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Netherlandic migrations: Of memory and remembering

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Since the mid twentieth century, life stories, oral histories and oral traditions represent important evidentiary sources for social science and humanities disciplines. The narrative mode of knowing represents a challenge for analysts using these sources, particularly since the academy's standards re truth value and universal utterances requires detailed and careful scrutiny of memory and remembering – the two foundations on which narration rests. Since orality, and inscription devised to mimic its qualities, focuses on filiation rather than on universal truths, scholars utilizing oral histories have devised precise socio-linguistic investigative models that emphasize both form and content in order to extract knowledge from these accounts. Attendantly, researchers increasingly recognise that people not only encode their worlds in stories, they assign significance to the objects that surround them. Analysis of photographs and cultural artifacts, as well as the aesthetics that characterize particular societies, deepens our understanding of Being in the world and facilitates cross cultural comparisons of human groups.

Key terms: Memory; remembering; artifacts; photographs life stories; oral histories.

Memories. We store them, draw on them, recall them, cherish them, lose them, are haunted, overwhelmed or plagued by them, find solace in them and narrate them. Memory structures our Being in and through time; we externalize the self through countless narrative fragments daily drawn from an experiential repertoire that reveals the "I" as central to particular cognitive processes. No one has the same perception of what I experience as my unique realities, nor my precise ability to reflect on, learn from, reject, revise and adjust my identity-memories (Bornat 1989, 20). We lament the loss of memory as the loss of identity and because we

are a species that communicates through symbols, we embed our memories in artifacts that we invest with meaning and often fetishize.

Memory-identity synchronicity is powerfully established through the narrative mode of cognitive functioning, one that Bruner contrasts with its irreducible complement:

There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two [though complementary] are irreducible to one another [...] Each of these ways of knowing, moreover, has operating principles of its own and its own criteria for well-formedness. They differ radically in their procedures for verification. (Bruner 1986, 11)

While the paradigmatic mode searches for universal truth conditions, the narrative style looks for unique connections between events through configurations that include descriptions of, and/or references to, the narrator's own actions or the actions of others. Life story narration seeks to contextualize chance happenings as meaningful contributions and to connect the significance of individual experience to the human condition; narration establishes filiation. Connective memory-identity is socially negotiated through symbolic interactionism; as we build intimacy, we increasingly share life story segments that signify the unique me and anticipate that others will reciprocate in kind. Although orality/narration is a fundamental component of the human 'coming of age', Bruner notes that we know "precious little" about how narrative processes work, while we have an extensive knowledge of the paradigmatic processes used in formal science and logical reasoning (Bruner 1986, 11).

The problem with memory

The discursively rich memory paradigm emerges from our perception of interiority; we are conscious as a singularity within a crowd. This experiential knowledge of memory storage and recall gives rise to the popular notion that memories are the result of a one-to-one correspondence between reality and what we recollect; *this happened to me and I remember exactly how it was*. Known by academics as the 'storehouse metaphor', we perceive a "multitude of stimuli imping[ing] upon the senses [...] discrete impressions of these stimuli are retained as memory units for later retrieval [and] as a result of decay or interference some of the units may become lost, weakened, or otherwise inaccessible" (Koriat & Goldsmith 1996, 167-228). Cognitive studies have long discarded the 'storehouse metaphor' as representative of how memory actually

works, but Jussim has rightly noted that “regardless of whether anyone actually believes in the storehouse metaphor, clearly many chose research topics, write and interpret research as if they believed it...” (Jussim 1991, 55).

On occasion, we are startled by the fact that people close to us do not remember a shared event in the way that we do and we are usually certain that *our* personal memory is the true one and the other’s contradictory memory, somehow ‘wrong’. Many a disagreement has arisen from a feeling of indignation by both parties that the other is misrepresenting what for each of them is a truth, which leaves a third party, should one be present, in some bewilderment as to which account is more reliable. This disparity in memory and its problematic implications have long been noted; Thucydides, when interviewing survivors of the Peloponnesian war, lamented the divergence in eyewitness accounts he collected and wondered if his consultants were seeing it from different sides or if their memories were flawed (Thucydides, 1972).

Since memories of events are often central to institutions such as the law, cognitive psychologists studying memory divergences began to query what we store as memory, how we store it (input), and how we relay what we have stored (output). Analyzing oral accounts of the same event, researchers quickly realized that operative memory in the ‘real world’, for example the way in which two sisters have very different memories of a shared familial experience, arise from a differing focus on, and divergent perceptions of, the details structuring an incident: we experience the world and store memories *subjectively*. To incorporate these new findings, the *correspondence metaphor* replaced the *storehouse metaphor* as the frame of choice for memory research. Three fundamental principles structure the model; representation, accuracy, and content, and each of them is problematic.

First, the representation element stipulates that memory is about an event in the real world. Thus, recounted memory bits are assumed to have truth-value; they are ‘about something’ that happened. This tenet retains elements of the one to one correspondence between ‘reality’ and memory found in the storehouse metaphor. Secondly, the accuracy component evaluates memory in terms of its descriptive intersection with real events: how close does this narrative come to describing the occurrence? Judging overlap between memory and reality however, a priori requires someone who is granted ‘authority’ with respect to the recall of other; there is no way to evaluate how accurate a memory of an event is unless we grant third party omniscience and omnipresence. Conway addressed this problem when he noted:

One difference between mental and physical states is that mental states have content, whereas physical states do not. Thus, my memory of dough rising is *about something*, some representation of an event I once experienced. But actual dough rising is not *about* anything; it is simply what it is – dough rising. (Conway 1994, 2; emphasis added)

Each person who narrates the ‘dough rising’, therefore, is merely relating their perception of how the dough rose. Facetiously put, whose account accurately parallels how the dough rose, only the dough can know.

Finally, the content factor is concerned with the *quality* of the memory; a crucial difference may arise if a narrator remembers one thing and not another. Koriat and Goldsmith offer the following example: “in the courtroom for instance, it might make a crucial difference whether the witness remembered that the burglar ‘had a gun’ and forgot that he wore a hat, or vice versa” (Koriat & Goldsmith 1996, 174). Thus, “functional considerations” (Koriat & Goldsmith 1996, 174) are intrinsic to the correspondence metaphor. Finally, rather than a focus on storage (input – how we store memories in the brain), the correspondence metaphor is concerned to address ‘output’ – “subjects are [...] held accountable for what they report” (Koriat & Goldsmith 1996, 174). The ‘quality’ of a memory is therefore judged according to its relevance to context. In the courtroom example offered by Koriat and Goldsmith, the memory that the burglar had a gun serves the prosecution, hence the quality of that witness’s memory is judged positively because it is relevant to their case. It is not difficult, however, to conjure a context where the gun would be less relevant than the hat, and the hat witness accorded greater veracity.

Issues related to the truth value and accuracy of memory, as well as the fact that people were ‘accountable’ for what they reported, continued to chafe scholars. What if there was only one witness to a certain event? How does one assess truth and accuracy under those conditions? If someone swears to ‘tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’, does their account not hinge on the truth *as they perceived it* and should its divergence from another truth lead to indictments such as ‘more or less truthful’? Under what conditions can that type of assessment be made and who has the authority to make it?

Researchers therefore turned to the central issue of veridicality; to use Conway’s example, how memories of the dough rising paralleled how the dough actually rose. In 1932, C.R. Bartlett tackled this perceptual problem and concluded that people do not store memory in terms of how the dough actually rose, but instead use schemata to make sense of their everyday experiences. ‘Schemata’ should not be understood as passive frames potentially available in a specific society, but as “an active organization of past reactions, of past experiences”

(Bartlett 1932, 201). Bartlett's discussion underlined that we not only process encounters with the world subjectively, we do so *narratively*. The web-like characteristics of narration facilitate our ability to process new information by linking it to experiences that inform our stored repertoire of similar occurrences; *this is just like the time, or this is how dough usually rises, and hence I have 40 minutes to do...* Known as the 'reconstructive approach', Bartlett's work on schemata moved our understanding of how memory works, and how we narrate memory, in new directions. Niesser, developing Bartlett's work further through the 'ecological approach', stressed the importance of context inherent in Bartlett's model:

Rather than beginning with the hypothetical models of mental functioning, ecological psychologists start with the real environment and the individual's adaptation to that environment. (Niesser 1988a, 151)

Since the Bartlett/Niesser eco-model emphasizes that social milieus play a significant role in the adaptation and (re)formulation of narrative frameworks, it charts an interpretative way forward for analyses that grapple with the memory work found in life stories, oral histories and creative non-fiction. How and what societies and bodies remember derive from the interplay between individual/group and narrative environment; social possibilities/inhibitions interact with narratives that are potentially accessible, but not always recounted. Elizabeth Cole's provocative analysis of "how societies and bodies remember, but equally important, how they forget and go on to forge viable practical models to help them endure" (Cole 1998, 628), powerfully unravels this effect of environment on reminiscence, while eliciting a deeper awareness of the narrative possibilities that inform memory and remembering. Life storytellers, as Cole emphasized, remain silent on topics they feel will be misunderstood, unappreciated, misinterpreted or threaten their very existence; memories may be bracketed to an extent that they may eventually disappear from individual/collective/public memory altogether (Cole 1998, 610-633). Bartlett's observation that people/groups adhere to the notion that by articulating one set of relationships they can forget or erase another (Bartlett 1932) led to Cole's observation – one that speaks directly to the immigrant experience –: "it is the forgetting that allows the creation of an acceptable social community" (Cole 1998, 622). Immigrant life stories/oral histories are characterized by the "development of specific images" that manifest through a "persistent framework of institutions that act as the schematic basis for reconstructive memory" (Bartlett 1932, 255).

The value of life stories and oral histories

If life stories and oral histories do not recount a one to one correspondence between truth and reality, then what is the value of memories to the academy? This legitimate question has been the focus of multiple scholarly debates, not only among oral historians, but within the institutions of the dominant culture. Adhering to the notion that only written documentation has truth value, the courts long dismissed oral testimony as unreliable and rendered their decisions wholly on the basis of written evidence. Curiously, as I discuss briefly below, documents are often more redacted, more subject to revisions written to convey lies as truth, and most often produce and reproduce hegemonic structures.

The swing to documentary evidence as truth, and oral testimony as completely unreliable, reflects the shift to literacy from orality in European culture. In *The coming of the book*, Febvre and Martin (2010) discuss the superstition and suspicion that initially greeted written texts, and the transition, for example in the courts, from the authority of orality where a man's word was his bond, to the slow acceptance of the superiority of documentary evidence, which held man's word to be in error unless supported by written records. Of critical importance to the discipline of history, life stories and oral histories were increasingly marginalized, a position made explicit in the German school of 'scientific history', where documentary sources were stressed and, finally, used exclusively.

Leopold van Ranke imposed a powerful oral/literary dichotomy on historical texts, one that continues to dominate aspects of the academy and western social institutions (Iggers & Powell 1990). Maintaining that documents addressing the event were the most reliable form of evidence and dismissing oral evidence as based on shoddy memories told from a biased point of view, Ranke and his followers were influential in transforming history from a literary (narrative) form into an academic discipline dependent upon a rigorous use of evidence and scrupulously trained historians who scrutinized documents in their search for objective 'truth'. Note, however, that 'writing' is merely memory inscribed – orality precedes literacy – from a writer's subjective – and often self-serving – point of view. During the transition from oral traditions to documented histories, only a handful of citizens had the ability to write and those that did served particular interests – a king, a church, a political position. Moreover, many historical incidents are characterized by paltry documentation and there is little in the way of checks and balances on 'truths' presented in specific texts, hence the resort to exegesis and tests for internal consistency.

Writing offers further possibilities for the creation of hegemonic structures not locatable – or maintainable – in oral cultures. When we interact face-to-face, each party to the communicative transaction has access to kinesic cueing and can immediately intervene to check, confirm, or challenge any utterance/body work contributing to the dialogic interaction; positioning, and its affirmation or negation, diverges substantially in oral situations. Indeed, in literacy, transcription disturbs the mutuality of interaction; the fact of the text mediates social relationships. As a writer, I can carefully position myself in relation to potential readers – who am I writing for, what do I want to convey, what type of approach will I take to my potential readers, and how will I structure the ‘voice’ I will use to present both myself and the point of my communication? Conversely, I may be uninterested in any of those questions; it may be the case that I am inscribing ‘only for me’ – narrating my thoughts, my insights and my experiences. In oral cultures the latter process leads to diverse narrative forms, while the earlier stance characterizes the rhetorical arts. In literate societies, where all inscription conforms to the formal rules that characterize various genres, the act of transcription limits the conditions for augmentation and creativity, including connotation, since words are anchored to the page. Even if I make the decision to phatically engage my readers, unless they are writing back to me, I cannot check that what I had intended to do has in fact been accomplished, that I have been understood. With the dissemination of a document, the authorial voice is decoupled from text and Barthes, in his discussion of the primacy of the reader-text relationship in *Death of the Author* (Barthes 1967), noted both the impossibility and undesirability of attempting to re-capture authorial intent.

Pinpointing originary intent to unpack truths, however, was the scientific school of history’s mandate. The established double binary; objective/writing//subjective/oral, with writing/objectivity as the privileged pole, can be problematically read as false, harmful and the key element in the creation of ideological hegemony serving institutional state apparatuses (Althusser 1971). The (re)introduction/adaptation of narrative forms of disciplinary evidence played a key role in dismantling the privilege of the paradigmatic mode and, in the process, has shown the desirability of iteratively moving between/combining narrative and paradigmatic ways of knowing.

Given the radical swing from narrative to ‘scientific history’ in the 19th century, it seems appropriate that we discern a reactive epistemic shifting in the discipline during the mid-twentieth century. A focus on documents had considerably marginalized the consideration of other evidentiary material and, consequently, historical analysis focused on the lettered classes. Rejecting the notion that top down history can accurately capture historical epochs, scholars

began to access documents that spoke to the lives of the masses, such as church records, while others focussed their interest on the life stories and oral histories of people ‘on the ground’ (Thompson, 1967, 1975, 1978, 1982, 2000 etc.). The new ‘social history’ profoundly altered our understanding of historical trajectories and the making of epochal ideologies, both in the form of interviews conducted with people who lived through distinct historical events and analyses of the memory inscriptions, artifacts and aesthetics left behind by ‘ordinary folk’. A subsequent appreciation of the vibrant anti-hegemonic historical discourses episodically modified and available, simultaneously facilitated greater understanding of the ways in which subordinate groups and classes actively appear to support and subscribe to the “values, ideals, and objectives, cultural and political meanings, which bind them to, and incorporate them into the prevailing structures of power” (Storey 1993, 119).

An example of narrative querying official documents – ‘History’ – can be found in Schrager’s work on the largest work stoppage in the history of the American logging industry (Schrager 1998, 284–299). The strike, called by the newly emerging IWW (Industrial Workers of the World or “Wobblies”), began in the lumber camps of northern Idaho, western Montana and eastern Washington in July of 1917, spreading from there to the Pacific coast. Lumber companies, newspapers throughout the region, and state and local authorities vilified the IWW, who were “accused of being saboteurs, arsonists and foreign agents” (Schrager 1998, 291). Many IWW members were “imprisoned in county jails and makeshift bullpens” and, after the strike was over, the prevailing narrative maintained that management had defeated the IWW and gave credit to the lumber companies for “voluntarily improving camp conditions” (Schrager 1998, 291).

Schrager went into the field to collect the life stories of the strikers and their family members to reconstruct what he calls the “narrative environment” (Schrager 1998, 289): the web of discourses that addressed all aspects of the strike, including the events that led up to it, and the relationships of single accounts to the narrative whole. His attention to the interplay between the content and form of the stories he collected enabled his ability to quickly identify specific discursive formations that conveyed nearly identical attitudes and experiences *across class lines*. Managers, loggers, and foremen, for example, expressed the same attitude to the strike and chose virtually the same words to describe pre-strike camp conditions and the utter disregard for labour on the part of lumber companies. Interviewees used uniform utterances to describe the motives of the strikers as just, and their actions as necessary. Furthermore, all credited the IWW with improvements in their working lives and scoffed at the

notion that the lumber companies voluntarily eased labour conditions. Incidents widely reported by newspapers and amplified by company bosses – such as the alleged incendiarism – were explained, through these oral histories, as having a benign source (smut in the wheat fields) that were discursively reproduced as worker malevolence.

Always sensitive to context, Schragger does not take his interviewees at face value but probes their very different accounts of the strike in terms of the dialogic interaction between narrative environment and emerging labour identities, while simultaneously sifting through, contrasting, opposing and reconciling the documentary and oral texts. There is no denying however, that his results contested the documented/official versions of the strike in every detail, as well as academic analyses that relied solely on documentary accounts. His work amplifies – and attempts to reconcile – the troublesome literary/oral polarity that continues to define evidentiary protocols in many western institutions and disciplines. Furthermore, the narratives – since the mode focuses on connections – facilitate our recognition of intersectionalities not evident in the documents; foreman-worker solidarity across class and ethnic lines, malicious collusion between corporate and media interests, and individual/group, gender and ethnic relations.

The work that oral historians engage in is therefore multi-disciplinary and can be broadly compartmentalized; the analyst can treat life stories/oral histories as units of formal linguistic structure; the analyst can treat them as functional units of social interaction; the analyst can utilize content analyses, and finally, the analyst can choose to combine all, or any two of these. At least from the 1960s on, scholars deploying life story methodologies began to maximize the iterative content and form possibilities inherent in their data. Despite a brief postmodern fling in oral history analysis, when scholars lamented that ‘everything was discourse’ and truth an empty term, theorists began to seriously address what kind of information interviewees conveyed, how to work with the concepts of truth, reliability, and accountability, and how to subject oral histories to the same rigorous level of analysis applied to documentary history. Approaching spoken history as documentary history led to an appreciation and acknowledgement of the convergences between the two types of texts, as well as the clear identification of their divergences, particularly in the analytic methods required to extract knowledge.

Observations: life story form

I perceive. I internalize perception. I recall, reproduce and narratively re-externalize perception. This is not a chaotic process. Narration – stretches of talk that can be

identified as a story – is bound by culturally specific structural rules and the western life story through which I construct the ‘I’ is no exception. Linde’s groundbreaking work on the functions and form of ‘western’ life stories identifies two foundational principles that inform these narratives:

[...] the stories and associated discourse units contained in the life story have as their primary evaluation a point about the speaker, not a general point about the way the world is [...]

[...] the stories and associated discourse units have extended reportability; that is, they are tellable and are told and retold over the course of a long period of time [...]

(Linde 1993, 21)

Linde emphasizes that the stories we tell emerge from the I; the world is secondary. It is my identity that I am at pains to convey. Secondly, the stories we tell and re-tell are ones that have especial significance for us, they say something important about who we perceive ourselves to be. As we externalize that perception through well-formed and internally consistent life stories, we reproduce and ground the self. When self-perception shifts, life narrators will de-emphasize or silence previous narrative segments, and begin to privilege others. The life story therefore “consists of all the stories and associated discourse units, such as explanations and chronicles, and the connections between them [...]” (Linde 1993, 21) that satisfy the above two criteria. In western life stories, the narrative is further anchored by fixed ‘landmark events’, both individual and socio-cultural, that are used to date social and personal epochs (*when JFK was shot, since I came out here, since I had the baby, or after the immigration*) and are marked by available domains that identify potential life/identity transits, such as occupations, education, marriage, childbirth, major illness, divorce, major geographical moves, or ideological/religious conversion. Reconciliation based on form – for example the landmarks utilized to mark life story segments in a particular culture, provides insights into an acceptable social life, while content analysis enriches that understanding.

The story within the story

Members of subcultures participate in narrative structural forms peculiar to their social groups. De Vos defines an ethnic group as “a self perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact” (De Vos 1975, 9). Dundes, however, argues that when we discuss ethnicity we are really talking about the lore of a folk. While the term ‘folk’ has experienced significant semantic degradation, Dundes points to its felicity as a

label for a group of people who share at least one common factor. In a multi-ethnic society, where people are members of multiple groups, 'folk' "considerably broadens the base of theoretical discussions of identity, beyond the "unfortunately overly restrictive limits of ethnic group" and allows "one to think of individuals belonging simultaneously to many different and distinct folk groups" (Dundes 1989, 11-12; Van Daele this volume). Rather than a focus on ethnicity, Dundes observes that any linking factor, a common occupation, language, customs, or religion for example, can solidify a folk; "what is important is that [a group] will have some traditions which it calls its own" (Dundes 1989, 11) and the individual "will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity" (Dundes 1989, 11).

The articles in this collection clarify that an individual is at once a member of a family, ethnic group, religious group, occupational group, nation etc., and is familiar with the folklore of each of these groups. As such, they learn to "code" and "identity switch" (Lyman & Douglass 1973, 357-358) as they transit groups. Therefore, immigrant story tellers that are members of enclave communities iteratively participate in, and modify, the culturally constructed and approved narrative structures that inform the larger society. The 'I' is indelibly linked, not only to their immigrant subculture, but, through transections, to the dominant culture. Intersections between western life story form and life stories told by immigrants from western countries, reveal commonalities that contribute to a structural understanding of diverse immigrant scripts, while at the same time exhibiting content divergences, particularly in foci.

Life story tellers usually narrate a 'primary' identity that they relay as fundamental to the Self and social belonging. This primary identity underpins how and when they identity/code-switch and pinpoints those occasions when they refuse to cross those boundaries. Fundamental to the primary identity is the immersion in social practices, often ritualistic traditions, not shared by others with whom they come into contact. Narrative markers define that space. Establishing the 'nature' of a group (*what kind of people we are*) and my own 'nature' (*what kind of person I am*) is accomplished through explicit and implicit narrative techniques that delineate character. Analyses of interviews with Dutch immigrants (Beaulieu 2009, 61 ff) led to the identification of multiple discursive formations that set out informant perceptions of the Dutch character; *this is the kind of person a Dutch man/woman is; this is how we/I react to challenges; this is how I accepted and lived up to (or not) that paradigm*. Moreover, character is directly coupled, through causality, to socio-morality and community – that Dutch community is of a particular *kind* and that the Dutch interrelate in unique ways

that mark them *as Dutch*. Note for example, Radsma's attempt to grapple with the word *gezelligheid*, a directly untranslatable Dutch term that encapsulates a unique social configuration and sense of communality. Responding to her husband, who noted that all of his customers had offered him coffee that day, Jenny Radsma's mother marks a boundary between Dutch and 'Canadian' socio-morality and community through her observation; "Oh ja? That doesn't happen so often with those Canadese people..." (Radsma this volume).

The deployment of character as 'adequate causality' in the Dutch immigrant life journey is a rhetorical device shared with the western life story paradigm, although the attributes of self that constitute 'character' may differ. Linde discusses the creation of coherence through character with reference to the doctrine of individualism and notes that it is narratively conjoined to aspects of the group/social self that emerge in a comprehensive and consistent western life story, in particular: a sense of agency, which includes self-responsibility and the ability to direct the life; the sense of continuity in time, in which memory plays the crucial role; a sense of physical cohesion; a sense of the reflexive-subjective self; and a sense of transmitting meaning (Stern 1985, 7-8).

Character, agency, and continuity in time are especially evident in narrative segments that successfully straddle *who I was in the old country and who I became and am in the new*. In these life accounts, narration connects past to present through past me to present me – *I have directed my life in this way, through these choices, because that's the kind of person I am*. The schema must incorporate obligatory mythemes; the reason for immigration, how we came to 'this' place in the new country, the story of our (sometimes painful) success, and the process of adaptation; the latter recounted in numerous vignettes that paradigmatically exhibit who we were/are.

Immigration is therefore a radical break that demands narrative resolution because it threatens the 'I's continuity through time; it has the potential to 'stop' a narrative, rather than propel it forward. To understand the mechanisms at work, and the content privileged, life story analysts, particularly those who focus on form and content, begin with the fluid and ongoing dialogic interaction between environment and life narrator. One, we must consider the positioning of a life story teller to events in the life; invariably, this relationship will emerge both through explicit narrative segments and gaps in the text. Two, we must account for events or motivations a narrator refuses to address or marginalizes, as well as narratives that exhibit "richness of account" (Linde 1993, 135-140). Schalk's discussion of interviewee recall that described their early immigrant years, suggests that her consultants did not dwell on the hardships they faced, glossing over both fundamental individual and immigrant group challenges they shared in

the new country and stressing their eventual success (Schalk this volume). It would be a mistake to read this silence synchronically and to assume that extreme hardship did not exist; Schalk's interviewees do discuss their challenges and she is certainly able to identify disjuncture. However, it is not narratively privileged, and this relative silence could be read as a boundary marker – it is possible that these individuals, members of a cohesive immigrant community with specific, well-articulated group boundaries and traditions, refuse to elaborate 'hardship' as a narrative device, silencing it and speaking the road to success as a "practical model that helped them endure" (Cole 1998, 628). Interviewee outlines of the creation of a new community that shared religion, immigrant experiences, and a land of birth, offer deep insights into the schema adopted by the community members Schalk interviews and sheds light not only on the evident fact that the boundary markers 'us' and 'Canadians' are well-articulated, but, through narrative intersectionality, that interfaces with the dominant society were anxious and the people, foreign. The community was 'home.' A comparative analyst could pose questions such as: Is 'overcoming' a communal narrative focus, and hardship dismissed within this narrative environment, and does *this* aspect of *this* narrative schema exhibit a commonality with the environmental narratives of immigrant communities elsewhere? Moreover, the 'closed' aspects of the community and its well-defined interaction with the dominant society, lead to research questions around immigrant adjustment and schemata adopted to survive and thrive.

On the other hand, Schalk's interviewees share in a narrative configuration that is well documented for immigrants in general; the richness of accounts surrounding the reason for immigration and how 'we came to this specific place' (Schalk this volume; Van Daele this volume; Hols this volume). Indeed, as noted, this narrative elaboration is an obligatory device in the immigrant life story since it creates continuous identity; *who I am now (naturally) grew out of the possibilities inherent in me in the old country*. Critically, the difference in narratives that create a relatively seamless transition, and those who exhibit crisis, are characterized by the act of forgetting that Cole references as essential to the creation of (new) community. Being 'born into' an ethnic group, in this place, on this land, with our traditions, speaking our language, and with our history, confers a naturalized identity (Handler 1998), this is simply who I am/we are. Netherlandic immigrants decided to break with the essential ingredients of 'folk' identity when they chose to leave their natal homes and, in doing so, re-evoked the essential questions of identity: who am I/who are we, in this new land, unfamiliar place, with strange traditions, no knowledge of our history and an unfamiliar language? Through self-agency, immigrants devise schemata that address what they can bear to remember, what they will continue to speak into existence, what they

must silence to survive, what aspects of their identity they feel are integral to the self, and how to re-create community and belonging. Having made the decision to start anew, what elements of my former life am I determined to retain, what do I pass to my children, where and how do I find myself in the midst of all this strangeness? How immigrants answer these questions – and who they answer them with – will radically affect the trajectory of the life-identity; *this is now me; these are now my people, this is where I now belong*. The “practical models they devise[d] to help them endure”, and the forgetting that they instigate to facilitate the making of new social community and personal identity (Cole 1998, 628), are integral aspects of the immigrant life script.

These decisions, however, are negotiated through sub/dominant cultural signs and mutual interaction. I well recall – with some bemusement as a child born in Amsterdam – studying ‘Holland’ in a Canadian elementary school and becoming aware that my identity could be reduced to a few totems: windmills, tulip fields and wooden shoes. These relatively benign signifiers, nevertheless a source of frustration for some immigrants, raises the question of the marked identities of other immigrant groups, particularly those imposed on refugees. Although wooden shoes had no relevance to my family history, within a few years, echoing Demers’ discussion of the ubiquitous identity markers in Dutch homes (Demers this volume), my mother acquired a pair that were carefully placed on a side table along with the Delftware and silver that marked our heritage to any ‘incomers’. This ‘ethnic interaction’ through objects that express an acknowledgement of ‘where I came from’ and how the other represents that heritage, is problematic at best for immigrants connoted through negative artifacts by the dominant culture and the use of those artifacts in the home may represent resistance as well as a re-working of signification.

Oral histories and life stories around immigration suggest that analyses of the immigration experience have been rather limited. For example, they have not, to date, focused on the widely divergent recall of immigrant parents, immigrant children and children born after the immigration. In making decisions regarding what they will remember and what they will silence, parents intervene in the ‘naturalized’ process outlined by Handler – that being born in this land, with these traditions, and speaking our language confers a ‘naturalized identity’ (Handler 1989). In other words, many immigrant children struggled to acquire the identity of the land they lived in or were born into. The parents of many of the interviewees in my database, relayed the ‘old country’ through stories, precepts, indeed ways of being, that structured a unique identity. While I have not had the opportunity to analyze a common discursive formation found in my data, I note its presence in van Daele’s article – the oft repeated assertion – in word and deed – that we are

'unique', different (Van Daele this volume) from the people around us. Children – those that immigrated, as well as those born in the 'new' country – were brought up with stories and hefty doses of European history – specific to their Netherlandic backgrounds - that signaled that they too, were unique and different; not the 'same' as the society they lived in. Essentially then, they were taught that the Dutch are unique, Dutch immigrants even more so, and "we" ourselves the most unique family among them. A comparative study that analyzes if this narrative is found among families of other ethnic backgrounds would offer insights into immigrant boundary formations.

Immigrant children are consequently at risk in terms of their primary identity and may remain liminal (Van Daele this volume). In the case of Dutch immigrant children, they might be firmly rooted in various trappings of Dutch community life reduplicated in Canada – a church, the ritualized coffee time, pseudo relatives drawn from their parent's friends to replace the extended families left behind. On the other hand, some parents rejected aspects of Dutch Canadian life, leaving the Dutch church because it was "too conservative", insisting on English at home so children could more rapidly make the necessary language transition, and making the decision not to participate in various Dutch community organizations or customs. For many children who immigrated with their parents, the primary question of identity – and the seamless creation of a story that links who I was to who I am – is troublesome, perhaps because as children, the life story narrative was in its early chapters, the plot not well-defined, and characters largely unmolded; although formulation of the latter was under the auspices of Dutch parents who adhered firmly to the socialization of children in terms of the 'Dutch character.' Preliminary analysis of the data suggests that the greater the boundaries drawn around the immigrant community, the more likely children are to acquire an identity securely related to the parent's natal land.

Parents made the decision to immigrate and *parents* narrate various acceptable reasons for that decision. Several paradigms feed the narrative utilized to transit this part of the life story. A cluster of accounts are linked to the war: we lost everything and wanted to start over, the country was struggling to get back on its feet, there were no employment opportunities, the future was uncertain for our children. In each case, the narrative defines the country to which they will immigrate as the land of *opportunity*. Pre-war immigration draws on employment opportunities, links to other family members who had already immigrated and adventure; data suggests – and requires confirmation – that more single people immigrated pre-war and that families immigrated post-war.

My own parents held firmly to the acceptable justification that 'we immigrated for the children'. Those of us who remember that transition, and the

confusion we felt when we could no longer visit dearly loved extended family members, certainly peppered our mother and father with questions; ‘why? – why did we have to leave?’ Well, they replied, we did it for your future. That was quite a burden to carry; we lived with the fact that they had given everything up – land, language, families, for us.

Ten years after our immigration, participating in another common immigrant narrative known as ‘The Return’, I arrived in Holland. Notably, as recounted by Van Daele in her article, I too received a delighted “Welcome home!” at Schiphol airport from the official who took my passport – the perception that an immigrant is returning *home* merits further study, as does the reaction on the part of the returnee, since it is invariably emotional.

On the first Friday night get together with both paternal and maternal sides attending, sisters, brothers, and parents fell to reminiscing about my parents, a most unsettling experience. With glee, they reminisced about my parents’ courtship and the long and difficult decision making process to immigrate. Since our familial immigrant script incorporated the assertion that Canada had always been the *only* land of the future, I was shocked (and my relatives entertained) to discover that my parents had flipped two guilders with four alternative immigration choices until they narrowed it down to Canada. Likewise, I felt completely deflated when I discovered that the mytheme ‘we left for the children (because) Holland was no longer a land of opportunity’, was also questionable, because my father [had] held an excellent position in Amsterdam with bright prospects.

An alternative explanation for our emigration was carefully promulgated by my Dutch family. When close extended family members emigrate, there is a rending of the social fabric in the home country. We tend to focus on the immigrant experience, but my data clearly reveals that the family left behind ritually engages in considerable narrative work to create a cohesive narrative around the emigration and that the resulting productions require further study. Thus, according to the family who were challenged with explaining why my parents would want to emigrate, my mother had been trying ‘to get out of the country’ long before she met my father, and my father, who was a bit of a pet, had little choice but to assent to her demands to leave. Expanding the narrative through causality to create richness of account, they explained that since my grandfather had prevented my mother from leaving the Netherlands, first for England and then to nurse in Indonesia, simply because she was female, my mother was determined to ‘escape the family’s clutches’ when she could and emigration with my father offered that opportunity; her father could no longer say no.

Two seemingly irreconcilable narratives: 'We left for the children' and 'They left because your mother wanted out'. Did I confront my parents with the alternative script when I returned to Canada years later? Although the new input considerably complicated my own identity, I let their discourse stand. Indeed, I am convinced that their revised life scripts/identities were their new reality; they selflessly immigrated for the children.

I remain equally perplexed by the fact that Netherlandic urban immigrants, who immigrated to large urban centers elsewhere, are relatively unstudied in the literature. The revisions of their natal identity scripts were, in many cases, profound. Many of them were firmly situated in particular 'pillars' in the Netherlands, and the creation of community in Canada required them, quite often, to make friends across class and religious lines that would have been unthinkable in the 'old country'. Moreover, their children participated far more fully in all aspects of 'Canadian' life and often had no Dutch friends at all, evoking socialization crises between parents and children since parents carried Dutch norms that often conflicted with parenting values in the dominant society. Thus, boundaries between the 'Dutch' way and the dominant culture became increasingly fluid and contested.

It may be the case that Netherlandic farming communities in North America, bound by specific religious parameters, are easily identifiable and hence, present more focused oral history possibilities (Schalk this volume). Boundaries between those communities and mainstream society are also more rigid and the opportunity to withdraw into a closed sub-culture more viable. My own interview data speaks to widely divergent urban immigrant scripts when contrasted with the Netherlandic farming communities that do appear in the literature.

Returnee immigrants, also known as 'failed immigrants' by those who 'succeed', also remain unanalyzed in the literature. Oral histories that recount immigration as a radical break, demarcate a crisis in the life story that manifests as a restless and complex search for a new 'identity'. Life story tellers who feel that life has 'done unto them', and that they are the victims of circumstances, do not weave narratives rooted in agency and hence the format of the life story dissolves; indeed, they often become uncomfortable for a listener. The immigrant who cannot 'forget' lives an unsettled life and exhibits a fragmented sense of identity. On the other hand, some of them decide to return 'home', an act read as failure by Dutch immigrants who 'succeed'. Returnees, however, reject that formal evaluation; in their opinion the 'succeed at any price' mandate stems from a false pride that informs flawed notions of 'Character'. Instead they create continuity in the life and the decision reversal through the 'I am a person who can admit when they have made a mistake' aspect of character and disparage many

of the ‘sacrifices’ immigrants state they made to succeed, challenging the narratives with the questions “What for?” and “How does that balance what they gave up?”.

Finally, some immigrants seize the opportunity to completely refashion the self in ‘this new place’ (Van Daele this volume). Rather than straddling the past-present divide, they employ extreme ‘forgetting’ as a technique to largely dismiss the past, retain a few elements of their former identity, completely reject others, formulate new ethnic affiliations and boundaries, and use ‘character-as-chrysalis’ as adequate causality in the life story; *this is who I was born to be, I now have the chance to become that person and though it may be hard, this is my journey.*

On creative non-fiction

The creative non-fiction genre that frames the contributions by Radsma, Hols, Van Daele, and, partially, Demers, attempts to grapple with the problems of orality inscribed. Playing with narrative styles that characterize orality, particularly its unique connective qualities, these authors simultaneously recognize the sequential constraints imposed when writing and situate the reader-text relationship as paramount.

Reading is still the principal thing that we do by ourselves in our culture. In *S/Z*, Barthes queries that reader-text interface and sets out two paradigmatic interactive models: the readerly and the writerly (Barthes et al 1974). Using the terms *lisible* (‘readerly’) and *scriptible* (‘writerly’), he respectively distinguishes between texts that are straightforward and demand no special reader effort to understand, and texts whose meaning is not immediately evident and demand input from the reader. A readerly text is one that presents a world of easily identifiable characters and events and one in which the characters and their actions are understandable.

In *The pleasure of the text*, Barthes further refines these concepts to illuminate reader/text interface (Barthes et al 1975), while de-emphasizing the importance of authorial voice. He notes that every reader brings a “culturally formed body” to a specific text and brings that subjectivity to bear in terms of textual choices. At this point in his thinking, Barthes held to the notion that the structure adopted by the author has an impact on ‘how’ the reader interfaces with the text. If the author tries to ‘lead’ the reader in terms of emotion, to ‘tell’ him/her what he is thinking/feeling etc., then the author has created a ‘readerly’ text. A reader may react with *plaisir* to that text, (i.e. will feel pleasure) but the reader will not invest in the text; the author leads, and the reader follows with pleasure. A ‘writerly’ text on the other hand, requires the reader to become

complicit with/in the text; he or she must inject the 'self' into the text to say 'what has not been said'. This reading-text relationship opens the door to *jouissance* – the complete loss of self in the text where text and reader fuse. *Jouissance* is felt 'in the body'. A viewer weeping copiously through a scene in a movie is experiencing *jouissance*.

Note however, that this process is purely subjective and highly personalized. I may lose myself in a text, may weep during a movie, because my embodiment facilitates interface. Another reader however, may merely feel pleasure, may refuse engagement, or may even be repelled by what calls to me. Creative non-fiction pieces are writerly texts. Van Daele, whose narrative is constructed as a life journey, and Demers, Hols and Radsma, all provoke connotative chains. In addition, the photographs that refer to text provoke connotation on the spatial level.

Of photographs

Grace Hols' vignettes, accompanied by photographs that evoke her memory segments, the drawings that accompany van Daele's creative non-fiction, and the photographs embedded in Radsma's, Demers' and Schalk's articles, speak to the power of image and text. Once again, it is Barthes who turns to semiology to understand the relationship between signs and symbols with their referents in the physical world or the world of ideas. He also attempted to understand the experience of seeing as a readable code, although he recognized the difficulty of distilling that code into words. However, he posited that the act of seeing something involves three components; the optical, in which the gaze informs or gathers information; the linguistic, in which relationship is established; and the haptic, in which the gaze looks at, attains, touches, seizes or is seized by something: the gaze as possession; the anxious gaze that seeks something or someone.

To understand his thinking, it is necessary to incorporate his notion of the 'photographic paradox'; the essential two element structure of the image. On the one hand, a photograph denotes, it is a sign of something, it has a literal or obvious meaning. I can look at a scenic photograph taken by a friend and think: "Oh yes, that is a picture of a boy on a bridge." On the other hand, however, the photograph has the power to connote, it may imply, it may suggest, it may activate cultural resonances. Looking at that same photograph, the bridge might evoke a memory of a bridge I once stood on, and trigger a connotative chain. Thus, I establish a more intimate or pleasurable reader/image interface with the photograph.

Since Barthes is always concerned with the reader/text relationship, and since photos or drawings are text, many of the distinctions that Barthes lays out for the reader/text relationship are re-articulated in his quest to understand the image/reader interface. Barthes posited that the denotative power of a photo/drawing, which can be equated with texts that elicit *Plaisir*, often gives the impression that it is 'nothing but' a similitude of that pictured and consequently, usually outweighs the power of a drawing's connotation. This fact is particularly noticeable for example, when one looks at someone else's photos; indeed, this is why they quickly bore us. The gaze seeks to establish connectivity, but is unable to do so. The pictures are just of people in a place, and simply establish what Barthes calls "the reality effect". Pursuing these ideas in *The rhetoric of the image*, in which he dealt with advertising (Barthes 1977), he expands our understanding of the relationship that develops between the viewer of a photograph or drawing and the artifact itself by again discerning three interfaces; the linguistic; the coded iconic and the non-coded iconic. Contrasting the denotative [non-coded iconic] and connotative interfaces, he simultaneously marks their connectivity; it is the *syntagm* of the denoted message that 'naturalizes' the system of the connotative message. In other words, the bridge may be merely a bridge, but it may also refer to yet another bridge, to what that day was like when I stood on that bridge, to how I got to that bridge; thus, the *syntagm*, or sliding signification, is an orderly combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole within a text, sometimes called a 'chain' (Saussure 1983, 126). Barthes' focus however, is on spatial signifiers that "can exploit more than one dimension simultaneously" (Saussure 1983, 70) and to underline that they do not establish a consciousness of 'being there', but of having been there, the evocation of nostalgia: "handling the precious photographs of two joined family lives in my left hand, and a coffee cup in my right [...] Caught in an immense flood of sadness and joy [...] another life, another time were overwhelming (Van Daele this volume). In effect, Barthes sets up a spatial-temporal model: spatial immediacy of the past in the form of the photograph, along with temporal anteriority, an illogical conjunction of the here-now with the there-then. There, is he states, an implicit trauma in all photos or drawings.

Beyond the informational and symbolic, he turns his attention to significance and links it to writerly texts; it is significance that provokes *jouissance*, the loss of self in a photo or drawing, a loss that, in the case of image/reader, Barthes refers to as the "*punctum*". In *Camera lucida*, Barthes (1981) provides a plethora of images which facilitate a viewer's immediate ability to grasp the distinctions he makes between divergent viewer/text relationships. Casually paging through the images before turning to a serious reading, my eyes latched

onto a very old black and white tintype of a little girl. On her feet are a pair of leather buckled shoes. I had a pair just like them, in Holland, when I was five. Eyes locked on those shoes, I was engulfed in multiple memories accompanied by a wave of nauseating sorrow and nostalgia; indeed, the reaction was purely physical, the quality that links it to writerly text (we could say, that for me, the photo was a 'writerly' visual). I felt a *punctum* ('piercing'), and the rest of the photograph faded away. To this day, I cannot recall any other details of that picture.

The relationship between myself and this photo was unmediated by script but the pictures and drawings in this issue are accompanied by captions and extended discussion that moves us between image and text. As readers turn a page, their eyes are immediately drawn to a newly revealed image and only subsequently, to the words. Relay, the process that describes the moving eye as it travels between text and picture, encapsulates the way in which we add and subtract from potential meanings until arriving at a definitive interpretation. Furthermore, we may be directed in terms of the image and in 1977, Barthes coined the term anchorage to refer to texts or captions that represent an image's authorial voice in order to (or not) situate the viewer *in relation to* image. As Hall (1973, 178) states: "It is a very common practice for the captions to news photographs to tell us, in words, exactly how the subject's expression ought to be read."

Photographs and drawings in a single article, like the 'coffee ensemble' in Radsma's article, or the connections apparent between Hols' vignettes, can be read as a sequence of pictures that visually amplify each other through the image/reader relationships as well as through a process of relay and anchorage. Furthermore, the images *across* the articles in this issue can be read as a 'composite'; for example, the ubiquitous appearance of coffee as a signifier of Dutch communalism across the photos, leading to an understanding of its centrality to identity. Images amplify and interact with text.

On Artifacts

The adoption of artifacts as markers of identity and the fetishism of objects that we accord certain powers resonate with sympathetic and contagious magic. On one level, objects may simply act as *memento mori*; reminders of our personal or group identity. A displayed pair of wooden shoes may signify complicity in a sign of Dutchness externally imposed by Canadian society and amplified by the immigrant. Although those identity markers are reproduced, and hence complicit in their (re)construction, new settlers have no attachment to those shoes; they

denote, they do not connote. On the other hand, carefully chosen artifacts, packed for the immigration, have the power to evoke emotion and memories on a very deep level.

Even in secular societies, many people adhere to the notion that objects have powers; a lucky necklace, a piece of clothing which, when worn, always brings luck, angels on one's lapel etc. While not always as specifically articulated as the Maori concept of *hau* (Mauss et al 1990) with its connotations of conscious vital essence, people across cultures share a belief that there is 'something' in certain (or all) objects, some animistic presence, that forms a personal relationship with a person or a chain of people. Older objects are unique in the contagious principle associated with them: the idea that things that have been in contact with one another will remain in contact with one another through space and time (natural or acquired characteristics are material and transmissible), and that by holding, or looking at that artifact, we re-connect with that past and the people who have shared and similarly held that object/history. Through artifacts, we evoke the past *in* the present; objects dissolve time while simultaneously restructuring its pathways.

Indeed, human relationships to objects, the establishment of relationships between humans *through* them, and especially how objects are exchanged (Demers this volume), form the focus of a plethora of analyses, particularly in the discipline of anthropology (Mauss et al 1990; Malinowski 1922) and inspired Marx's classic discussion of commodity fetishism (Marx 1906). *We grant power to objects* in relation to ourselves. They signify identity, they connect us to others, they *contain* our essence, they are a gateway to the past, and they entrench relationship. In this issue, three authors focus specifically on artifacts: Helene Demers on the bracelets that she introduces through fragments of oral history and frames through scholarly analysis, Jenny Radsma through her creative non-fiction piece on the Dutch cup of coffee, and Grace Hols, who presents artifact memories through image-text connections in her vignettes.

Through the articles in the issue, readers are invited to contemplate the power of artifacts as both signifiers and meaning containers. Radsma's cup of coffee for example, is a boundary marker *and* container. It signifies her immigrant community as well as her Dutch historical identity, including its colonial past and Dutch contributions to the European palette. The use of the artifact has been thoroughly ritualized – almost fetishized – in terms of its power. Ritual: coffee must be ground in an exacting way to preserve and enhance its flavor, coffee requires certain types of cups, spoons, settings, and coffee should be accompanied by pastries. Coffee contains the elements of a good Dutch life, literally, drinking/internalizing the good life, while simultaneously signifying lack:

a time when the Dutch had no coffee, *were not themselves*, during the war. Coffee time marks the boundary between sacred and profane time, a time 'marked off' from the daily routine and ritually 'put away' once the allotted time has passed. Coffee makes friends of strangers who cross the threshold of one's home (Van Gennep 1909); once one eats or drinks with a stranger, the stranger is neutralized. Radsma's attempt to ritually provide for her landlord speaks not only to the paradigm of hospitality in which she was raised, but to his refusal to acknowledge relationship; one senses her textual anxiety. In Radsma's article, a cup of coffee connotes an entire communal way of life.

When Samuel Johnson was in Scotland inscribing and learning Scots oral history, he addressed the problem of writing history in real time and through oral traditions. Like Thucydides, he grappled with the 'accountability' of reporting and issues of 'truth value' in oral accounts of the same incident. Johnson however, recognized and underlined the precedence of orality, noting that all history was at first oral. For the purpose of transmitting oral histories in written form, he recommended the following solution: since people are divergently attuned to their social worlds, and hence perceive differently, an assemblage of narratives addressing the same event will offer all possible perspectives on an occurrence, thereby creating a holistic account (Johnson & Boswell 1990).

Oral historians follow Johnson's mandate when collecting life stories: the greater the number of accounts, the richer our potential understanding. Since narration is the defining quality of the evidence, analysis must proceed, as I have argued, on both a form and content basis. How a story is told in each (sub)culture facilitates identification of what that culture understands as essential in a 'life'. For example, if the recounting of 'professions' or 'type of work I did' forms an aspect of the life story, its inclusion signals the domain 'work' as a significant one both ideologically and socially in that culture. Similarly, reoccurring themes – the homeland; the return (which leads to self-reflection and reawakens family narrative segments); the history of where I came from/who I am; the reason we immigrated and why we immigrated to the place we did; childhood memories; the train; photographs that concretize memory; questions re ethnic identity; the strong immigrant mother – all these and more lead to further avenues of investigation while holistically extending our understandings of the immigrant experience.

Not inconsequentially, individual and composite life story collections *refer* historically, they facilitate our understanding of specific historical peoples, their social milieus, their ideologies, their praxis, their interactions, in and through time. Indeed, the historical aspects of life stories cannot be underestimated, quite often it is only through them that we gain an understanding of how people were

thinking, how they responded, complied or confronted political decisions and policies made by those in power, and how official versions of socio-cultural events are often one-sided and marginalizing. Indeed, it is oral histories that deepen our understanding of the human condition and shed light on social formations, human adaptability or resistance, and power/resistance formations.

The articles in this issue cast new light on the shaping of immigrant identities, on remembering and memories, on the artifact as repository of identity and memory making, and on the process of memory/identity shaping over the lifetime. When carefully analyzed and juxtaposed, extended life story collections offer critical evidentiary contributions to memory and remembering around the immigration experience, precisely because that event stands as the narrative crucible in the life.

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About the guest editor

Over the past 17 years, Hendrika Beaulieu-Boon has been engaged in oral history/life story research, initially with North American interviewees who were citizens of the Dutch East Indies during the last years of the colonial period and World War II, and who experienced the subsequent diaspora to the Netherlands. In 2009, she obtained her Ph.D. from Leiden University based on that study. Thereafter, she has been primarily engaged with life story/documentary research among the Blackfoot of Canada and the United States and with various immigrant communities. A historical anthropologist who commonly approaches analyses through the lens of multiple socio-linguistic methodologies, her focus is on extending and challenging official – and hegemonic – documented History through accounts derived from people ‘on-the-ground’. As an immigrant herself, she believes that there is a lacuna of detailed work around the immigrant experience, and advocates for extended social science research among immigrant communities, with a particular focus on cross-cultural experiences.

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Neerlandische migraties: Over herinneringen en herinneren

Sinds het midden van de twintigste eeuw worden levensverhalen, orale geschiedenis en orale tradities beschouwd als belangrijke bronnen van evidentie in de sociale en geesteswetenschappen. Om te voldoen aan academische standaarden met betrekking tot waarheid en universaliteit, vereist de manier waarop kennis wordt weergegeven in narrative vormen een gedetailleerd onderzoek naar de aard van herinneringen en het proces van herinneren – de funderingen waarop de narratieve vorm rust. Aangezien oraliteit, en de inscriptie die de kwaliteiten ervan moet nabootsen, zich concentreert op filiatie in plaats van universele waarheden, hebben onderzoekers gedetailleerde socio-linguïstische onderzoeksmodellen ontwikkeld die zowel vorm en inhoud in aanmerking nemen met het doel kennis te ontleen uit orale narratieve bronnen. In dit verband realiseren onderzoekers zich steeds meer dat mensen hun wereld niet alleen weergeven in hun verhalen, maar ook betekenis geven aan de voorwerpen waarmee ze zich omringen. Een analyse van foto’s en cultuurobjecten, zowel als de esthetiek die karakteristiek is voor bepaalde

samenlevingen, biedt een dieper begrip van ons Zijn in de wereld en vergemakkelijkt interculturele vergelijkingen tussen verschillende groepen mensen.