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# War, transgenerational memory and documentary film: mediated and institutional memory in historical culture

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## ABSTRACT

This article makes use of history documentary films to examine mediated historical culture and memory narrated by media. It particularly focuses on transgenerational dimensions of memory in media representations – the idea of how collective memories are transmitted through media to a second generation of people who did not directly experience the actual events but who nonetheless have often been exposed to the traumatic tensions of the first generation. The article first asks how mediated memory provides different views on war in historical culture. Second, it discusses how the memory of war is negotiated in the contemporary institutional historical culture of a democracy. The article demonstrates that since the role of the state in public remembrance is no longer as clear-cut as before, at least in democratic countries, *historical culture* is a more appropriate and precise concept than either civil society or even *public history* for analysing the importance of memory in society. The article also confirms the notion that it is difficult, if not even impossible, to separate media-narrated memory into the collective and private spheres of life. The empirical body of research consists of three Finnish history documentary films on WWII screened or broadcast in 2017, when Finland celebrated its 100-year anniversary.

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## Introduction

The media play a significant role in shaping contemporary understandings of *historical culture*, especially in the *commodification* of history as popular entertainment (de Groot 2009, 17). Artistic media representations of history have long been important for how people comprehend

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history. Besides literature and theatre, modern artistic media have, since the advent of feature and documentary film, had power to define the history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see, e.g. Rosenstone 2013). One central dimension of mediated historical culture is how the media exploit collective memory. This *media memory* – ‘the systematic exploration of collective pasts that are narrated by the media, through the use of the media, and about the media’ – is constantly shaping and reshaping our understanding of the past (Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg 2011, 1).

The article asks how mediated memory provides different views on war in historical culture. It also discusses how the memory of war is negotiated in the contemporary institutional historical culture of a democracy. It focuses especially on transgenerational dimensions of memory in media representations – the idea of how collective memories are transmitted through media to a second generation of people who did not directly experience the actual events but who nonetheless have often been exposed to the traumatic tensions of the first generation.

The empirical body of research consists of three Finnish history documentary films on WWII, screened or broadcast in 2017 when Finland celebrated its 100th year anniversary. Besides WWII, the common theme in the documentaries is how the next generation of soldiers and home front have dealt with the wars and their legacy in relation to family life.

The methodological approach stems from the idea that history provides cultural orientation in daily life and that documentary film positions these orientations through aesthetic forms of historical culture. It is principally interested in historical memory as a domain in the temporal orientation of the subjects depicted in the films: how they position themselves, their families and the surrounding social and cultural sphere in the past.

### **Official historical culture, war and documentary**

The Finnish government established the ‘Finland 100 programme’ for the 2017 centenary celebration. In other words, the programme was an official state programme (reporting to the Prime Minister’s office). Altogether, over 5,000 different kinds of projects were officially accepted as part of the ‘Finland 100 programme’.

The projects funded by the programme included films, both fictional and documentary. Of all 3,312 projects described on the website of the programme, 17 were history documentaries. The three films analysed here are the only ones about the Finnish wars of WWII (*Suomi Finland 100 2018*).<sup>1</sup> *He jäivät* ('They Remained', UNIPIC 2017) is about the Winter War (1939–1940), while the other two, *Matkusta Syväriille – isäni jatkosota* ('Travel to Syväri: My Father's Continuation War', PK-Productions 2017) and *Sodan murtamat* ('The Wages of War',<sup>2</sup> Filmimaa Oy 2016) are about the Continuation War (1941–1944), both fought against the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

Although supported by the government, the centenary programme also included a bottom-up perspective, meaning that public- and private-sector organisations and individuals could suggest a project. Of the documentaries analysed here, especially 'Travel to Syväri' represented this kind of perspective, with the director of the 'video documentary' being an amateur video director. *The Wages of War*, directed by a professional documentary film director, received funding from the 'Finland 100 programme', whereas 'They Remained' and 'Travel to Syväri' were only accepted as part of the 'Finland 100 programme' (*Suomi Finland 100 2018*). The director of 'They Remained' is also a professional in the field of audio-visual production. Of the films, only *The Wages of War* was broadcast on national television (Yle TV1, 2017). *The Wages of War* (in autumn 2016) and 'They Remained' (in spring 2018) also had a theatrical distribution ([elonet.finna.fi](http://elonet.finna.fi)), whereas 'Travel to Syväri' had only DVD distribution.

In general, Finnish documentary film production reached a heyday in recent decades. The range of documentary films has been wide in terms of approaches and topics, including those dealing with the past, since the 1990s. The period, which has extended into the 2000s, has been called the golden era of Finnish documentary film. There are many reasons for the boom, including educational, financial and institutional reforms in the field. The 'boom' has also resulted in increased quality, as Finnish documentary films have also won international awards at film festivals in the previous two decades (Haase 2016; Sills-Jones and Kääpä 2016.) Moreover, along with the digitalisation, the content production of documentary film has expanded as technological developments have provided new possibilities in terms of cheaper equipment and practical representational possibilities.

Since the films analysed here are about Finnish struggles during WWII, they provide the essential dimensions of historical culture in general. According to a broad international survey conducted two decades ago, both world wars are the most important events of the twentieth century among people – not only in Europe, but also in Asia (Liu et al. 2005). In constituting ‘the living historical memory’ of Finns, the Winter War and the Continuation War are still the most frequently mentioned events in the 2010s (Hakoköngäs, Pirttilä-Backman, and Halme 2021). The heroic Winter War especially provides a strong narrative of Finnishness – Finland as a ‘survivor nation’ – which can still be found in the uses of popular historical presentations (e.g. computer games), as well as schoolbooks in the twenty-first century (Ahonen 2017, 90–96; Rantala 2011).

However, the situation has changed to a certain degree in recent years. A study (Torsti 2012, 100, 135–155) on Finnish historical consciousness found that Finns appreciate the creation of the Finnish school system (the most important) and the welfare society (4<sup>th</sup>) more than the Continuation War (5<sup>th</sup>), for instance – yet the wars (the Winter War was 2<sup>nd</sup>) remained among the most important phenomena in Finnish history. According to the recent content analysis (Sakki and Hakoköngäs 2020), the theme of ‘war’ was only the sixth most-common in the ‘Finland 100 programme’. Moreover, besides providing a ‘hegemonic narrative’ of war – i.e. the patriotic, romanticised and idealised narrative of Finland being both honoured victim and victor – the representations of war also included alternative narratives provided by the experiences of individuals and memory organisations, such as topics about war children, evacuees or soldiers traumatised by war.

Of the films analysed here, ‘They Remained’ deals mostly with the evacuees and *The Wages of War* predominantly with traumatised soldiers. Both films also include academic historians as talking heads,<sup>4</sup> who can be said to represent the ‘new military history’, meaning they are less interested in strategies, guns and heroic battles and more interested in children, women, trauma and emotions (see, e.g. Hoffenaar; Bourke 2006). On the other hand, ‘Travel to Syväri’ is representative of a more traditional, patriotic and heroic historical culture of war. The documentary deals with the troops, offensives and military technology in a detailed manner. In Finland, however, this kind of representation of war has not been ‘traditional’ in the sense that it has been openly possible to make such a documentary only since ‘the neo-patriotic turn’ of the 1990s (Kinnunen and Jokisipilä 2012, 450–470).

According to the well-known classification of different modes of documentary filmmaking by Bill Nichols (2001), 'Travel to Syväri' represents an *expository* mode of filmmaking by using an argumentative logic to recount history and address the viewer directly with voice-over. On the other hand, most of the features characteristic of the *participatory* mode of filmmaking also fit the documentary, such as when the director himself talks about his father in front of the camera and interacts with war veterans. The documentary also has an 'excessive faith in witnesses' and mediates a sense of 'naive history' (Nichols 2001, 138). While *The Wages of War* can also be classified as an example of the expository mode of filmmaking, it also includes some features from the poetic mode of filmmaking with dramatized sequences and slow-motion shots. Nevertheless, *The Wages of War* exploits most of the common elements of a traditional history documentary film (excluding academics as talking heads): voice over, archival footage and interviews.

The documentary 'They remained' makes abundant use of dramatization and re-enactment (in slow motion), and it even states that the film is 'a poetic indie-movie narrated from the point of view of a grandchild' on the DVD's back cover. However, it also consists of rather traditional usage of archival footage (such as photographs) and talking heads, both witnesses and experts. From the point of view of historical culture, it is interesting that authorities on war issues in the documentary include also non-academics (a writer and a military enthusiast/collector). Mixing popular history with academic history is common in media representations of history, such as in documentary filmmaking. Although there are problems in mixing the two, it is important to remember that scholarly interpretations also often rely on public and popular histories (Kalela 2012, 87).

### **History documentaries as historical culture**

Consequently, the films chosen are interesting from the point of view of historical culture since they not only all have an authorised relationship with the 'official' historical culture of a nation but are also representative of persons from different professional backgrounds using the same media to produce historical culture. This is manifested in the production, as well as in how they deal with the memory of war.

*Historical culture* has been a growing object of research in the 2000s, whether it concerns history theory, cultural history or the representations of history.<sup>5</sup> The concept of historical culture<sup>6</sup> refers to a wide range of activities in which images and information about the past are produced, mediated and used. History is not seen only as an act of mind but as a social practice. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the concept has been linked to the rise of memory studies (Grever and Adriaansen 2017, 74–77).

Although the significance of moving images and film in the study of history and historical culture has received scholarly attention since the 1980s (see, e.g. O'Connor 1990), the 'history boom' at the turn of millennium – when history was seen as 'the new rock'n'roll, the new gardening or the new cookery' (de Groot 2009, 17) – created much interest in mediated history among scholars (see, e.g. Cannadine 2007; Edgerton and Rollins 2001; Roberts and Taylor 2001; Rosenstone 2013). Especially, television, when it began to focus on the 'era of plenty' in Europe (Ellis 2000, 162–178) and the subject of 'post television' in America (Ouellette 2013), became a sort of shop window for promoting an interest in history among the general public. The increase in the number of channels (including niche channels, such as the History Channel), digitalisation, technical and economic convergence, and effective global media markets in television in turn led to the production of telefilms on history in the early 2000s. For instance, of the documentaries analysed in this article, 'Travel to Syväri' most likely would not have been produced without the cheaper and undemanding alternative provided by digitalisation.<sup>7</sup> The sudden interest in watching history on television is not totally new, however. The same kind of phenomenon occurred in the late 1970s with such influential TV miniseries as *Roots* (1977) and *Holocaust* (1978).

Nonetheless, history documentary film was a relatively popular object of research in the first decade of the millennium, both among historians and media scholars. The changing global production context of the media industry not only exponentially increased documentary production but also created a new genre of producing historical documentaries just for television. Along with the reality television boom, the so-called 'reality-experiential history documentaries', where 'ordinary people' have been made to live in 'authentic' historical environments, first appeared on television at the turn of the millennium (see, e.g. Hanna 2007; de Groot 2009, 165–180). The rise of 'infotainment' was also related to an increase in the popularity of re-enactments in



various fields of historical culture (see, e.g. the theme issue of *Rethinking History*, 2007; de Groot 2009, 103–145). Documentary films began using not only reality-experiential forms to depict history but also dramatized the historical scenes performed by actors (Aaltonen and Kortti 2015). Of the films analysed here, *The Wages of War* and ‘They Remained’ make abundant use of dramatization – especially the latter film, where an actor representing a woman on the home front forms the structural frame of the film.

Also, such auteurs as the director Ken Burns in the US or charismatic professional historian presenters, such as Simon Schama in the UK, help generate interest in historical documentaries among scholars.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it has become quite important for scholars to study how history is communicated via such powerful media as historical documentary film (see Ludvigsson 2003, 21). Even still, few studies have as yet approached history documentary film as a form of historical culture.<sup>9</sup> One reason for the lack of such an approach is that Anglo-American scholars are focusing more on *public history*, which is not, in my view, exactly the same. Unlike the German notion of *Geschichtskultur* (‘historical culture’), ‘public history’ has its origins in the cultural turn and ‘history from below’ thinking, in which non-academic and non-institutional actors were part of the scholarship or movement right from the start. ‘Historical culture’, instead, is more a holistic meta-historical concept, which, among other things, is linked to history didactics and treats history as a social science, thus making it more an intra-academic concept (Grever and Adriaansen 2017, 74–77).<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, I find the ideas posed by one of the most influential theoreticians of historical culture, Jörn Rüsen, useful for analysing history documentaries (see Kortti, 2016; Aaltonen & Kortti, 2015). Particularly, his ideas of ‘orientation’, how people orient themselves in time through stories and narratives of history, is fruitful for analysing historical culture via media and artistic representations. According to Rüsen, how history is presented is central to how people make sense of history.<sup>11</sup> In documentary analysis, orientation also refers to the significance of position for the subjects or characters of a film through such strategies as film techniques (Iedema 2004).<sup>12</sup> Through their orientation, subjects help the audience, or general public, understand where it has come from and where it is going on a collective level, how the past is significant for the present.

In analysing the films, however, I do not apply a single method systematically to all the films here, but rather use the idea of orientation as a sort of methodological standpoint when interpreting the Finnish

history documentaries as examples of mediated historical culture and memory. Neither do I describe the films in a very detailed manner since they are first and foremost examples providing empirical backing for the discussion on mediated memory.

Just as with any representation of history, the analysis emphasises the surrounding historical culture of a mediated history. It not only frames and contextualises a given representation but also reveals the sub-trends and orientations of a certain national/regional historical culture.

## War and transgenerational memory

The memory culture of WWII, part of the ‘memory boom’ of the late twentieth century, has been widely studied in the last few decades. Studies on the Holocaust survivors alone fill an entire library. What is characteristic of Finnish memory culture of WWII is the almost total lack of focus on the hardships of the occupation among the civilian population. This is largely due to the fact Finland was not occupied,<sup>13</sup> and in those parts of the territory occupied by the Soviet army, namely the eastern part of Karelia, people had been evacuated before the invasion.<sup>14</sup> For that reason, civilian casualties were minor – fewer than 2,500 people – compared to other European countries participating in the war. In Finland, the memory culture of WWII has focused on war veterans, war orphans, Karelian evacuees, children sent to Sweden for the duration of the war, women on the home front and the women’s national defence organisation Lotta Svärd (On the Finnish culture of war, see Kivimäki 2012; Kinnunen and Jokisipilä 2012).

Of the documentaries analysed here, ‘They Remained’ concentrates on Karelian evacuees and women on the home front, while ‘Travel to Syväri’ and *The Wages of War* focus on war veterans. In fact, ‘They Remained’ and *The Wages of War* focus on the memory of war. Memory also plays a significant role in ‘Travel to Syväri’ since the film traces the wartime experiences of a soldier as documented in the diary of his father, the film’s director, as well as through the reminiscences of veterans. What is common to all three documentaries, yet to a lesser degree in ‘Travel to Syväri’, is the transgenerational dimension of the memory of war.

*The Wages of War* is about psychologically traumatised Finnish soldiers during the various phases of WWII. The focus of the documentary is on the stories the veterans told to their children. Hence, the film focuses more on how the second generation had to live with the traumas of the war and how the traumas scarred them for life and effected their conception of the past. Altogether, eight people talk about the traumas

experienced by their fathers. The film has an extra dimension of subjective orientation in the sense that the director of the film is the child of a soldier, yet the war stories he had to listen to at home concerned mostly the experiences of his mother, who had worked at a military hospital during the war (Laukkanen 2016). With respect to the war's victims, the people in the film often talk about the delayed impact of the traumas, which only began to appear later (Caruth 1995). This concerns also the stories told in *The Wages of War*, which also documents the transgenerational effects of the war.

As Rüsen (2005, 1, 25, 148) writes, “‘Trauma’ has become one of the central issues of metahistorical discussion’, something that deeply orients human life, because the Holocaust and other horrific experiences of contemporary history have created unresolved problems in how to deal with human identity and its relationship to the past. In all this, ‘the burdening chain of memory has become a fundamental condition of human life because human beings have lost their guidance by natural instincts and are forced to replace instincts with a self-created cultural framework of orientation’. Moreover, as Jeffrey K. Olick (1999) has emphasized, these kinds of war traumas are not only ‘a purely individual psychological matter’ but a part of a collective narrative.

Marianne Hirsch (2001, 2008) has introduced the idea of *postmemory* in her studies of Holocaust survivors and their children, by which she means the collective memories transmitted to a second generation of people who have not experienced the actual events but who have often adopted the traumatic tensions of the first generation, even to the extent that they seem to constitute memories in their own right. In Hirsch's definition, postmemory is something that defines the present in relation to the troubled past. Accordingly, it comes close to the idea of orientation of a subject – how, for instance, the child of a veteran recalls the trauma across the generational divide.

Hirsch uses both the notion of inter- and trans-generational memory to refer to the act of transferring traumatic knowledge and experience from a previous (genetic) generation to the next generation. However, when we try to understand the war traumas of veterans mediated through their children, it is important to separate inter- and trans-generational memory. While the latter describes the overall mental process whereby the child of a victim or a witness adopts the memories of his/her parent, intergenerational memory also describes the actual physical emotions of the second generation. For instance,

some of the interviewees in *The Wages of War* often describe the physical violence directed at them from their fathers, especially when the veterans were drunk or hallucinating. Even those persons whose father did not necessarily hit them still felt the threat of violence, a constant presence in their lives, such as being afraid to be alone at home at night, even as a grown adult. One of the interviewees also talks about the mental violence of his father, who forced him to direct his life along an unwanted track. In that sense, postmemory is mainly intergenerational.

In 'They Remained', the focus is on the home front, especially on the evacuees of the Winter War. The transgenerational dimension of the documentary extends to the third generation since the main witnesses are the grandchildren of soldiers and evacuees. The central instruments of orientation in the documentary are the letters exchanged between a soldier and family on the home front, which the grandchildren find. Through the letters, the grandchildren process their private and common understandings of the past: how the war remained etched on their family life until the passing away of their grandmother, and even afterwards, as well as how the war changed Finnish social life in general. Since the re-enacted dramatizations provide a skeletal framework for the documentary, the documentary orients its audience to the everyday experiences of the home front. Besides using slow motion, the documentary also employs many drone shots – as modern audio-visual productions often do – to illustrate the contrast between the peaceful Finnish countryside and the carnage on the battlefields, narrated mostly through a series of letters sent home from the front. The role of women in the war is central in the documentary. In that sense, it reflects the changes in Finnish memory culture of WWII, as women's experiences have been given more attention since the 1980s (Kinnunen and Jokisipilä 2012, 467).

In comparison, 'Travel to Syväri' also uses a diary as primary source material – the war diary of a battery, written by the lieutenant father of the director – and an orienting element of such a 'video documentary'. The other content consists mostly of traditional photo archive footage, interviews with veterans, contemporary shots from 'authentic' locations in Russian Karelia and some re-enactments. In terms of visual orientation, maps have a central role in the documentary. The advances of the troops are illustrated in a detailed manner via arrows on the maps (also using Google Earth), voice-over (the director) and texts informing

viewers about exact days, even hours, of the fighting and the names of fallen soldiers. The soundtrack is also important to the documentary because the use of military (catalogue) music creates a bombastic, patriotic atmosphere. Unlike in other documentaries, the memories depicted in ‘Travel to Syväri’ are, first and foremost, subjected to a sequential and very detailed description of events when exposing the audience to the wartime narrative.

Although Finland lost the Continuation War, the myth of a ‘defensive victory’ in the last battles at Syväri, on the Karelian Isthmus, is (still) a solid historical narrative in Finland (Kinnunen and Jokispilä 2012, 452). The footage and narration in ‘Travel to Syväri’ strongly reinforces the myth. In the end, the documentary shows the Finnish flag, memorials dedicated to those who fought in the Continuation War and the lists of fallen soldiers. Indeed, ‘twentieth century warfare is infused with horror as well as honour’ (Winter and Sivan 1999, 9, 10), with both sadness and dignity. In many respects, the documentary represents the ‘patriotic memory landscape’ that prevailed during the post-war years until the 1960s, when the effects of the Cold War (especially so-called Finlandization<sup>15</sup>) and the Soviet-minded, left-wing radicalism of the baby boomers questioned the legacy of the war generation (Kinnunen & Jokispilä 2012, 439–450).

The father of the director of ‘Travel to Syväri’ survived without mental and physical injuries from the war, yet the bad conditions of the war still left him with chronic health issues. According to his son, the mental pressures of the war still remained with him later in life. According to the private documents he left behind, the veteran did not consider his wartime experiences heroic: the war mostly consisted of shivering cold, hunger and an overall sense of purposelessness. His son states at the end of the film that the filmmaking process was his way of not only revealing and understanding the experiences of his father during the war but also to transfer the family history to later generations. Hence, although the orientation of the documentary is on the common remembrance of war, it also has a central private dimension. However, unlike the other documentaries discussed here, ‘Travel to Syväri’ does not operate in a private domain in the sense that it would mediate the shadow of war through the processing of memory. In other words, it does not mix the private pain with public remembrance.

As Rösen (2013) has described, historical culture is not only cognitive, political and aesthetic but also includes moral and religious dimensions. While the tone of ‘Travel to Syväri’ is *cognitive*, it obviously also includes a *moral* dimension. Although films always have an *aesthetic* dimension, the aesthetic representation of memory is central in ‘They Remained’. What is interesting in *The Wages of War* is not only the moral questions raised in the documentary but also the *political*, somewhat factitious sideshow presented in the film. Through the use of propagandist archival news reels, the documentary narrates at several points the idea of ‘Greater Finland’, even though the controversial political issue is not discussed by the second generation witnesses and is not linked to their traumas at all.

The central idea behind the ‘Greater Finland’ movement was to make Soviet Karelia, the home of the national epic *Kalevala*, an organic part of the Finnish folk and nation. The idea was maintained among a certain faction of Finnish officers when Finland fought as a co-belligerent with Germany, taking part in Operation Barbarossa during the Continuation War (see Pimiä 2012). It seems that the director, Timo Korhonen,<sup>16</sup> a representative of the later baby boomer generation, wanted to take part in a political history discussion about the contested motives of Finland siding with Nazi Germany during the Continuation War. These kinds of tendencies have increased in the Finnish historical culture of war in recent decades, mostly due to academic historical research by a new generation of scholars (see e.g. Kinnunen and Kivimäki 2012).

Although the ideas of political history and politics of memory regarding Finnish objectives in WWII are beyond the approach of this article, it must be noted that introducing this kind of contested topic, however, factitiously expressed, into a piece of artistic historical expression as part of a state-sponsored history commemoration programme is interesting. It shows that although modern states have been the most powerful institutions in creating collective memory, the narratives are by no means stable; they change over time (Wertsch 2004).

### **Conclusion: the spheres of memory in mediated historical culture**

As sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992[1925]), one of most influential theorists in the field of (collective) memory studies, emphasised a century ago, historical representations play an important role in creating *collective memory*. The media in general are central in building *cultural memory*, which can be seen as a form of collective memory that includes

traditions, transmissions and transferences of memory, as Jan Assmann (2008) has defined the concept. Put succinctly, 'cultural memory is based on communication through media' (Erlil 2008, 389). On the other hand, scholars have viewed 'cultural memory' as an inadequate concept, at least in the Assmannian sense, for defining current memory production in media cultures. Since the media, especially after the rise of social media, is based on complex production and dissemination practices, it does not simply mediate memory but also shapes and alters what memory is (Zierold 2008; Hoskins 2017).

Memory studies have been an established field of study for decades, and the contradiction between memory and document-based scholarly research in history has not been an issue for a while – at least among those academic historians who are interested in the 'soundness' of the knowledge produced and the 'meaningfulness' of their findings (Kalela 2012, 42–46). Nonetheless, it is still relevant to make a distinction between 'memory' and 'history'. Jay Winter (2006) has introduced the term *historical remembrance*, which also includes commemorations. They indeed are at the heart of historical culture. As Winter emphasises, academic historians are also part of historical remembrance projects. We could add, based on the analyses here, others as well: military enthusiasts, authors, journalists, self-made and professional filmmakers – and the second generation of witnesses to the effects of war.

In terms of their orientation, the documentary films analysed here show how the producers of historical culture, namely the directors of *The Wages of War* and 'Travel to Syväri', use an art form to make sense of both their private past and the nation's collective past. Hence, not only those watching media representations but also those producing them are able to process history through use of the media. In addition, one of the interviewees in *The Wages of War* talked about how the filming process made her more forgiving of herself (Laukkanen 2016). Indeed, such a 'temporal orientation' represents a mix of external practical life understood through communicative forms of social life and the internal subjectivity of actors in relation to broader historical identities and self-understandings (Rüsen 2005, 28).

With such multidimensional and overwhelming series of events as wars, it is difficult to find the line separating private and public memory. It may often be a rather unproductive and quixotic way to approach the processes of remembrance in the first place. Especially, facilitated 'media memory' intrinsically mixes the private and the collective spheres of memory. Winter and Sivan (1999) have introduced a sort of mid-point

between *homo psychologicus* – persons holding onto private memories – and *homo sociologus* – persons exhibiting more socially determined forms of memory in their conceptualisation of war and remembrance. *Homo actans* is an individual who makes use of social memory, but who does so consciously and actively, processing memories as a way of ‘remembering’. This sort of memory is often used in artistic expressions, and it is done in relationship with the state, philanthropic institutions, commerce or other aspects of civil society.

This comes close to the idea by Olick (1999), of how collective memory should be divided into *individualist* and *collectivist* understandings. According to his psychologically oriented approach, the individualist dimension of collective memory means ‘the aggregated individual memories of member of a group’ (p. 338), whereas the idea of collected memory stresses the social and cultural patterning of public and personal memory, often publicly available symbols objectified in society. Nevertheless, social frameworks shape what individuals remember, and the ‘technologies of memory outside of the brain’ (p. 343) have an increasingly important role in the process (c.f., Andrew 2017).

Also, the theoreticians of historical culture see the problems in memory studies when memory is seen merely as a collective and cultural practice interested in the ‘mnemonic representations of specific events within specific social groups, thereby disregarding the production, performance and dissemination of memories in communicative interaction between people, groups and institutions’ (Grever and Adriaansen 2017, 77). Moreover, cultural memory does not just include different media representations of the past but also national, political, archival and artistic dimensions of memory, meaning it has a central role in wider historical culture.

### **Discussion marks: What will be the role of institutional memory in historical culture?**

These ideas fit perfectly with the documentary films on war discussed in this article. However, instead of invoking a broad concept of civil society, it is more appropriate and precise to use the term historical culture. The state, for instance, is an official quarter of (civil) society, with which a person may be able to negotiate, but which nevertheless represents a certain viewpoint on remembrance. But if we look at the Finnish centenary celebrations, which were mostly carried out as part of a state-led programme, and hence, were representative of official institutional



memory, the role of the state in remembrance is no longer so straightforward, at least in democratic countries. Moreover, the battles fought during WWII, so central to commemorating the Finnish culture of independence, were not the most important topic in the programme, as other approaches to the wars were more diverse and heterogenous, even introducing contested views to formerly hegemonic narratives (cf. Sakki and Hakoköngäs 2020). The affects and consequences of the damaged and traumatised soldiers on the second generation is an example of an alternative way of dealing with the collective, cultural, social or post-memory of WWII.

Orientation also means that '[s]tories and histories must provide answers to questions shared by narrator and addressee alike, if they, the stories and histories, are to have, and make, "sense" within this communicative context' (Rüsen 2008, 55). The bottom-up perspective of the Finnish centennial programme provided an interesting communicative context representative of 'official' state-sponsored narrations of historical culture, namely memory culture. The policy made it possible for filmmakers to address such contested and suppressed topics as the traumas of veterans in *The Wages of War*. In fact, *The Wages of War* also received funding from the 'Finland 100 programme', unlike the other documentaries analysed here, which were more 'traditional' in their thematic approaches.

In addition, historical culture also includes – and, I would say, better describes – the market and business side of civil society in matters remembrance. Heritage culture and especially media-related memory production are increasingly parts of the entertainment industry. Therefore, viewing them as modifiers of historical consciousness, the central orientating elements for understanding the past, is a more fruitful way of understanding the importance of memory in our current culture than merely looking at memory production as one part of civil society.

The media represent but one of many ways of depicting historical culture, together with such activities as visiting museums and exhibitions, viewing buildings and studying materials in the archives. The formal ways of depicting historical culture in institutions and organizations, including the educational system and academic history, still play a strong role in shaping the historical consciousness of people. On the other hand, history teachers and professional historians have increasingly taken extracurricular sources – historical knowledge produced outside the discourses of professional historians – into consideration in their activities. Nevertheless, the media and popular culture, together with

personal/private histories, often comprise the strongest component in shaping public historical consciousness (Grever and Adriaansen 2017, 74; Kalela 2012). Indeed, although academic history matters, memory, personal or/and collective, also strongly affects public historical consciousness in the twenty-first century.

## Notes

1. Appendices 8–10, not included in the publication, contain information about the accepted and financed projects. The author obtained it from the Prime Minister's Office.
2. Only *The Wages of War* has an official English title, so the other two film titles are translations by the author. That is why only *The Wages of War* is written in italics.
3. In addition, Finland fought the so-called Lapland War against Nazi Germany (1944–1945) due to the Moscow Armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union (and the United Kingdom), which forced Finland to expel the German army from its northern territory.
4. Maria Lähteenmäki (as a talking head) in 'They Remained' and Ville Kivimäki (as an adviser) in *The Wages of War*.
5. On historical culture, public history, the influence of culture in history and the relationship between culture and history, see, e.g. Jordanova (2011); Kalela (2012); Jenkins (2009); and de Groot (2009, 2012; 2016).
6. Although 'historical culture' is the rather established translation of German original *Geschichtskultur*, also 'history culture' is used. Kalle Pihlainen (2021), however, suggests that 'history culture' should be preferred over 'historical culture', since 'historical' denotes ambiguous meanings.
7. The director of *Travel to Syväri*, Pekka Kansanen, is a biologist-limnologist by profession and makes video documentaries on the side as a hobby (<https://www.pkproductions.fi/pkproductions/>).
8. See especially Edgerton (2001). On British history documentaries, see Roberts and Taylor (2001).
9. For some reason, studies particularly interested in analysing history documentaries as historical culture have mainly been done in the Nordic countries. See Ludvigsson (2003); Kortti (2016).
10. The definition of public history and its relationship to historical culture varies, but see, e.g. Demantowsky (2018).
11. Rüsen has defined his idea of historical orientation in several writings. See, e.g. Rüsen (2005).
12. About my adaptation of this kind of social semiotics, see Kortti (2016).
13. To emphasise that, of nations fighting in WWII, Helsinki was the only capital city, together with Moscow and London, not occupied by opposing forces is a solid part of Finnish historical culture.
14. After WWII, more than 400,000 Finnish Karelian evacuees were resettled in different parts of Finland.

15. Finlandisation means the process by which a small independent country was forced to abide by the political will of a larger more powerful country. The term originated in response to Finnish-Soviet relations after the Berlin Crisis of 1961.
16. Timo Korhonen is also a Doctor of Arts. His doctoral thesis was on documentary film, which discussed the author of a documentary as a moral actor (Korhonen 2013).

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