# International Postgraduate Symposium Forgetting / Remembering Dunedin, 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> June 2015

#### **Abstracts**

**Eleonora Bello** – "Between Testimony and Storytelling: the Memory of the Mental Hospital in Ascanio Celestini's <u>The Black Sheep</u> (2006)"

Nicola, the eponymous protagonist of Ascanio Celestini's monologue, tells about the last 35 years of his life spent in a lunatic asylum. Nicola is an outcast, a dimwit, a dunce: he represents the "black sheep" of all times and places, that is to say, in Celestini's own words, he embodies all those against whom the intentional use of violence seems almost justified, since people like him are barely considered human beings.

Nicola's story starts from the day of his death and is told in third person. Only at the end of the play, when the *authentic memory* and the *fictional memory* converge, we understand that Celestini, as a "narractor", levers on the fact that real memory and imagined memory became confused in Nicola's head. By its very nature, narrative theatre genre, to which Ascanio Celestini's works belong, is performed through a narrative located halfway between two kinds of testimony: one is the personal testimony of the narrator, and the other draws from a variety of sources that are shaped through invention, symbolism and imagination.

In this paper, I analyse three fundamental elements of narrative theatre: the function of narrator, almost always present inside the story; the strategy by which a biographical identity is created, that is to say how an individual story becomes the story of a community; finally, the role of the public's memory, the ultimate depository of the narrative experience.

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Cordelia Black – "Too Real: curating personal and emotional investment in a roleplaying context"

I will be drawing on 15 years' experience in a range of communities and game styles that employ roleplaying elements. I will briefly discuss some narrative experiences of immersion in a game experience, as recounted by participants from different communities. Specifically, I will investigate the concept of 'bleed', and the search for a definition of the crossover between player experience and emotions and the game world. I will discuss the perceived impacts of personal investment (or overinvestment) in a game environment, as well as player attitudes to engagement with their game experiences. This paper is a cautionary tale against using the same term in different subcultural contexts, as different groups have very divergent approaches to curating their in-game identities and very different views about risk management and use of language when describing their cathartic experiences in game. ...

The narrated experience of a player's intentions, the way they set out to find connections between their world and the world of their gaming community, I am calling 'curated' identity. This could be considered a conscious decision to remember or forget aspects of one's real world experience, or aspects of one's roleplaying persona, in either environment.

I propose that 'Bleed' as a concept, while defined very broadly across different communities, refers to unconscious acts of memory - covert remembrance of one identity that slips through into the other world and violates the pre-established rules of 'curated' experience.

I will also briefly discuss the extent to which different gaming communities elect to collectively forget - or collectively remember - the emotional and practical connections between roleplaying and daily life.

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**Bentley Brown** – "Video Without Memory: An Examination Of Memory Philosophy & Archival Video From Childhood In Chad"

Is it true that when we see an image of ourselves that we don't remember, we imagine a narrative to explain who we were and what we were doing at the time? Even the past of a few minutes ago lives on through memory, repurposed again and again each time we recall it.

Video Without Memory is a research project with an audiovisual component in which I use "home video," video captured on a family-owned camera and collected in a family-owned archive, to explore memories of my departure from the United States to Chad as a teenager, examining passages through time, place and identity.

A filmmaker myself, I re-visit these memories through the lens of a 2014 return visit to Chad, including the effect of such a trip on a feature screenplay I was writing at the time, based on the people and moments of my teen years. And, lastly, I reflect on memory and the archival process itself, asking questions such as:

- -When looking at "video without memory," is our associated narrative explanation more, or less, malleable than that of "pre-existing memories"?
- -Or, on the other hand, does looking at an image simply awaken a dormant memory?
- -Did certain technologies facilitate more candid representations of a 'reality,' if one exists?
- -Does my experience change when watching videos with other family members?
- -Do I value certain recorded memories over others?
- -At stake in such questions are important discussions of identity formation, race, and transnationalism, particularly in their mediation through film & video.

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**Stephanie Beck Cohen** – "Quilting Operation Octopus: soft textiles, hard memories of the Liberian civil war"

Launched by Charles Taylor's rebel forces in 1994, Operation Octopus was the most traumatic and deadliest event of the Liberian civil wars (c. 1989-2003), a war indexed internationally through photojournalistic lenses as child soldiers and widespread destruction. This paper investigates how Liberian artists visualized the wars' most deadly and destructive period, and explores how quilts serve as tangible repositories for cultural and historical memory. I examine how artists and their communities created a visual record of violence and coped with traumatic national memories in three ways.

First, I visually analyze Operation Octopus in two media: Gladys Cole's Octopus quilt and Hallie Andrews' painting *Operation Octopus*. These two works illustrate how Liberians experienced the war and visually cataloged those memories.

Second, I examine quilt making as a coping mechanism during and after the war based on oral histories recorded in Liberia in 2014, looking specifically at quilt patterns named Octopus that serve as mnemonic devices and tangible objects around which women's communities remember national and deeply personal traumas.

Finally, I discuss quilt making practices more broadly in the context of the Liberian National Symbols Review Project. As an American imported artistic practice, I examine how quilting has changed and adapted to represent Liberian perspectives over a century and a half of nationhood. This study speaks to gendered and material culture ways of remembering and memorializing recent civil war histories in West Africa.

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Maddalena Fumagalli - "Songs, sponges and cultural behaviors in cetaceans"

Male humpback whales in a breeding population sing the same song, the most elaborate single display known in any animal species. This song evolves structurally over breeding seasons, and spreads across the oceans, transmitted between subgroups along migration and feeding routes. Bottlenose dolphins in Shark Bay, Australia, place sponges over their rostra when feeding on

rocky substrates. Sponge-using dolphins, or spongers, are females and transmit the behaviour to their daughters. The investigation of nature and nurture influences, cultural processes and social I earning become even more challenging when applied to nonhuman mammals, and especially so when the focus is on long-lived, highly social, highly mobile marine animals that are often out of view, such as dolphins and whales. Humpback whales songs and sponging are the most renowned examples of information or behaviour that cetaceans acquire from conspecifics through some form of social learning. Under Boyd & Richerson's (1996) definition, they are cultures. In this presentation I describe these and other cultural behaviours discovered in cetaceans, discuss the roles of societies and social networks in shaping observed cultures and emphasize the importance of culture for informing and promoting conservation of wild populations.

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**Andrew Yi Ming Lim** – "New Zealand's response to the 30 September coup attempt and Indonesian mass killings, 1965-1966"

2015 is the 50th anniversary of the 30 September "coup attempt" in Indonesia. On 30 September 1965, several mid-ranking officers kidnapped and murdered six army generals, who were rumoured to be part of a CIA conspiracy against President Sukarno. In response, General Suharto took control of the Indonesian Army and crushed the "30 September Movement." Alleging that the Movement was a failed Communist coup attempt, the Army and right-wing groups unleashed a pogrom against the Indonesian Communists and left-wing elements which killed around half a million people. Over the next two years, Suharto maneuvered President Sukarno out of power and initiated a radical realignment of Indonesia's foreign policy and society.

The United States, Britain, and Australia aided Suharto's rise to power by covertly supporting the Army's anti-Communist campaign. While New Zealand was not involved in these efforts, Wellington welcomed Suharto's "New Order" due to the influence of Cold War logic on New Zealand foreign policy and its military involvement in the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation. This short paper examines New Zealand's response to the 30 September "coup attempt" and its violent aftermath. Besides examining government policy, it also examines public discourses through the mainstream media, memoirs, alternative voices like the Communist Party of New Zealand and the New Zealand Monthly Review. How did Cold War ideologies influence different New Zealand responses to the Indonesian coup attempt and mass killings? What factors influenced the New Zealand government's acquiescence to the Indonesian Army's takeover of Indonesia.

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#### Wenwen Liu – "Changed Motifs of Guohua in Modern China"

Guohua (Chinese ink-brush painting) has been considered "traditional" from most of Chinese critics' perspectives nowadays. However, apparently we have ignored a phenomenon that many motifs that we thought "completely traditional" in guohua did not even exist two centuries ago. Chinese ink-brush painting has been changed continuously since Shanghai was forced to open up as a trading port in the 1850s. Artists borrowed what they have observed from Western oil paintings to inject new elements into Chinese painting, for example, the more precise portraying of people's faces on paper, and certain prey animals and birds as motifs such as loins, foxes, and eagles. Guohua was reformed again after the founding of PRC in 1949 for better serving the people than merely meeting literati's aesthetic needs. During the period of the 1950s tough strokes of outlining shapes of figures appeared in guohua, which was mostly used as an outlining skill in Western style sketching. Ethnic figures became a prevailing theme in guohua as well because of the Chinese Communist Party's art propaganda in the 1950s. This paper is a brief introduction of innovative motifs that have appeared in guohua in modern China. As stated above, what we thought unchanged as the tradition of art have continuously transformed. Guohua keeps borrowing elements from other cultures for certain purposes. Beside of the motif introduction, how guohua has been innovated in terms of nationalism is another concern of this paper. concern of this paper.

Eliot Lynch – "Title: Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. Civil War, and the Problem of 'Union': Forgetting Absolutisms in American Political Culture"

Within the dominant narrative of U.S. political culture, the United States is considered to be a moderate liberal state of individual freedom, democracy, and peaceful commerce. While George Washington and other founders are considered to have created a federal constitutional union embodying the highest ideals of the European enlightenment, Abraham Lincoln is considered to have saved the federal 'union' and American democracy from the stain of slavery in the U.S. Civil War from 1861-65. Building on Louis Hartz's theory of 'liberal absolutism' in American political culture, this paper will argue that there are three core elements of 'absolutism' in the U.S. Civil War that are often silenced or ignored in U.S. cultural memory. First, the U.S. constitution was suspended in the 'pro-Union' North, ending freedom of political speech and habeas corpus. Second, the Civil War was arguably the first 'total war' which witnessed the comprehensive destruction, verging on annihilation, of the American south. Third, in extending liberal citizenship rights to former African-American slaves, the conception of liberalism in the United States was deepened taking on a truly universal application. It is argued that to silence or ignore these three elements of 'absolutism' is to minimize the complexities and unintended, but real, comprehensiveness of U.S. liberalism as a 'way of life' verging on 'civil religion'. It will be concluded that the elements of 'absolutism' fundamental to the US Civil War have subsequently been globalized in the 20th and 21st centuries with ramifications for our interpretation of US foreign policy and the project of global liberalism in the early 21st century.

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Sally Ann McIntyre – "Huia Transcriptions: re-collecting Colonial era witness accounts of extinct birds"

In classical acoustic-ecological conceptions of the soundscape, the preservation of a sound mark is understood to positively relate to the preserving of (cultural and natural) memory of place. But what of the sounds beyond (recorded) memory, that are already missing? How can we suspend the fantasy of a natural plenitude of sonic fecundity, to adequately hear the withdrawal of sound from an ecosystem and its soundscape, through ecological destruction? And how best to memorialise this loss? In a series of works focusing on what Dugal McKinnon has termed "ecological silencing" I explore the possibility for practice based research to investigate the lost birdsongs found within New Zealand colonial narratives, asking what it might mean to re-collect, through interventions into archival records and other material traces, the songs of lost species. These works explore the tension between the need to memorialise such loss in the veneration of individual species, and the recognition that the lost remain as traces within the wider physical and acoustic environment, as they do in written narratives and other recordings. Just as George Gibbs relates in Ghosts of Gondwana that the Moa is still visibly present in the New Zealand landscape through the Lancewood's juvenile stage, might we also be able to locate the afterechoes of the songs of the Huia within the songs of extant species? As John C. Ryan says in his essay, Why Do Extinctions Matter? "A more tenable ecological conceptualisation of mourning needs to consider connectivity, rather than unified subjectivity, as a tool for exploring the deep channels of grief over the loss of the more-than-human."

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**Manuvelraj Ponnudurai** – "Forgetting and remembering Iyothee Thoss in Tamil speaking South India: the role of Caste in constructing the Memory"

In Tamil speaking South India (TSSI) or "Tamil Nadu" the dedicated efforts of Pundit K. Iyothee Thoss (1845 - 1914) marked the revival of Buddhism. He was an "untouchable" by birth, driven him to exercise the extraordinary talent by which he became a multidimensional personality such as Siddha doctor, editor, publisher, and scholar of multiple languages. He, along

with Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832 - 1907), revived Buddhism in TSSI and established South Indian Sakya Buddhist Association (1898). He published the first pamphlet on Buddha in Tamil language and launched two magazines, *Dravida Pandian* (1885) and *Tamilan* (1907-1914), through which he spread the ideas of Buddhist revivalism. Moreover, he was instrumental in establishing a Buddhist identity, known as Sakya that reinterprets history, religion, literature, and tradition. Iyothee Thoss is a pioneer of revival of Buddhism, and "Dravidian" movements, which have been consciously understated and degraded by the Tamil speaking caste Hindu Shudra Dravida (Tamil Shudra) momentum. Such Tamil Shudra groups to fulfill their selfish interest created Tamil identity which ultimately leads to Tamil Nationalism. Recently, the death centenary of Iyothee Thoss (2014) has been celebrated by the "untouchable" community and neglected by Tamil Shudra groups. From the emergence of Tamil Shudra political parties (early 1940s) to the republication and dissemination of Iyothee Thoss writings (late 1990s) the vital contribution of Iyothee Thoss for the empowerment of marginalized communities in TSSI has been systematically and deliberately forgotten by the Tamil Shudra groups. This paper attempts to explore the reasons for forgetting and remembering Iyothee Thoss in TSSI in our times.

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#### Murari Prasad, PhD – "Reclaiming History: Amitav Ghosh's The Calcutta Chromosome"

Retrieving erased history or narrating alternative versions of the past has been a salient trend in contemporary Indian English fiction since the 1980s. Of course the novelist's concern with history is not a unique contemporary phenomenon in that, at a fundamental level, all literary narratives are more or less empirically grounded and emanate from the social context but the issue in most of our major novels is to combat the dominant history by interpolating recuperated stories of the past. Evidently, Amitav Ghosh is an outstanding exemplar of this genre. His prize winning novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), focuses on offering a counterhegemonic narrative that subverts the imperial perspective on medical historiography. The novel interrogates the authenticity of the nineteenth-century malarial research of Sir Ronald Ross, who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1902 after researching the vector of malaria for three years (1895-1898) in India. Ghosh suggests that in fact it was not Ross' own research that led to the discovery of the transmission of malaria; it was primarily the work of the two subaltern and disempowered assistants in Ross' laboratory that steered him in the right direction. By interweaving disparate strands of history and fiction the novel offers a postcolonial corrective to the colonizer's narrative.

Ghosh's multi-stranded tale tells us how the Indian laboratory assistants were manipulating Ross' findings for the use of a secret religious society involved in its own search for the secret of immortality. The followers of the counter-scientific cult understand that a "Calcutta Chromosome" generated through anti-malaria treatment has the power to regenerate a new body.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the signifying transactions in Ghosh's novel, which is substantially informed by the recovered historical material related to Ross' malarial research in India.

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#### Radhika Raghav – "Traditions of Portraiture and Twentieth Century Stardom in Indian Cinema"

This research paper looks at the codes and conventions of representation associated with female stars of early Indian cinema (1930s-1960s). I propose to approach the topic of female stardom by focusing on photography, fashion, and lifestyle as the means through which a star develops the recognizable personal style that is endemic to twentieth century celebrity. This paper argues that the process of construction of a star image persistently deals with a kind of visual remembering and forgetting of previous visual art forms such as theatre, dance, painting, sculpture, etc. Star iconography, for example, incorporates and omits visual styles in accordance with cultural nationalism. By underlining these connections, locating the overlooked links between their

respective photographic portraits, this paper explores how the portraits of celebrated performers of the colonial era acted as prototypes for images of film stars.

This research situates itself within other scholarship, such as that of Neepa Majumdar, that argues that the role of nationalist discourse is more influential than Hollywood in creating the visual persona of Indian stars of this period, as manifested in the distinctive iconographies associated, in particular, with the female stars. This preliminary research is based on a close analysis of a number of key photographs of courtesans, performers and film stars of early Indian cinema. In order to understand the evolution of the depiction of women in Indian society these earlier works will be placed alongside later examples of film stardom with an emphasis on the growing legitimacy of the latter, in order to highlight the evolution of the depiction of women in Indian films. As such this paper promises to contribute to our understanding of gender and nationalism in the construction of celebrity beyond Hollywood.

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#### Jane Ross – "Desiring the Rural in This Way of Life"

Documentary film enacts a particular viewing position, which enlists spectators in what Elizabeth Cowie describes as the desire to see and know reality as it really is. As is the case with Thomas Burstyn's documentary This Way of Life, (2009) it incites a desire to experience a romantic view of rural life even though it may only be a fantasy, or indeed, what Roland Barthes has described as a myth. I will situate this film as part of a longer project of representing Aotearoa New Zealand as a rural nation; a project that always been negotiated through mythical structures. Claudia Bell reminds us that early European settler propaganda promoted the nation through the myths of a better life in a new and ideal rural society. Romantic ideals of the moral and physical superiority of rural life are also reproduced within This Way of Life, enabling for spectators a nostalgic remembrance of a bygone era whilst simultaneously asserting a mythologised contemporary rural identity within what has become a highly urbanised nation. I contend that the film's emphasis on reproducing mythified expressions of rural and national identity engages spectators in a paradoxical desire to not want to know contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand as it really is. To extend my argument, I explore how This Way of Life facilitates a form historical forgetting or a disavowal for its spectators, not only of the reality of urbanisation in Aotearoa New Zealand, but also for colonisation and what Stephen Turner has referred to as an 'unsettlement', which impacts upon bicultural relations represented by this film.

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**Ritika Singh** – "Remember, Recover: Trauma and Trans-generational Negotiations with the Indian Partition in <u>This Side</u>, <u>That Side</u> and <u>The 1947 Partition Archive</u>"

The hauntings of the Indian Partition continue to be expressed via newer mediums as two or three generations negotiate its impact. This paper looks at role and function of *The 1947 Partition Archive* that records oral testimonies of first-generation witnesses. It also examines an anthology of graphic narratives – *This Side*, *That Side* - that illustrates second-generation accounts of trying to understand the Partition, passed down through stories and memories. Through an analysis of both, trans-generational negotiations with traumatic memories of the Indian Partition can be studied along with examining how newer channels open newer opportunities of representing its trauma, and how different ways of narration or expression give words to these wounds. I argue that the process of coming to terms with individual and collective trauma, in the context of the Indian Partition, has just begun and such mediums not only fulfil a therapeutic need of recovering from the trauma of the Partition but also allow a sharing of the knowledge of direct and indirect witnessing of the traumatic event. This paper also then looks at some crucial questions: is healing possible without forgiveness? Are mediums like the digital archives, or

literary narratives, instruments of reconciliation? Is the burden of forgiveness, like trauma, also trans-generational?

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**Timothy Smith** – "Forgetting Falsification – How Creationism Survived Darwin's Origin"

The publication of Darwin's Origin of Species effectively ended the reign of creationist explanations in the biological sciences, but Darwin's idea was only the last nail in the coffin. His theory was preceded by several hundred years of European thought from revolutionary geologists and biologists such as Buffon, Cuvier, Hutton and Lyell. Due to the efforts of these men, creationist explanations were slowly but surely discarded. The recent creation of the Earth, Noah's flood, an original human pair, the immutability of species - all of these creationist theories were replaced by naturalistic scientific ideas. With Darwin's nail, the falsification of creationism was complete.

Unfortunately, creationists have forgotten what happened before Darwin. In particular, they have forgotten that the discovery of the phenomenon of extinction was a tremendous blow to their theory. They have also forgotten that the discovery of antipodean peoples shook the foundations of their theory. In this paper, I argue that the recent political reemergence of creationism has been made possible only by the passage of time healing the wounds of scientific refutation.

SSS

**Zohreh Soltani** – "The Reincarnation of the Damned Qajar Palace: from palace to prison, from prison to Museum"

In November 2012, Qasr Garden Museum was officially opened, being announced as an important touristic attraction zone for Tehran. This event would mark the third reincarnation of this building since its construction. With the order of Fath Ali Shah Qajar, famous traditional Iranian architects were ordered to build this palace in Tehran, in 1807. Being named as Qasr-e Qajar, which meant "Qajar Palace," later the name remained as Qasr, which meant palace. After it was transformed into a prison in 1929, under Pahlavi state, this palace served as the most important prison of Tehran in Reza Shah's era and it became an important symbol of the sociopolitical struggles of Iranian society under the rule of Pahlavis. After the 1979 Revolution, and once the new state was settled, the prison was not serving as a political prison anymore, aiming at a display of an act of detachment from the past. In 2003, the prison was shut down, and turned into a Garden Museum. This research aims to focus on Qasr, a piece of architecture that is not only deeply woven into the urban fabric of the city but also as a multi-temporal physical entity, which is present in the memory of the intellectual, political and social history of the country. Through the narratives of the life and transformations of this building, which is a traumatic site indexing to the very recent history of the nation, I aim to focus on the relationship between museums, politics, and collective memory in urban cultural landscapes. How does a site of suffering function as a touristic attraction? What is the essence of a romanticist approach in preserving the sites of horror and turning them into museums, creating bonds to the heritage of a nation? What is the characteristic of the nationalistic narratives created out of this space, and how does it reconstruct the collective and shared memory?

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**Katharina Weinstock** – "Things beyond Recognition. Ethnography as Object Practice (from Archival Art to Postinternet)" Since the mid 1990s there has been a discourse in art historical scholarship about ethnographic and archival trends in contemporary art. Most recently it was Massimiliano Gioni, curator of "The Encyclopedic Palace", who attested to the unabated artistic impulse to organize the plethora of things surrounding us: "artists, writers, scientists, and self-proclaimed prophets [...] have tried – often in vain – to fashion an image of the world that will capture its infinite variety and richness. Today, as we grapple with a constant flood of information, such attempts seem even more necessary and even more desperate." There is a wide range of artists today, who draw upon the culturally given. They collect found material and subject it to new artistic readings, setting free its subversive potentials. In the wake of institutional critique the museum

used to figure as a major point of reference for such practices. At present though, as I want to argue, with the advent of the so-called postinternet generation we witness a shift in as much as the official, culturally sanctioned archive of the museum is challenged by the rampant archive of the internet. Generally drawing on my PhD related research on the found object and considering the seminal example of "The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things" in particular, my paper strives to illustrate how Mark Leckey – by embracing the cumulative logic of the web – undermines the interpretational sovereignty of the museum. As James Clifford once suggested, we only may overcome the obliviousness of ethnographic allegory (the inevitably 'crafted' nature of every ethnographic account) by opening ourselves to alternative interpretations of the world

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# Alireza Sayyad, Amirhosein Sayyad, Nahid Gilamirrod - "Architecture, Civilization and Barbarism"

In the "theses on the philosophy of history", Walter Benjamin argues, "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism". The most obvious and best examples of cultural treasures in Benjamin's discussion can be found in the monumental architecture, and the history has always shown that the rulers have been interested in these magnificent statements by stone. Adolf Hitler believed that every outstanding civilization had represented its own glorious through the monumental architecture. Benjamin's discussion challenges the dominant theory that seeks an ideal image of these magnificent architecture works in order to confirm the glorious cultural past, and by establishing this image, can introduce these artworks as the expressions of culture and national identity. Before Benjamin, the great Nietzsche had also derided this desire to admire great historical artworks, and their interpretation in line with the historical progress. This perspective would challenge the triumphantly interpretation which suggests history as a moving forward and progressive process, because as Benjamin points out, every progression is associated by a catastrophe. The present article attempts by employing Benjamin's discussion and by using of the cinematic thinking's model suggested by Gilles Deleuze, to revise the role of these architectural monuments in establishing national identity. Deleuze himself believed that reading of artistic work should not be a study in the history and context of it formation, but this reading must allow us to confront with new reformulation and new creation of concept.

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