlapping, yet distinct, scenarios of extreme violence” (Rothberg 2009: 96). Since he identified Marxism with cultural universalism, he naturally comes to the tautological conclusion that Marxism is incapable to meet the demand for multidirectionality because it obliterates particularity.

Why the new “comparative theory” must specifically be a theory of trauma remains unexplained. Without going into detail about the criticisms of postmodern theories of cultural trauma (Kansteiner – Weilnböck 2008, Fassin – Rechtman 2009, Rothe 2016), let us only point out how the truism of temporal return (originally compulsory repetition) lacks any empirical base if projected to the historical process, as shown above. Further, the cultural “diagnosis” of trauma which identifies the subject as a traumatized victim, silences the subject in a way that his or her own voice, interpretation, or explanation becomes inaccessible (Zombory 2019: 91–119). In Césaire’s case it is his political vision and Marxist theory that fell victim to trauma theory.

In the subchapter entitled “Between Marxism and Multidirectional Memory,” Amié Césaire appears as an intellectual with some potential for multidirectionality *despite* his Marxist-communist leanings. “With its notion of the *choc en retour*, Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, as well as the further development advanced in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, provides some of the resources for such a theory, but it also remains caught in its own limiting universalist discourse: French Communist Party Marxism” (Rothberg 2009: 96). In order to present Césaire as a true precursor of his memory theory, Rothberg needs to point out, first, that the Martinican politician’s “juxtaposition of Nazism and colonialism is based both on a universalizing historical perspective and on a grasp of how universalizing projects seek to eliminate particularity (that of Jews, that of colonized and indigenous peoples)” (Rothberg 2009: 97), and, second, that he succeeded to overcome his own limitations stemming from “Marxism.” Both premises are historically untenable.

Rothberg solves the paradox he arbitrarily created—a Césaire who was both communist and multidirectional—by minimizing Marxism’s impact on him. Thus we learn that Césaire was actually „simultaneously struggling against” Marxism, and that „Marxist theory seems inessential and subordinate in Césaire’s *Discourse*.” Most importantly, Rothberg presents Césaire’s quit from the PCF in 1956 as a categorical and definitive reckoning with Marxism as such. A selective reference to Césaire’s open letter to PCF general secretary Maurice Thorez announcing his resignation is enough to substantiate the statement that Césaire moved from universalism to particularism by „insisting on the colonial difference vis-a-vis the Marxist metanarrative” (Rothberg 2009: 98).

What Césaire was reckoning with in his open letter was certainly not communism and even less Marxism, but simply the French Communist Party. Instead of communism, he refutes „the paths of communism as it has been put into practice” (Césaire 2010: 147). He complains



that the colonial question cannot be subordinated to the struggle of the French worker against French capitalism. Césaire had already treated colonialism and capitalist exploitation as equal issues in his *Discourse*: proletariat and colonies as the two self-created problems of the capitalist bourgeoisie. In effect, Césaire's political thinking was moving toward third worldist communism, accusing the PCF of not having confronted Stalinism after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of having civilizational (Eurocentric) allusions. His letter made his attitude to communism and Marxism quite explicit: "I believe I have said enough to make it clear that it is neither Marxism nor communism that I am renouncing, and that it is the usage some have made of Marxism and communism that I condemn" (Césaire 2010: 149–150). At the same time, he expresses his faith in the Chinese Communist Party and his hope that there also will be an African, Caribbean, etc. version of communism. In other words, in his open letter to Thorez, Césaire expects a renewal of communism after the Khrushchev revelation including the self-examination of the parties, especially his own. After addressing the side issues (!) he has raised as "a man of color," he concludes his letter by the following: „To return to our main subject, the period through which we are living is characterized by a double failure: one which has been evident for a long time, that of capitalism. But also another: the dreadful failure of that which for too long we took to be socialism, when it was nothing but Stalinism." (Césaire 2010: 150). The crucial aspects of his position are thus the same as in the *Discourse* six years before: anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism.

Indeed, Césaire remained faithful to an internationalist, nonaligned communist decolonization that, as Nick Nesbitt demonstrates, "clearly persisted decades after his celebrated official resignation from the Parti communiste français (PCF) in 1956" (Nesbitt 2015: 133). As Césaire's anti-colonialism was and remained essentially anti-capitalist, his Marxism was continuous irrespective of party affiliations. "References in his speeches and talks in this [post-1956] period to Marx and Lenin allowed him to remain unambiguously a figure of the revolutionary Marxist Left without explicitly committing himself to their most radical political stances (Nesbitt 2015: 136).

Had Rothberg not read cultural trauma theory into Césaire, he might have found the multidirectionality that in fact linked colonial subjugation to antisemitic persecution in the early postwar French intellectual landscape. However, the key person in this regard was not Césaire but Jean-Paul Sartre. He not only published his *Reflections on the Jewish Question* in 1946, but was simultaneously engaged with the anti-colonial cause of the *négritude* movement initiated previously by Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas. Jonathan Judaken even speaks of Sartre's multidirectional anti-racism as "his anti-racist interventions were still significantly indebted to his critique of antisemitism." Ultimately, Sartre "developed a multipronged critical theory of racism that went beyond his earlier existentialist critique of fascist Judeophobia" (Judaken 2020: 117).

Sartre's Marxist multidirectionality is clearly visible in his famous essay *Black Orpheus* that he wrote as the forward to Senghor's *Anthology of the New Black and Malagasy Poetry* in

1948. On one hand, Sartre asserts that “[t]he Negro, like the white worker, is a victim of the capitalistic structure of our society, and he discovers a solidarity of interests beyond the nuances of skin color with certain classes of Europeans oppressed as he. Such a solidarity incites him to plan a society without privilege where the pigmentation of the skin will be treated as a simple accident.” And continues: “But, if the oppression is a common one, it is patterned after historical and geographical conditions. The black man is a victim of it, inasmuch as he is black, in his role as colonized native or as a deported African. And since he is oppressed in his race and because of it, it is first of his race that it is necessary for him to take conscience” (Sartre 1951: 223). Sartre regards the *négritude* movement as a form of gaining consciousness, an anti-thesis to white supremacy that as an “anti-racist racism” is a necessary though temporary step toward the synthesis of raceless society (Jules-Rosette 2007). Sartre’s position toward *négritude* foreshadows the ambivalent political potential of post-1970s identity-and-memory politics, of which Rothberg’s work is a late example. By concluding that *négritude* is both „the triumph of narcissism and the suicide of Narcissus,” Sartre acknowledges both the pleasure of self-assertion in exoticism (that is particularism in Rothberg’s vocabulary) and its inevitable failure as a political act.

The decontextualized treatment of Césaire in *Multidirectional Memory* suggests that the thoughts he expressed and the acts he took were essentially driven by his post-colonial identity. Yet, it was the multidirectional effects among some key figures of the postwar French intellectual landscape in which the *négritude* movement unfolded that turned out to be decisive. The mutually productive impact between Sartre and Fanon provides an excellent case for this. Fanon’s critique of Sartre, published in *Esprit* in 1951 as “The Lived Experience of the Black,” applies the conceptual framework of Sartre’s treatise on antisemitism (Judaken 2020). Ten years later, proving the impact Fanon made on Sartre, the latter’s foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) formulates the “boomerang effect” in various ways.

Certainly, Césaire and Sartre did not represent the same homogenous and universalist “Marxism” at the end of the 1940s. But this is exactly the point, to treat Marxism as a historically diverse set of traditions that could be and actually was re-appropriated time to time by different social actors on the basis of a commonly shared anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism. One such particular re-appropriation was the way Black liberation and civil rights movements relied on the Marxist tradition in order to counter racism and colonial oppression.

### *The Mythical Encounter: Du Bois and the Ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto*

A key moment in Rothberg’s account of an emergence of “multidirectional memory” is W.E.B. Du Bois 1949 trip to Warsaw and his ensuing report, published in 1952 in *Jewish Life*, a communist magazine. According to Rothberg, the trip initiated a turn in Du Bois’s thinking and led him to the recognition that racism cut across the “color line,” in contrast to his early classic,

*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), that had famously anticipated the “color line” to be “the problem of the Twentieth Century.” In Rothberg’s interpretation, the experience of seeing the destroyed city and, especially, the Jewish ghetto changed how Du Bois conceptualized racism. According to Rothberg, encountering “absolute destruction” and facing Nathan Rapoport’s 1948 monument, erected to commemorate the Warsaw ghetto uprising, made Du Bois realize that Nazi antisemitism was “different from, but related to” anti-Black racism in the United States (Rothberg 2009: 125). Standing in midst of the destruction enabled him to extend a solidarity beyond the “color line” and toward the Jewish people which had previously not been “always automatically given” (Rothberg 2009: 119). To support his argument, Rothberg interprets Rapoport’s monument as an expression of what Du Bois had previously termed “double consciousness” in relation to the African American experience and maintains that it is by expressing a similar experience in relation to European Jewry that the monument inspired solidarity in Du Bois. The assumption of a turn in Du Bois’s thinking is crucial for Rothberg’s statement that solidarity across the “color line” emerged, in case of Du Bois, as a result of a postwar recognition and a multidirectional mode of remembering past atrocities.

Yet, a precondition of seeing Du Bois’s Warsaw report as a turn is a thorough disregard of many significant aspects of the text itself as well as Du Bois’s previous career, including the wider context of his Warsaw trip. One surprising consequence of such a de-contextualization is that Rothberg isolates Du Bois’s Warsaw trip from his involvement in a postwar campaign for decolonization, even though the latter is Rothberg’s main focus in *Multidirectional Memory*.

When revisiting *The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto*, three clues in the text itself seem to be particularly important: First, Du Bois explicitly refers to his *three* trips to Poland, spanning more than half of a century, the first taking place in the 1890s, the second in 1936, and the third in 1949. When mentioning the “Warsaw ghetto,” it is not solely the Nazi structure but the long history of Jewish segregation that he refers to. Second, in describing postwar Warsaw, he conjures the “memories of war and destruction” (Du Bois 1952: 15) and, consequently, he addresses the Jewish *and* the Polish experience as well. Instead of referring exclusively to the Holocaust, he states that oppression and occupation of Poland and antisemitism and genocide “were *one* crime against civilization” (Du Bois 1952: 15, emphasis added). Third, he considers the fight against racial and religious discrimination *and* capitalist oppression as equal parts of a progress of what he calls civilization: “So that the ghetto of Warsaw helped me to emerge [...] into a broader conception of what the fight against race segregation, religious discrimination and the oppression by wealth had to become if civilization was going to triumph and broaden in the world” (Du Bois 1952: 15). In short, his view of postwar Warsaw combined racial segregation, war, imperialism, and capitalist oppression.

As Rothberg ignores Du Bois’s hint to his previous trips to Poland, he does not expand on his earlier experiences of European antisemitism either, ranging all the way back to his time as a student in Wilhelmine Germany. Still, evidence for Du Bois’s long-standing stance on antisemitism abound, enough to substantiate the subtitle of a 2002 paper, “A Lifetime of

Opposing Anti-Semitism” (Sevitch 2002). What is more, Du Bois’s commentary on antisemitism had in no way been ever separated from his reflection on American racism. For instance, when reporting on German antisemitism in an 1893 letter, Du Bois commented that “it had »much in common with our own race question and is of considerable interest to me.« This commonality of mutual discrimination against Jews and African Americans,” noted Benjamin Sevitch, “became a theme that he would often repeat in subsequent writings” (Sevitch 2002: 325). Reporting on his trip to Hitler’s Germany in 1936, Du Bois “asserted that »there has been no tragedy in modern times equal in its awful effects to the fight on the Jew in Germany. It is an attack on civilization, comparable only to such horrors as the Spanish Inquisition and the African slave trade.«” From the 1930s on, concluded Sevitch, “Du Bois was among the most prescient American observers of the Holocaust; and he never retreated from sounding the alarm.” Hence, for Du Bois, Jewish suffering in the Third Reich and during the Holocaust did not need to be recognized retrospectively, nor did the specifically racial character of Nazi persecution. His understanding of racism as cutting across the “color line” had been established prior to 1949 and his solidarity did not originate in postwar recognition or an ensuing memory of the Holocaust.

Furthermore, Du Bois did not merely encountered political antisemitism in Berlin of the 1890s, but another political current as well which had a life-long impact on him: socialism (Horne 2010: 15). He would eventually apply class analysis to the understanding of slavery, join the socialist party, and insist on the significance of capitalist imperialism before the Third International put anti-colonialism on its agenda (Van Wienen 2012: 143). The impact of socialism on Du Bois is key to understanding the formation of his sense of cross-cultural solidarity.

For Du Bois, “a sympathetic critic of Marx” (Robinson 2000: 207) and the first to view slavery as an imperialist institution and as a global problem (Olsavsky 2020: 27–28), American slavery in the nineteenth century was a “microcosm of the world system” and its abolition a historical reason for subsequent colonial expansion (Robinson 2000: 228–229). As it replaced American slavery, Du Bois claimed, modern imperialism led to the creation of conditions of near-slavery in the colonies and to the elimination of entire populations by a combination of military force and forced labor (Robinson 2000: 238–239). Ever since his early involvement in Pan-Africanism, anti-colonial struggle remained at the heart of Du Bois’s work.

Indeed, the end of the Second World War saw Du Bois working on a book titled *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace*, written with concerns about the postwar development of the world (Du Bois 1945). Published some five years prior to his Warsaw trip, the book reveals the links Du Bois had established between the war, the Nazi atrocities (and Jewish suffering in particular), colonial rule, and racial oppression in the United States. In a “Preface,” dated to January 1, 1945, Du Bois stated:

“[insofar as] our current efforts to ensure peace [...] leave practically untouched the present imperial ownership of disfranchised colonies, and in this and other ways proceed

as if the majority of men can be regarded mainly as sources of profit for Europe and North America, in just so far we are planning not peace but war, not democracy but the continued oligarchical control of civilization by the white race.”

For Du Bois, liberation from colonial rule was an imperative lesson of the war. Yet, he regarded colonization as part of a wider concept of oppression. In a chapter entitled “Unfree Peoples,” Du Bois reflected on the “plight of the minorities,” mentioning “the Jews of Europe, the Negroes of the United States, the Indians of the Americas, and many other smaller groups elsewhere,” all “encysted and kept from participation in the full citizenship of their native lands” (Du Bois 1945: 70). He regarded anti-Semitism, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism as interdependent. He expressed solidarity toward the Jewish people in this context because he regarded their plight as a case of racial oppression and he viewed anti-racist struggle as necessarily—well, *universal*. This latter quality of his thinking did not eliminate the “particular,” on the contrary: it enabled cross-cultural solidarity.

Du Bois’s anti-colonialist stance became controversial as a consequence of the emerging Cold War and American imperialism. Undeterred, Du Bois insisted on anti-colonialism and, equally, on charging the United States at the newly established United Nations with human rights violations against African Americans. His resolute stance led to his (second) exclusion from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1948, in a changed atmosphere of anti-communist hysteria. His work for The Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace (1948–) came in the aftermath of his petition at the United Nations, his ousting from NAACP, and his subsequent involvement with the Council on African Affairs. His campaign for World Peace was a continuation of his previous endeavor of connecting racial equality in the United States to the global agenda of liberation from colonial rule in Africa and elsewhere. It continued his long-standing anti-colonial struggles as the latter already had had an anti-war component: Du Bois shared the view that the First and Second World War were outcomes of competing imperialisms.

In 1949, he traveled to a World Peace conference in Moscow as a sole American delegate. From there, he detoured to Warsaw while returning to the United States. Therefore, his travel from Moscow to Warsaw, a site of war, racial segregation, and genocide, tied some of his long-standing endeavors together. It was not the sudden insight into destruction but penetrating analysis and long-time political-ideological commitment and engagement that led Du Bois to powerful expressions of solidarity.

In Rothberg’s account, Du Bois’s trip is thoroughly isolated from his postwar career and his involvement with The Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace that occasioned his 1949 trip. While Rothberg does mention Du Bois’s trip to Moscow, it remains nebulous how his participation at the Moscow conference related to his Warsaw visit. Therefore, in *Multidirectional Memory*, his campaigning for World Peace is disconnected from his remembering Nazi atrocities. As a result, the nexus between his anti-war, anti-colonial, and anti-

racist work and his understanding of the Nazi genocide is obscured. In fact, by isolating his Warsaw experiences, *Multidirectional Memory* obfuscates what helped Du Bois forge such an overarching solidarity.

Most importantly, Du Bois did not see Warsaw as a site of de-contextualized Jewish suffering but as a memento of war and genocide (Horne 1986: 123–124), viewed as products of Nazi imperialism. What helped him relate to Jewish suffering under Nazi rule was not solely his experience as an African American or a “comparison” of “disparate histories” of suppression and suffering. Rather, it was his insight into the historical nexus of slavery, racism, exploitation, capitalist imperialism, and war. In Rothberg’s study, that insight is rendered imperceptible in order to establish “multidirectional memory.” In Du Bois’s eyes, however, the Jewish genocide was not decoupled from Nazi imperialism nor from a “world system” of capitalist imperialism and practices of racism, forced labor, and elimination. Behind his memorable expression of solidarity was a strong political commitment that originated in an insightful analysis inspired by and critical of Marx and Marxism.

#### *Delbo and the Antifascism of the French non-communist Left*

A third key witness to “multidirectional memory” is Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo. According to Rothberg, her engagement in opposing French colonialism in Algeria was in fact inspired by her experiences under Nazi rule. At one point he even asserts in general terms that it was “the very echoes of the Nazi past that motivated French intellectuals and activists during the Algerian war” (Rothberg 2009: 203). Hence, her case would prove that the experience of the Holocaust led to anti-colonialism. Conversely, Rothberg maintains that Delbo started publishing her postwar memoirs on Auschwitz in 1965 because the anti-colonial political climate of the 1960s prompted her to do so. This double reading supports Rothberg’s central thesis about „the emergence of Holocaust memory and the unfolding of decolonization as overlapping and not separate processes” (Rothberg 2009: 200).

Yet those French intellectuals had in fact other motivations than their individual experiences of Nazi rule. In his study of French postwar memory, Philip Nord presents three main points as a critical reflection on Rothberg’s theory (Nord 2020: 90). For one, French intellectuals were not fixated on the „Deportation-Algerian War duo” as they were also dealing with the nuclear bomb, Franco’s fascist state, the US war on Vietnam or, like the film by Morin and Rouch, consumer society. Second, this agenda was clearly political, put forward by a circle of ex-communist and Left-leaning intellectuals such as Resnais, Cayrol, Morin, or Delbo. “Multidirectional memory, in this instance, was not a free-floating entity, but one anchored in an identifiable political milieu close to the PCF but in critical tension with it” (Nord 2020: 90). Nord’s third point actually is a caveat that the subject of the French non-communist intellectuals was in fact the Deportation in general, not the Holocaust as such.

These limitations of multidirectional memory theory are particularly significant in the case of Delbo, a former political prisoner of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, whose intellectual “work is suffused with politics from beginning to end” (Nord 2020: 123). Rothberg comes to the thesis of a dialogue between “proximate histories of violence” by disregarding Delbo’s political commitments and reducing her engagement exclusively to her camp experiences. An already canonized Holocaust survivor at the time of the writing of *Multidirectional Memory*, Delbo is a good candidate to evidence the connectedness of the “two histories.” Rothberg approaches Delbo’s book retrospectively in the context of the historiography of Holocaust memory. The coincidence that *Les Belles Lettres* was published the same year when the trial of Adolf Eichmann took place in Jerusalem would prove that the memory of the Holocaust emerged in the context of decolonization. Without textual evidence, Rothberg has to presuppose the influence of Holocaust memory on a book that he admits “may look less like contemporary Holocaust memory” (Rothberg 2009: 202).

This epistemological bias, so characteristic of post-structural trauma theory, is also constitutive of the way Rothberg problematizes testimony. The latter is theorized on the basis of post-Cold War Holocaust memory studies, in which the concept of the political is reduced to the act “when testimony leaves the intimate sphere and becomes public” (Rothberg 2009: 202). In a twisted way, Delbo’s work, motivated as it was by Leftist ideological commitments of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, is depoliticized as a “memory work” whose only political significance is making intimate experiences of past suffering public. Yet most of the letters that Delbo quotes are coming from already published sources and are written by public figures. From his retrospective standpoint, Rothberg fails to see the context of testimony outside of the trauma theory of Holocaust memory and disregards that the practice of witnessing had its own significance in the context of the Algerian War. Even if we restrict ourselves to the Leftist intellectual circle around the Minuit publishing house, the one that published Delbo’s work in 1961, we encounter a series of publications of public witnessing, *La question* (1958), *La gangrène* (1959), *Le déserteur* (1959), all addressing French colonialism in Algeria. These publications, not the Eichmann trial, provide the direct context of Delbo’s work which even refers to two of them.

Rothberg interprets the antifascist references to the Second World War and the Algerian war as expressions of Holocaust memory. For instance, he quotes the words of a Catholic soldier who refused military service and was sentenced to two years in prison by a military court: “I would make war against the Nazis without displeasure. But against them [that is, Algerians], no” (Delbo 1960: 14). Here, Jean Le Meur’s statement can only be interpreted as remembrance to the Holocaust if we limit Nazism to the persecution of Jews. Similarly, the reference to the UN Genocide Convention in Francis Jeanson’s open letter to Sartre does not refer to the Holocaust, as the two became synonymous much later. Jeanson’s question, “Must we console ourselves by holding on to the fact that in these camps there are neither gas chambers nor crematoria?” (Delbo 1960: 27), does indeed link the former Nazi death camps to the present-day internment camps.

However, it is certainly not a testimony to Holocaust remembrance as Rothberg understands it. Like Le Muer, Jeanson is appealing to the fact that for French readers the legitimacy of the anti-fascist struggle against the Nazis is unquestionable. Finally, at one point Rothberg discovers Delbo's own experiences in Auschwitz in *Les Belles Lettres*, though she actually uses the plural third person to refer to the knowledge of the deportees in general.

Rothberg's interpretation that Delbo "recirculates memories of genocide and colonialism" is highly questionable. In fact, *Les Belles Lettres* demonstrate the correlation between fascism and colonization. Its antifascist stance is not limited to the recognition of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis (for which Rothberg, and not Jeanson, uses the term genocide). What is more, from this antifascist perspective, neither colonization nor fascism appear as things of the past to be remembered.

In the same debate presented in *Les Belles Lettres*, from which Rothberg selects according to unknown criteria (Le Muer, Jeanson, Delbo), others are also heard. For example, Jacques Nantet, a Catholic, pacifist, neutralist, "independent left" writer and journalist, who argues that the question of desertion cannot be neglected, if only because in Algeria there will be no government-initiated ceasefire in the foreseeable future, "the distant perspective remains the fascist threat" (Delbo 1960: 14). In the same debate, writer Claude Simon, former Spaniard and Second World War resistance fighter, speaks of the "war" in Algeria in quotation marks, which according to him has the "inevitable consequences" of "the progressive fascification of our army, of our youth and finally of our country" (Delbo 1961: 16). It is in this context of the present day menace of fascism, and not of the memory of the Holocaust, that the frequent Gestapo parallels in contemporary discourse must be understood.

What Delbo's book mobilizes is thus not the memory of the Holocaust but the idea of antifascist resistance is not restricted to anti-Nazism, either in the past or in the present. As Nord contends, "while Nazism and the Algerian War stand out at the core of Delbo's story, hers is a grander epic than that, extending back in time to the Spanish Civil War and forward to the war in Vietnam. She is every bit as 'multidirectional' as Resnais and the others, and from the same perspective." (Nord 2020: 123). This perspective can only be conceptualized as a Leftist and non-communist variant of postwar transnational antifascism, in which "the Spanish Civil War is a watershed event and Picasso's *Guernica* an aesthetic touchstone. Fascism itself is an unprecedented evil, and the concentration camp its exemplary expression. And France's imperial wars (as, later, America's war in Vietnam) made all too evident that the concentrationary impulse was still at work in the world, abetted by the hard-driving greed of industrial capitalism" (Nord 2020: 123). In this political perspective memories of the past did matter but were subordinated to meeting the challenges of the present.

What Rothberg disregards in case of Delbo and others is the sometimes radically different social and political visions of past futures (Koselleck 2004). No matter whether his sources refer to "fascism," "Nazism," "racial segregation," "concentration camps," "torture," or "genocide," these terms all acquire the conceptual meaning of Holocaust memory:



“Against the backdrop of the global *longue durée* of Europe’s colonial project in Africa, the Americas, and elsewhere, as well as more national issues such as American segregation, most of these figures engaged the proximate events of the Holocaust at a moment when no singular concept existed to describe the destruction of European Jewry.” (Rothberg 2009:175)

Yet, the protagonists of *Multidirectional Memory* were not merely trying to overcome a conceptual deficiency, or think despite of a lack of a “singular concept.” Rather, their concepts run counter to our contemporary expectations.

One reason as to why Rothberg misreads the historical record is the assumption that the Jewish genocide had been “marginalized” before the onset of Holocaust memory. Yet, a more recent body of scholarship challenged the myth of postwar silence (Cesarani and Sundquist, 2012) and showed how postwar societies across Europe and in France in particular remembered the Jewish tragedy (Azouvi, 2012; Nord, 2020; Perego, 2020). Delbo and other protagonists in *Multidirectional Memory* were not the harbingers of an impending era of Holocaust memory but relied on and were part and parcel of a tradition of Leftist antifascism. In that regard, the juxtaposition of the Warsaw ghetto and the Algerian interment camps in Marguerite Duras’s *Les deux ghettos* (1961) constituted no historical turning point when compared to Claude Bourdet’s 1951 comment on the “Algerian Gestapo.” Instead of finally breaking with a “broad antifascist rhetoric” (Rothberg 2009: 241) by naming the particularly Jewish experience, Duras’s references to the Warsaw ghetto were just as antifascist as Bourdet’s references to the Gestapo. Equally, the experiences of the French Resistance were just as “particular” as Jewish experiences were in occupied Poland. Unlike our contemporary regime of memory, antifascism remembered fascism, not the Holocaust. Yet, it regarded the genocide as central to fascism and commemorated its Jewish subjects *as* Jewish (see Kékesi and Zombory 2022). While the latter were not unnamed nor marginalized, the Jewish genocide constituted no *separate* past to be remembered.

In some ways, fascism did. Even so, for antifascists, they regarded fascism as neither merely a matter of the past, nor as a phenomenon ever completely separated. Especially on the Left, they regarded it as inherently racist and imperialist and therefore interrelated with the past and present of European imperialism and racism. While wartime antifascist alliance had put a halt to uncompromising, Leftist, critique of European imperialism, the situation changed as the Allied parted ways and the Cold War started. Concurrently, colonizing countries, including Rothberg’s case study, France, embarked on a restorationist course. Drawing on a previous definition of fascism *as* imperialism, anti-colonialists recognized the reinforcement of colonial rule as a potential for a fascist transformation in the present, rather than merely mobilizing the memory of a fascist *past* against colonial rule in the *present*. What they meant when comparing the French police to the Gestapo was nothing purely rhetorical nor did they “compare” one

political regime to another (an unfortunate legacy of anti-totalitarianism). Rather, they defined fascism as an outcome or rather part of European imperialism.

Certainly, when protesting colonialism, they did use the recent past and recalled its memory. Nonetheless, memories of occupation, oppression, persecution, and resistance were not simply elements in a “broad antifascist rhetoric;” instead, they were evocative of particular experiences of fascism, just as memories of the Warsaw Ghetto were. Still, all these memories of the recent past, including the French resistance (Jewish as much as non-Jewish) and Jewish suffering (and resistance) in Eastern Europe, had become epitomes of fascism and therefore transcended (and not *eliminated*), dialectically, the particular.

### *Conclusion*

When asked about the attitude of the French workers toward their Algerian colleagues, one Algerian worker pointed out: “As far as racism, you won’t have much trouble finding it; it’s everywhere, even among those who cry while watching the film *Exodus*,” the 1960 movie that sympathetically portrayed the founding of Israel while exposing the plight of Jewish survivors. “Here is a vivid example of the non-zero-sum logic of memory at work,” comments Rothberg and explains: “the powerful affective response to *Exodus* becomes the occasion for remarking the lack of such a response before the plight of Algerians and thus also prepares the grounds for such a response in the future” (Rothberg 2009: 243). Yet, what is expressed in the response of the unnamed Algerian worker is how empathy, memory, and the mediating experience of art do *not* result in such an act of extended solidarity. Again, in Rothberg’s reasoning it remains unclear under what conditions they may do so „in the future.” As for the words of the Algerian worker, they testify to the breakdown of “multidirectional memory.”

In general, politics in Rothberg’s theory is reduced to the problem of the relationship between groups and their memories. The presentism of this theory is manifested in the way the implicit social ontology of contemporary identity politics is projected back into the past. Even though Rothberg aims to theoretically undo the implicit assumption of competing public memory claims that tie social groups to distinct memories, he continues to rely on an implicit social ontology that sociologist Rogers Brubaker termed „groupism” (Brubaker 2002). When combating group competition, Rothberg still posits two, allegedly “distinct histories” of political violence: the Holocaust and colonization. Thus the political vision of his theory is reduced to the mutually cooperative relation between the memory groups of “genocidal anti-Semitism” and of “colonial brutality.” Once the two memory-elements of “multidirectionality” are ontologically separated, their relation, either competitive or cooperative, can be interrogated. Therefore, political problems can in this theory arise exclusively as problems of memory.

While his book advocates non-essentialist identities, non-essentialism seems to be the desired outcome of an uncertain process that starts with tying the subject to the experience—

identity–memory triangle. This is in part a result, in part a precondition of de-politicization: since Rothberg discounts the role of (Leftist) political-ideological commitments and ignores any other social factor (such as class or status), there is little else left than identity to define his subjects—and the unexplained openness to multidirectional exchange.

In an interview for the German edition, historians Felix Axster und Jana König asked Rothberg “what redistribution in the realm of memory culture may mean?” (Axster and König 2021: 19). In his response, Rothberg claimed to be “enough of a Marxist” to be aware that “the question of distribution should ultimately be approached materially.” While his response represent a step forward from the 2009 edition of *Multidirectional Memory*, he ultimately conceded that memory cannot avert a reproduction of inequalities. Facing this shortcoming of memory politics, he added defensively that abandoning the memory of traumatic pasts should not be the solution either. Ultimately, his response left the dilemma of how memory may help us confront material inequalities unresolved.

Our suggestion is to re-think memory in a way that indeed does not decouple trauma from material aspects of exploitation or “oppression by wealth,” as Du Bois formulated in his piece for *Jewish Life*. Indeed, our claim is that this is exactly how most of the authors examined by Rothberg conceptualized “memory,” if they did so. To recognize their conceptual potentials for memory studies specifically, one needs to re-historicize their language instead of translating it into present-day concepts. They had no separate memory of the Holocaust *because* they did not see the genocide as a past to be remembered separately from fascist policies of expansion, subjugation, and exploitation.

In this paper, we argue that there is no path from memory to solidarity, except through some sort of political-ideological commitment. In Rothberg’s theory, the appearance of an unmediated path from memory to solidarity emerges due to the de-contextualizing and ahistorical interpretative method. Nonetheless, once one recognizes how extended, cross-cultural, solidarity is politically conditioned, there are new pathways to follow when it comes to thinking about solidarity, historically as in our political present.

The various legacies of transnational antifascism need to be reconsidered when it comes to revisiting postwar memory in- and outside Europe, especially in relation to instances of cross-cultural solidarity. While we certainly acknowledge that Leftist traditions and political positions were not the sole passages to overarching solidarity (see e.g. Mouralis 2019), it is the legacy of Leftist traditions that seem to be of particular relevance when one traces the politics–memory–solidarity nexus as it emerges from Rothberg’s sources.

Certainly, the legacies of pre-1945 antifascism were used as instruments in the Cold War and were controlled, to some extent, by repressive state apparatuses in the Cold War East. Yet, strands of postwar antifascism were anything but homogeneous. Furthermore, they created potent and diverse ways to remember war and genocide and act politically in the postwar present, as the above examples demonstrate.

Indeed, over the last decade or so an ever expanding scholarship has shed new light on the importance of Leftist internationalism for anti-colonialism and anti-racism in the interwar, wartime, and postwar world. To name but a few examples: scholars revised the postcolonial critique of Marx and Marxist traditions (Anderson 2016; Lindner 2022) and revealed the “antiracism of Marxism” (Satgar 2019); the role of the Third International in anti-colonial struggles received renewed attention (Prashad 2007; Prashad 2019; Drachewych and McKay 2019); and, in the wake of a new wave of studies on transnational antifascism (Garcia et al. 2016; Seidman 2018), there is now a new awareness of antifascism as a historical force in anti-colonialism (Smith 2017; Braskén 2020, Braskén et al. 2021). The significance of the memory of the fascist past for countering colonialism and its legacy, so we claim, declined as antifascism disintegrated in the 1970s (Stone 2014) and Holocaust memory emerged. Indeed, it did not return until the rediscovery of the *historical* (and not primarily memory-related) connection between the Holocaust and colonialism in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Zimmerer 2004; Madley 2005).

Finally and more broadly, for memory studies, itself a product of a „post-ideological” shift in the humanities as reflected in a most recent handbook (Berger and Niven 2020: 11–12), a reconsideration of the memory (culture) of Leftist ideologies and movements would be one way to understand more about the political potentials of memory beyond our current-day paradigm of transnational memory politics and the all too familiar modes of nationalism, on the other hand. Studies on how the politics–memory–solidarity nexus changed historically may open up new avenues for future conceptualization as well (cf. Rigney 2018; Berger et al. 2021). For that, one needs to abandon the presentist view and ideologically re-historicize past instances of cross-cultural solidarity.

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