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Research Project

Memory, Place, and the Postsouthern in Contemporary US Southern Literature

Project funded by own resources

Project title Memory, Place, and the Postsouthern in Contemporary US Southern Literature

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Organisation / Research unit

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Places of memory in Southern literature do not only contain, but also produce memory. At the same time, memory is not only contained in places, but it also produces places in the South. Memory in Southern literature is a way to make the past productive for the present (and future). It allows for confirmation of the status quo, but it also allows one to re-negotiate and reappropriate the past for the present.

Memory is a form of the past that is not equal to history, it can be an agent in and of itself. Literature can function as a medium to transport memory and thus offer an account of the past, but it is not necessarily a historical account of the past either. Both memory and literature provide access to the past in a non-historical sense. Memory allows us to access the past in relation to the present, which means that the present – as the point of where the past is accessed from through the process of remembering – is crucial. In the form of memory, the past is not only accessible, but it can also be adapted and altered, and, thus, made productive for the present or even the future. The meaning of a particular place of memory depends on who remembers, and it may shift along with the present in which the act of remembering takes place. Consequently, places do not only contain memory, but they also produce memory as they reveal a particular access and interpretation of the past from the present point in time. This memory can emphasize some aspects of the past and neglect others as well as present an alternative interpretation of the past or even go as far as imagining a past.

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