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## On the road: exile, experience and memory in the Anabaptist diaspora

Fashionable crowds of the film world at the 2007 Cannes Film festival saw the Jury Prize go to a film from Mexican director Carlos Reygadas called *Silent Light*. Set in a Mennonite community on the Mexican border, it narrates a story of a married Mennonite man who falls in love with another woman.<sup>1</sup> Not only was the film shot in a colony close to Cuauhtémoc with non-professional Mennonite actors, characters also conversed in *Plautdietsch*, the Low Prussian dialect spoken by 400 000 individuals in some Mennonite communities.<sup>2</sup> Despite declining use, *Plautdietsch* retains its significance for Mennonites; it is a verbal link to a European past and a sign of belonging. Conversations at the Mennonite archives in Winnipeg sometimes break into the dialect, whilst greeting cards in the giftshop in the Mennonite Heritage Village museum in Steinbach make *Plautdietsch* word puns.<sup>3</sup> This linguistic remnant in Mennonite culture is an evocative reminder of the power of memory amongst modern-day successors of the Anabaptist movement who migrated from Europe and Ukraine across the Atlantic and beyond. Connections to their past, evoked by language in this instance, have shaped and sustained a distinct communal identity bound to experiences of migration and exile.

Descendants of sixteenth-century Anabaptism – Mennonites, Hutterites and Amish – retain vivid recollections of their Reformation past. For these communities, memories of persecution, exile and withdrawal from the world bolster a sense of distinction from contemporary society. The degree of disconnection varies: integrated, open Mennonites in Manitoba differ from stricter communities who still practice traditional ways of life, such as Mennonite colonies in Mexico, the Hutterite Bon Homme Bruderhof in South Dakota, or Amish communities in Lancaster County Pennsylvania whose “Plain” lifestyle draws on historical traditions (and is also a major tourist attraction).<sup>4</sup> Differences in convention and practice separate the communities, yet all share an affinity with their past and its traditions which evoke connections to the early modern world. Histories and literature recall martyrdom, persecution and migration, and these memories are embedded in cultural practices such as speaking *Plautdietsch*.

Scholarship has often considered Reformation memoryscapes in recent years but has tended to focus on what mainstream institutional churches such as Lutheranism and

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<sup>1</sup> *Stellet Licht*, Carlos Reygadas. Palisades Tartan and NDMantarraya, 2007. Film. See also Rebecca Janzen, *Liminal Sovereignty: Mennonites and Mormons in Mexican Culture* (Albany, 2018); Steven P. Carpenter, *Mennonites and Media: Mentioned in It, Maligned by It, and Makers of It: How Mennonites Have Been Portrayed in Media and How They Have Shaped Media for Identity and Outreach* (Eugene, OR, 2015), 54-6.

<sup>2</sup> Reuben Epp, *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch: Tracing a Language Across the Globe* (2<sup>nd</sup> printing, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Informal conversations and visits to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See James Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe - Russia - Canada 1525-1980* (Winnipeg, 2006); Harold S. Bender (ed.), *Hutterite Studies: Essays by Robert Friedman - Celebrating the Life of an Anabaptist Scholar* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., MacGregor, MB, 2010); John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (2<sup>nd</sup> printing paperback, Baltimore, 1997); John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society* (4<sup>th</sup> edn., Baltimore, 1993); Rod Janzen, *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists* (Hanover and London, 1999). See also the tourist guide to Amish: Donald B. Kraybill, *The Amish of Lancaster County* (Mechanicsburg, 2008).

Calvinism<sup>5</sup> and have neglected non-conformist legacies which evolved from the 'left wing' of the Reformation.<sup>6</sup> Memories of the Reformation are both vividly alive and also unique for descendants of Anabaptism. These non-conformist communities, often dispersed, focused memory-making not on establishment, success and the growth of the institutional church but migration, fragmentation, and suffering. Different experiences resulted in different ways of looking back. Anabaptist memory culture focused on its own heroes, it existed in specific forms which had to be sustained across distance, and it narrated the memory of exile and dispersion. This memorial culture has astounding geographical and chronological breadth but is little understood in the broader context of Reformation histories.

Migration and dispersion shaped Anabaptism from the movement's inception. Persecution in the sixteenth century fragmented communities. Some sort out refuge in safer, more accepting havens, such as Strasbourg or established settlements in lands which offered tolerance, such as Moravia.<sup>7</sup> Mennonites, the followers of Menno Simon, an erstwhile Catholic priest from Friesland who converted to Anabaptism in 1536, formed communities scattered across the Netherlands, spreading east to tolerant Polish Prussia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth-century communities moved again to New Russia, and from the nineteenth century began migrations to North America.<sup>8</sup> In similar but distinct patterns, Hutterites, followers of Jakob Hutter, formed communities in Moravia, with subsequent persecution forcing them across central and eastern Europe, then also to the Russian Empire, and finally America and Canada.<sup>9</sup> The Amish were followers of Jakob Amman who split from Swiss Mennonites in the seventeenth century and moved to Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Such a brief survey cannot encapsulate the diversity of migratory experiences amongst Anabaptists and their descendants, but dispersion is deeply ingrained in Anabaptist culture.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Susan Boettcher, 'Late Sixteenth-Century Lutherans: A Community of Memory?', in Michael James Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (eds), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2008); C. Scott Dixon, 'Luther's Lost Books and the Myth of the Memory Cult', in Kat Hill (ed.), *Cultures of Lutheranism, Past & Present* Supplement 12 (2017), 262–89; Peter Marshall, *1517: Martin Luther and the Invention of the Reformation* (Oxford, 2017); Dixon, 'Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Origins of the Reformation Narrative', *English Historical Review* 132 (2017), 533–569; Philip Benedict, 'Divided memories? Historical calendars, commemorative processions and the recollection of the Wars of Religion during the ancien regime', *French History*, 22 .4 (2008), 381–405. See also the 2017 issue of the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*. For 2017 Luther celebrations see 'Luther2017.500 Jahre Reformation', <https://www.luther2017.de/>. Accessed 20 June 2018. This is the official website of the 500-year anniversary supported by the EKD: Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland.

<sup>6</sup> Anabaptists were included in this problematic notion of the 'left wing' by Ronald H. Bainton, which has homogenized but also marginalised these groups. Ronald H. Bainton, 'The Left Wing of the Reformation', *Journal of Religion* 21. 2 (1941), 124–134.

<sup>7</sup> For a good overview of sixteenth century Anabaptism see John Roth and James Stayer, *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> An excellent study of one family's migration is Arlette Kouwenhoven, *The Fehrs: Four Centuries of Mennonite Migration* (Leiden, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Emese Balint, 'Anabaptist Migration to Moravia and the Hutterite Brethren', in Timothy G. Fehler, Greta Grace Kroeker, Charles H. Parker, and Jonathan Ray (eds), *Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe: Strategies of Exile* (Abingdon and New York, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For locations of communities see William Schroeder and Helmut T. Huebert, *Mennonite Historical Atlas* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Winnipeg, 1996).

However, little scholarship exists on memory making in the Anabaptist diaspora. The persecution narrative is fundamental to memory cultures among these confessional groups, although exile and martyrdom was never the complete story of Anabaptist history, nor was commitment to peace or opposition to worldliness.<sup>11</sup> Communities both forgot and remembered as they constructed memoryscapes which emphasized the ongoing quest for a place to be 'die Stille im Lande' (the Quiet in the Land), the search for somewhere to pursue non-engagement with the world in peace. Anabaptist histories continue to draw a direct link between persecution of the sixteenth century and withdrawal from society, although the era of martyrdom has long since passed.<sup>12</sup> Collective memory, the term coined by Maurice Halbwachs, gave Mennonites a sense of shared identity as they created the 'sites of memory' which passed down generations.<sup>13</sup> The theory of collective processes of remembering and forgetting has been refined by Jan Assmann who points to the canonical, cultural memories consciously selected by people and by Aleida Assmann who underscores the importance of functional memories drawn from a large bank of archival memories.<sup>14</sup> This provides a convincing framework for thinking about the reciprocal processes of individual and collective memory, although scholars such as David Berliner argue that only individuals can truly remember. He critiques the overuse of memory by anthropologists who label every social practice of recalling and recollection as memory.<sup>15</sup> However, this oversimplifies the complexity of memory culture, and the practices of recollections which allow individuals and communities to retain memories of events, people and places across generations and beyond living memory.

But diasporic memory presents particular challenges. How were memories shared across distance? How did individual memories in dispersed communities shape collective cultural memories? How did a shared memoryscape operate at distance and across time to help shape identity? Scholarship on contemporary diasporas has explored the 'de-territorialized' identities separated from the rootedness of nation and land, where memory can be 'hybrid, displaced, split.'<sup>16</sup> But memory is also particularly important because of this absence of territory since it also creates continuities across space and time; it connects dispersed groups to the immediate community; to the diaspora around world; and to places of

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<sup>11</sup> Kat Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525-1585* (Oxford, 2015), especially Chapter 2; James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Revised edn., Eugene, OR, 2002); Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood*. For tensions in Mennonite identities see also Michael Driedger, *Obedient Heretics: Mennonite Identities in Lutheran Hamburg and Altona During the Confessional Age* (New edn., Abingdon and New York, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> For some history on this phrase see Isaias J. McCaffery, *Mennonite Low German Proverbs from Kansas* (Goessel, KS, 2008). See for example *Mennonites in Texas: The Quiet in the Land. Text and photographs by Laura L. Camden and Susan Gaetz Duarte* (Everhest Printing Co., China, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,' *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-24.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin, 2010), 109-18; Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125-133; Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> David Berliner, 'The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology', *Anthropological Quarterly* 78.1 (2005) 197-211.

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Huyssen, 'Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts Author(s)', *New German Critique* 88, (2003), 152; Vijay Agnew, 'Introduction', in Agnew (ed.), *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto, 2005), 5.

origins.<sup>17</sup> Forgetting trans-local connections would mean the end of the community embedded in the intangible bonds of memory across distance. This chapter examines how Anabaptist groups and their descendants produced memories of the Reformation and beyond, which sustained diasporic communities. A growing literature on exile has examined the experience of dislocation for Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic exiles.<sup>18</sup> However, understandings of memory in these contexts are limited,<sup>19</sup> and Anabaptist traditions have barely featured at all.<sup>20</sup> Dagmar Freist argues that we need new parameters to address the production of fragmented memories in dispersed early modern communities outside the framework of the nation state. 'Glocal memoryscapes' in diasporas connect time, space and things in the practice of memory.<sup>21</sup>

Confronting Anabaptist diasporic memory, therefore, allows us to explore important questions in early modern cultural and confessional history. Anabaptist memories of the Reformation do not just reside in official histories and institutional structures but in more intangible places such as landscapes and language, producing long-lasting associations connecting transnational identities across generations. Shared investment in the memory of separation, for example, and a desire to find a place free from the constraints of the state to live, worship and farm, spurs migration to this day, as recent reports about movement of Mennonites from Ontario to Prince Edward Island suggest.<sup>22</sup> Anabaptist memory allows us to confront the dynamic between individual and collective memories and how local reproduction of memory cultures produced translocal belonging. Thus, the spread and survival of Mennonite, Amish and Hutterite communities suggests new ways of thinking about the act of remembering the Reformation in the *longue durée* of a confessional diaspora. It reveals new perspectives on both our histories of confessional diasporas and on how memories of religious change have shaped global trajectories.

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<sup>17</sup> Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephen Besser and Yolande Jansen, 'Introduction: Diaspora and Memory', in Marie-Aude Baronian et al., *Diaspora and Memory*, 11-12; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York, 1996; reprint, 2005), esp. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ole Peter Grell, *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2011); Fehler et al., *Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe*; David van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700* (Abingdon and New York, 2016); Geert Janssen, 'The Counter-Reformation of the Refugee: Exile and the Shaping of Catholic Militancy in the Dutch Revolt', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64.4 (2012), 671-92; Jesse Sponholz, *The Tactics of Toleration: A Refugee Community in the Age of Religious Wars* (Newark, 2011); Yosef Kaplan (ed.), *Early Modern Ethnic and Religious Communities in Exile* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On early modern diasporic memory see Liesbeth Corens, 'Dislocation and Record Keeping: The Counter Archives of the Catholic Diaspora', in Alexandra Walsham, Kate Peters, and Liesbeth Corens (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, Past & Present Supplement 11 (Oxford, 2016), 269-287; Dagmar Freist, 'Lost in Time and Space?: Glocal Memoryscapes in the Early Modern World', in Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller and Jasper van der Steen (eds.), *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2013), 203-22; Johannes Müller, *Exile Memories and the Dutch Revolt: The Narrated Diaspora, 1550 – 1750* (Leiden; David J.B. Trim (ed.), *The Huguenots: History and Memory in Transnational Context: Essays in Honour and Memory of Walter C. Utt* (Leiden, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> See for example isolated chapters: Emese Balint and Chris Martinuzzi, 'Composite Religions and Ideas in Exile: Encounters between Saxon Reformers and the First Anabaptists' in Kaplan, *Ethnic and Religious Communities*, 218-241 and Balint, 'Anabaptist Migration'.

<sup>21</sup> Freist, 'Lost in Time and Space', 206-13.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jul/26/no-land-for-love-or-money-how-gentrification-hit-the-mennonites>. Accessed 3 August 2018.

## Memory and time

About an hour's drive from the Mennonite archives in Winnipeg is the Mennonite Heritage Village and Museum in Steinbach. The museum's permanent gallery tells the history of the Reformation, including figures like Zwingli and Thomas Müntzer but focusing on the key figures of Anabaptism many of whom were persecuted or exiled: Felix Mantz, Conrad Grebel, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Menno Simons, amongst others. The era of bitter persecution in the sixteenth century provides the cornerstone for Anabaptist memory cultures, in similar ways that migration during the Dutch revolt created a 'grand narrative of persecution and exile' for Dutch Protestants.<sup>23</sup> Anabaptist memories are deeply embedded in the era of early modern confessional change, although the figures celebrated are not the conventional stalwarts of the Reformation. The sixteenth century is labelled the era of peace, a surprising title for an era of violent confessional conflict but here the contrary and specific memory of the Reformation is evident: Anabaptists emphasized peace and non-violence at a time of conflict. These chronologies connect modern Mennonites to their early modern pasts.

Memory is intimately related to time. Writing the history of the Reformation or relating stories of martyrs involved thinking about time and chronology.<sup>24</sup> Studies of diasporic memory, however, have often been expansive in geographical scope but less so in chronological range. Perhaps this is the apparent tendency for diasporic memory to appear simply nostalgic, longing for a lost homeland, rather than creating dynamic chronologies. More broadly, critics of influential memory studies of the 1970s to 1990s argue that the nostalgia for any trace of past in the present and the sanctification of memory is a form of "presentism".<sup>25</sup> Both studies of remembering and forgetting become nothing more than the construction of culture in the present.<sup>26</sup> For Anabaptists trying to capture a distant past, it could be argued that this is not memory but nostalgic presentism. But a dynamic understanding of nostalgic memory is a particularly useful way to think about diasporic memory. Recent studies have rehabilitated the notion of nostalgia within diasporic memory studies. It can be seen as a way of dealing with trauma and both chronological and temporal dislocation, so that such nostalgia 'produces postcolonial identity and has the power to create utopias'.<sup>27</sup> The dynamism of nostalgic memory for dispersed communities gives new forces to the way in which we understand the longing for a Golden Age of the early modern world or the veneration of the era of steadfast martyrs amongst Anabaptist communities. These communities look back with this nostalgic vision of history, but they are also concerned about preserving a heritage for future generations, since the past is something to be passed down. Nostalgia is not simply a passive longing for the past but a dynamic force

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<sup>23</sup> Müller, *Exile Memories*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> C. Scott Dixon, 'The Sense of the Past in Reformation Germany: Part 1', *German History* 30.1 (2012), 1–21 and nd C. Scott Dixon, 'The Sense of the Past in Reformation Germany: Part 2', *German History*, 30. 2 (2012), 1–23.

<sup>25</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History*, The Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lecture Series (Budapest, 2008), 16-18; Nora, 'Between Memory and History'.

<sup>26</sup> Berliner, 'The Abuses of Memory'.

<sup>27</sup> Anette Hoffman, 'Comparing to Make Explicit: Diasporic Articulations of the Herero Communities in Namibia', in Baronian et al., *Diaspora and Memory*, 37; Pamela Sugiman, 'Memories of Interment: Narrating Japanese-Canadian Women's Life Stories', in Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory and Identity*, 63-4; Andreas Huyssen, 149-51

which allow us to see how memory is translated into active heritage and even heritage tourism, such as the Steinbach museum and village. Thus, the way in which Mennonites, Hutterites or Amish constructed temporal frameworks as they remembered the Reformation was essential to their existence and survival, providing continuity and a rootedness in the past, but also hope for the future in the face of dispersion. As Esther Peeren argues, diasporas share in chronotopes which intermingle past and present as well as home and exile.<sup>28</sup>

Early modern Anabaptists did not always leave explicit historical records, but gathered letters, confessions of faith and martyr stories into collections which have been preserved. Hutterites produced the most explicit historical writing, and their flourishing book and literary culture from the 1560s to 1660s produced 300 surviving manuscripts, including historical chronicles, which record their understanding of the past.<sup>29</sup> The Great Chronicle was probably started by Kaspar Braitmichel on the suggestion of Elder Peter Walpot in Moravia in the mid-sixteenth century and then copied by the clerk Hauptrech Zepft, added to by six further annalists.<sup>30</sup> Writers had access to archives in Austerlitz which kept materials relating to the Hutterite communities as well as probably a small library with works by authors such as Eusebius and Sebastian Franck.<sup>31</sup> Other Anabaptist traditions were less systematic in their historical collections but the martyr stories, shared across groups and collected into volumes such as the *Ausbund*, look back to the past.<sup>32</sup> These histories and martyrologies all evolved in the context of dislocation, telling a different story from the standard Reformation narrative.

The Hutterite chronicles adopt a distinctive approach to chronologies and memories of the Reformation.<sup>33</sup> The Great Chronicle started with a conventional account of biblical history, running through the Old Testament, the age of Christ, and the Apostles, and then related the persecutions of the early church, the Donation of Constantine and late medieval corruption and heresy. After a cursory account of Luther and Zwingli, the chronicle narrates the beginning of Anabaptism through the lives of Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz and Georg Blaurock, and other early martyrs. Although the chronicle opens the section on the

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<sup>28</sup> Esther Peeren, 'Through the Lens of the Chronotope: Suggestions for a Spatio-Temporal Perspective on Diaspora', in Baronian et al., *Diaspora and Memory*, 74.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Rothkegel, 'Anabaptism in Moravia and Silesia', in John Roth and James M. Stayer (eds), *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden, 2007), 204-6; Robert Friedman, 'Hutterite Chronicles', in Harold S. Bender (ed.), *Hutterite Studies: Celebrating the Life of an Anabaptist Scholar* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., MacGregor, MB, 2010), 157-162.

<sup>30</sup> The historical writings have a complex history and although the Great Chronicle is the most famous and standard account of Hutterite history, there are many other chronicles in existence. Robert Friedmann, 'Hutterite Chronicles.' *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1953. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hutterite\\_Chronicles](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hutterite_Chronicles) Accessed 20 August 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Friedman, 'Hutterite Chronicles', in *Hutterite Studies*, 157.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Burschel, *Sterben und Unsterblichkeit: Zur Kultur des Martyriums in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 2004), 117-195.

<sup>33</sup> Twentieth-century printed German editions include: Rudolf Wolkan, *Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder* (Macleod, AB, and Vienna, 1923) and A.J.F. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder: Ein Sprachdenkmal aus frühneuhochdeutscher Zeit* (Ithaca, 1943). An English translation was prepared in the 1980s, *The Great Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* (Rifton, NY, 1987). Josef Beck also produced an edition of smaller chronicles or *Denkbücher*, Josef Beck, *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (Vienna, 1883; reprinted Nieuwkoop, 1967).

Reformation in 1517, it is clear that the history of the true church does not start until the 1520s with these Anabaptists. Subsequent history is divided into ages: an age of beginnings, the emergence of the brotherhood, persecution, a good age, a golden age, renewed persecution, tribulations and difficult times.<sup>34</sup> There are several intriguing features in this composition. In these sections on the Reformation era and the narrative of the Hutterites' own history, the chronicle is devoid of almost all wider outside context, such as the Schmalkaldic Wars, or religious conflicts in France and the Netherlands. The destruction and suffering caused by the Thirty Years War is given more room but remains limited. With this internalized perspective, there is also very little narrative to explain why and when things happen, or how one age moves to the next. But although the chronicle is enclosed within the Anabaptist world, focused on ebbs and flows of persecution, it is also part of an universal narrative of the true church, placed in biblical context.

The Reformation that Hutterites remembered was very different from many of the narratives of the Lutheran or Reformed churches. Anabaptist history which linked diasporic communities could not be focused on the same events, and the growth of the institutional church, but instead looked to shared experiences of dispersion across territories but also through time. The effect of the Hutterite visions of history was to bring the past into touching distance and to emphasize continuity of experiences of suffering, even though there were also better times. This was also true of the great martyr collections like the *Ausbund* or Van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror (Het Bloedig Tooneel Der Doops-gesinde)*, first published in 1660 but perhaps best known from the second edition of 1685 which included engravings by Jan Luyken.<sup>35</sup> Martyrologies never started as explicitly historical pieces of writing, but collections of contemporary accounts developed into bound volumes of martyr stories which bore witness to the past and, in the case of *the Martyrs' Mirror*, linked this to biblical histories. The *Martyrs' Mirror* was split into two volumes. The first begins with Jesus's crucifixion, persecution in his lifetime and the Apostles, lists early Christian martyrs, and then witnesses who suffered century by century. The second recounts martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, starting with Hans Koch and Leonhard Meister.<sup>36</sup> Although a new volume ushers in the sixteenth century, the Reformation is not really a distinctive caesura, but a continuation of the story of persecution. Contemporary accounts became indirect recollections beyond living memory, but connections existed between the experience of the Apostles, the martyrs of the seventh century, Anabaptists in the sixteenth century or communities singing songs in the eighteenth or even the twenty-first century. Time narrowed as past, present and future became linked.

Martyr stories were integral to communities as they moved. Aside from the Bible, martyr hymns and narratives were the most central texts to Anabaptist piety, and they are frequently mentioned in letters or bibliographies.<sup>37</sup> When Mennonites migrated to America,

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<sup>34</sup> *Great Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*.

<sup>35</sup> The first known extant edition of the *Ausbund* to 1583; it has been reprinted many times with several additions, though it is still used today by the Old Order Amish in America substantially unaltered from the 1583 edition. Selected hymns have been translated: *Songs of the Ausbund: History and Translations of Ausbund Hymns* (Millersville, OH, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> Brad Gregory, 'Anabaptist Martyrdom: Imperatives, Experience and Memorialization', in Roth and Stayer, *Anabaptism and Spiritualism*, 467-506.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Friedman, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature* (Goshen, Ind., 1949), 96-7.

martyrologies mattered. In 1742 Mennonites in Pennsylvania wrote to the Committee of Foreign Needs of the Dutch Mennonite Church to request a German translation of *the Martyrs' Mirror*.<sup>38</sup> The Skippack Mennonites wrote again in 1745, and although the migratory enterprise had been largely untroubled, they emphasized that the situation in colonial America was now dangerous and that the “cross and tribulation may...[soon] fall to the lot of the non-resistant Christian.”<sup>39</sup> The texts were of crucial importance to maintain faith in difficult times. When no response was forthcoming, they turned to the German-language press in the frontier community of Ephrata, where the first North American edition of the *Martyrs' Mirror* was printed in 1748-49.<sup>40</sup>

The importance of these texts elucidates important ways in which the Anabaptist memoryscape functioned. Nostalgia for the era of martyrdom was more than a wistful glance back but an important way in which piety based in suffering was reinterpreted in ways that comforted and connected communities. More broadly, the shared diasporic collective memory of martyr stores from the sixteenth century underscores the critical importance of the connection to the past and histories of dislocation. Past, present and future are linked in chronological networks across generations and place. The importance of temporal connections is evident in the records kept by individual communities. From the eighteenth century, Mennonite communities who had migrated to Prussia from the Netherlands started keeping their own church books. The records of the Przechówko congregation in the Vistula Delta (modern-day Poland) were started in the late eighteenth century by Elder Jacob Wedel. The records, however, date back to 1661 and must have been based on older records or oral knowledge within the community.<sup>41</sup> The sense of the importance of the past was bolstered by chronicles, family records and genealogies. Heinrich Donner, elder of Orlofffelde in Marienburg, West Prussia and his son and successor Johann Donner wrote community chronicles, two of which are integrated into the Orlofffelder church books.<sup>42</sup> Community history also intersected with family history. In these closely connected groups, church books preserved family histories, and families kept their own genealogies which also told community history. The diary of the Lehn family which dated back to the seventeenth century was a record of the Danzig and West Prussian Mennonites but was also a family history continued by subsequent generations, remaining in their possession to this day.<sup>43</sup> Generational transmission of memory in these records was

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<sup>38</sup> John C. Wenger, *History of the Mennonites of the Franconia Conference* (Telford, PA, 1937), 311.

<sup>39</sup> David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History* (Baltimore, 2016), 130.

<sup>40</sup> Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror*, 130-42.

<sup>41</sup> MLA (Mennonite Library and Archives) Kansas, CONG. 15, Box 11, ‘Alexanderwohl original Przechowka book’. For a modern and translated edition see *Church Book of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in the Molotschna Colony of South Russia*, trans. Velda Richert Duerksen and Jacob A. Duerksen (Goessel, KS, 1987). Scans of the original book are also available through the archives at Bethel College.

<sup>42</sup> Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof, KB.OR.01, ‘Geburten, Taufen, Trauungen, Todesfälle 1727-1857’, 77-146 and KB.OR.02, ‘Chronik (Donner), Geburten, Trauungen, Taufen, Kirchengzucht 1800-1899’; 1-85; Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Winnipeg, MB, Small Archives, 4355, Box 2, ‘Heinrich Donner's Chronik’. Donner was a keen record keeper. His own meticulous ‘Hausbuch’ survives in the archives in Bethel; MLA, Bethel, KS, SA-II-1906, ‘Heinrich Donner's Hausbuch’.

<sup>43</sup> The MS of this text is still kept by the family, but a translated word-processed version is held by the MHCA, Winnipeg, MB.

essential to diasporic identity, sustaining the community in both space and time.<sup>44</sup> The importance of cross-generational bonds is evident too amongst the Hutterites. They were voracious letter writers whose epistles have been preserved in remarkable codices.<sup>45</sup> These ranged in size from folio editions to 32, tricesimo-secondo, mere centimeters high which could be slipped into a pocket or carried in a hand, and they were living, mobile documents, detailing experiences of prison, tribulations, suffering or conflict, which were written down, shared, read and stored.

The copying and the sharing of histories, from great chronicles to manuscript histories of individual communities, emphasized collective memory. In some ways, writing genealogies, letters or chronicles was deeply conventional but in the face of displacement, the practices of writing and rewriting constructed a shared interest in the continuity of time and shared chronologies. These histories often looked back to the era of persecution and martyrdom but were also constantly reshaped. Not everyone had to experience persecution to share in it. According to Johannes Waldner, elder of the Hutterite community that had settled in Wischink north of Kiev, it was necessary to start a new chronicle in 1794 and write out excerpts from the old "Gemeingeschichtsbuch", a treasure of faith full of songs and tales which were a model of their steadfastness in the face of suffering.<sup>46</sup> Anabaptist memories recorded in martyrologies and histories were more than inert recollections but relational narratives which were performed and shared in a network of communities. The nostalgic memoryscapes emphasised connection to the present, not in a negative or static sense, but in a way that sustained the diaspora across space and time.

## People

A long-standing exhibition dedicated to the *Martyrs' Mirror* which opened in 1990 explores themes of suffering and persecution based on the 1685 edition of the martyrology; it is currently at its permanent home at the Kauffman museum in North Newton, Kansas, but since its creation has travelled round 21 states and 55 Canadian provinces.<sup>47</sup> Its success underscores the centrality of martyrs to Anabaptist conception of themselves. Martyr stories established genealogies of those considered true persecuted servants of the faith. The Hutterite chronicles, the *Ausbund* and the *Martyrs' Mirror* named particular figures in a clear lineage, such as Hans Koch and Leonhard Meister, Felix Mantz, Michael Sattler and Georg Blaurock, whose names were not just transcribed but sung or narrated again and again.<sup>48</sup> The repetition of names established tradition and belonging, and performance of the songs reflected the continuous reproduction of eras of confessional significance

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<sup>44</sup> Müller, *Exile Memories*, 124-46. On generations and religious change see also Alexandra Walsham, *The James Ford Lectures in British History*, University of Oxford, 2018: 'The Reformation of the Generations: Age, Ancestry, and Memory in England c. 1500-1700'

<sup>45</sup> Robert Friedmann, 'The Epistles of the Hutterian Brethren: A Study in Anabaptist Literature', in *Hutterite Studies*, 163-89.

<sup>46</sup> Harmut Kessler, 'Das "Dicke Buch" der Gemeinde Gottes': Zur literarischen Selbstdarstellung der Huterischen Täufergemeinschaft', in Ludger Grenzmann and Karl Stackmann (eds), *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit* (Stuttgart, 1984), p. 168

<sup>47</sup> 'The Mirror of the Martyrs', Exhibition at the Kauffman Museum, Bethel College, North Newton, KS.

<sup>48</sup> *Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, vol 1: 43-7.

amongst these communities. Martyr stories were embedded in a literary, oral and performative culture which was shared across communities and media.

Martyrdom, however, did not continue into later centuries, nor did it provide a sustainable vision for an ongoing future, apart from one that perhaps pointed to the apocalypse. The *Martyrs' Mirror* appeared at a moment of security and prosperity for Mennonites in the Dutch Golden Age. The indulgent second edition which included Luyken's engravings was a reminder of intolerance at a time of comparative tolerance, produced amidst concerns that Mennonites had forgotten what past suffering meant.<sup>49</sup> Martyrdom was a collective memory, but with the passing of generations, it passed out of living memory. Yet new meanings emerged in relation to these remembered narratives of persecution, such as the way in which the Skippack Mennonites needed the *Martyrs' Mirror* to comfort them on the colonial frontier. The narratives continue to play a pivotal role in memory production, for both communities and individuals. The Harlem Doopsgezinde community celebrated their 300-year anniversary with a reprinting of the 1685 edition of the *Martyrs' Mirror*.<sup>50</sup> In a more intimate engagement with histories of suffering, Elder Isaak Dyck described the deadly flu virus of 1918 that hit his Sabinal Mennonite community as a time of sorrow but also beautiful spirituality. His wife was disappointed not to suffer God's punishment and remain unscathed.<sup>51</sup> For this traditional Old Order Colony in Chihuahua the *Martyrs' Mirror* is central to their faith. Memories of martyrs created cultural associations that could be reproduced in different contexts, and Dyck's wife reinterpreted the macro narrative at the local level with new meanings.

Martyrological genealogies functioned as form of diasporic memory in both translocal and local contexts. Membership books and family histories also produced memories through people and genealogies. The Przechówko church book is far more than a list of members. The opening pages establish heritage by recording the surnames of families in the community, including a short history of where the name first originated. The first name on the list is Becker. Johan Becker came from Lutheran parents apparently of questionable morality, but Johan became a minister in the community.<sup>52</sup> Lineage matters in the record books of the Przechówko Mennonites, but these lineages were being reinvented in new contexts, as the migrant community sought to root themselves in a translocal environment. Origins were necessarily messy. Some were Lutherans who had converted such as Becker, some such as Tobias Schnellberger came from the Moravian Brethren, forced out by Catholic persecution, and in some cases, there is no information. Once someone had accepted believer's baptism, he founded a new line and the individual's family was marked in the record. The church book proceeds to list all church members in tabled columns, male and female, with an accompanying number. Going along the row from one name and number, the next two columns list numbers which correspond to other names

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<sup>49</sup> Mary S. Sprunger, 'The Dutch Golden Age: Prosperity and the Martyr Tradition,' *Mennonite Life* 45.3 (1990)

<sup>50</sup> Nanne van der Zijpp, Harold S. Bender and Richard D. Thiessen, 'Martyrs' Mirror', *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. November 2014. Accessed 10 Sep 2018  
[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Martyrs%27\\_Mirror&oldid=145854](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Martyrs%27_Mirror&oldid=145854).

<sup>51</sup> Kouwenhoven, *The Fehrs*, 194, 212.

<sup>52</sup> MLA Kansas, CONG. 15, Box 11, 'Alexanderwohl original Przechowka book'. For a modern and translated edition see *Church Book of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in the Molotschna Colony of South Russia*, trans. Velda Richert Duerksen and Jacob A. Duerksen (Goessel, KS, 1987). There are no folio numbers on the document but scans can be accessed here: [https://mla.bethelks.edu/archives/cong\\_15/prz/IMG\\_1816.JPG](https://mla.bethelks.edu/archives/cong_15/prz/IMG_1816.JPG)

indicating the father and mother of the individual. Subsequent columns give the date and place of baptism, first, second and even third marriages, children, and the date of death. The records are sequenced (at least initially) according to family – the Ratzlaffs, then the Beckers, and so on – recording family genealogies across generations, all linked to a founding father. The records are even covered in annotations and scribbled notes which provide further detail about the community and its members. In one record, the compiler Wedel notes that Jacob Ratzlaff was his grandfather, scrawling ‘Grossvater’ next to the record, as personal memory intersected with communal memory.

The Przechówko books are just one example amongst numerous church books compiled by Mennonites, all of which differ slightly in format and composition. Church books were very different from martyr stories and remind us that communal memory making amongst Anabaptists was not just about martyrdom, but the texts performed comparative functions in the way they created genealogies that grounded communal memory in people and networks. Whether martyrs or family members, memories of individuals were fundamental to Anabaptist culture since such lineages of people bridged diasporic spaces. Contemporary Mennonites can do their own family histories by using the Mennonite database, “GRANDMA” (The Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry), accessed through the website “Grandma’s Window”. The emphasis on lineage has even spurred controversial conversations about whether Mennonites can be considered an ethnic group.<sup>53</sup> Intimate connections enacted across distance enabled a resilient transnational network, and the methods to maintain ‘glocal’ memoryscapes have continued to evolve. Newspapers and periodicals were established to share recollections and news, trace origins and keep the diaspora connected throughout the world. For example, the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, an American German-language Mennonite periodical, was started in 1878 and active until 2007<sup>54</sup> whilst the *Mennonitische Post* founded in 1977 recently celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as one of the last German language publications amongst North American Mennonites.<sup>55</sup> These publications have created not simply an imagined but a very tangible global community.<sup>56</sup>

Continuity of language is a crucial cultural practice which allows dispersed Anabaptist communities to maintain connections across distance. The Przechówko congregation, renamed the Alexanderwohl community in New Russia, retained German for records, even in Ukraine and Kansas, though English has subsequently been adopted. Particular regional dialects have also endured such as the form of Plautdietsch heard in Reygadas’ film.<sup>57</sup> Hutterisch is a mix of German and Austrian, Moravian, Slovakian and Transylvanian, spoken by Hutterites, containing within its structure the origins but also the

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<sup>53</sup> Grandma’s Window is a paid service available at <https://www.grandmaonline.org/>. Accessed 21 July 2018. On ethnicity see Royden Loewen, ‘The Poetics of Peoplehood: Ethnicity and Religion among Canada’s Mennonites’, in Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (eds), *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (Toronto, 2008), 330-64.

<sup>54</sup> <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/mennonitische-rundschau-die/>. Accessed 29 July 2018.

<sup>55</sup> <https://mccanada.ca/stories/die-mennonitische-post-celebrates-40th-anniversary>. Accessed May 25 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Robyn Sneath, ‘Imagining a Mennonite Community: The *Mennonitische Post* and a People of Diaspora’, *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 24 (2004), 205-20.

<sup>57</sup> Epp, *Story of Low German and Plautdietsch*; Mark L. Loudon, ‘Anabaptists and Minority Languages’. 16 May 2019. *Anabaptist Historians. Bringing the Anabaptist Past into a Digital Century*. Accessed 30 August 2019.

migratory past of the Hutterite communities.<sup>58</sup> Language is also about ways of speaking as collections of Amish, Mennonite or Hutterite proverbs suggest.<sup>59</sup> Attachment to language is more than a nostalgic remnant, but a way of drawing boundaries between the sacred and non-sacred, though the struggle to keep languages alive is an ongoing concern for Anabaptist elders. Prairieleut Hutterite descendant Delbert Wiens remarked, 'Once the mental stranglehold of our mother tongue is broken, new ways of speaking and seeing come more quickly...A away of speaking is a way of seeing.'<sup>60</sup>

## Things and places

The Przechówko church book is a delicate document with thin fragile pages and tattered edges, the loose binding still holding together folios of hundreds of names.<sup>61</sup> Though kept by the Mennonite archives in North Newton, Kansas since 2008, where its custodian is archivist John Thiessen, it remains the property of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite church who left the Ukrainian Molotschna communities in 1874 and migrated to Kansas.<sup>62</sup> The church remains an active congregation in the prairie lands of middle America. Relating histories back to the sixteenth-century, the church book has survived each movement of the community from the Vistula Delta to New Russia and then the journey across the Atlantic. It stayed with the Mennonites as they lived in temporary accommodation for at least two years in communal huts provided by the Santa Fe railroad company.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the Hutterites venerate the Great Chronicle which the community sheltered throughout years of exile and persecution. Today it is kept by the Bon Homme colony in South Dakota in a special wooden box, which was the first Hutterite community to settle in north America in 1874.<sup>64</sup>

Such documents and records are embodied material memories which connect times and places. Recent scholarly conversations between the history of emotions and material culture offer new ways of thinking about these objects in the context of diasporic memory, not simply as inert entities but actors that produce and shape human responses.<sup>65</sup> The

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<sup>58</sup> Rod Janzen and Max Stanton, *The Hutterites in North America* (Baltimore, 2010), 147.

<sup>59</sup> McCaffery, *Mennonite Low German Proverbs*; Suzanne Woods Fisher, *Amish Proverbs: Words of Wisdom from the Simple Life* (Grand Rapids, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Rod A. Janzen, *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists* (Hanover, NH, 1999), 226-9

<sup>61</sup> MLA Kansas, CONG. 15, Box 11, 'Alexanderwohl original Przechowka book'.

<sup>62</sup> David C. Wedel, *The Story of Alexanderwohl 1874-1974: Profile of a Heritage* (North Newton, KS, 1974); J.A. Duerksen, 'Przechowka and Alexanderwohl – Beginnings of Alexanderwohl, Tabor, Huffnungsau and Other Churches', *Mennonite Life* (April, 1955), 78-82; Adam Teichrib, *Alexanderwohl: 60 Jahre danach* (Lemgo, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Norman E. Saul, 'The Migration of the Russian-Germans to Kansas', *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 40.1 (1974), 38-62; Cornelius Krahn, 'Santa Fe Railroad Company', *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1959. Accessed 2 Sep 2018. [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Santa\\_Fe\\_Railroad\\_Company&oldid=102652](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Santa_Fe_Railroad_Company&oldid=102652).

<sup>64</sup> John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (2<sup>nd</sup> printing paperback edition, Baltimore and London, 1997), 305-6.

<sup>65</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC, 2009); Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles (eds), *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History* (Oxford, 2018); Catherine Richardson, '“A very fit hat”: Personal Objects and Early Modern Affection', in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (London, 2016); Sasha Handley, 'Objects, Emotions and an Early Modern Bed-sheet', *History Workshop Journal* 85.1 (2018), 169-94; Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon and New York, 2017); Sarah Randle, 'Materiality', in Susan Broomhall, *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction* (Abingdon and New York, 2017), 17-19,

power of their experience as things which had travelled and which invoked emotions and memories, speaks to the way in which they were entangled with the communities who used and owned them.<sup>66</sup> Their tangible materiality embodied memories of dislocation, while their continued use shaped memory practices across generations. Objects also reflected change and transition in their material substance. We can see generational shifts in the church records when the hand of the scribe changes, or when the community started a new membership book. The first page from the earliest church book of the Alexanderwohl church after the emigration to Kansas is a remarkable snapshot of a community in transition. The names of members are listed and then follow baptismal registers which record baptisms that had happened in Ukraine. Past and present, Eurasia and America, collide in one document.

The shifting emotional valences of objects illustrate how they functioned in diasporic memory by negotiating the gap between personal and collective memory, as well as local and transnational spaces. The *Ausbund*, for example, contains hymns sung all over the world, shared by communities, but as material objects, copies of this book travelled across land and sea in personal family collections.<sup>67</sup> Material possessions kept by a family throughout generations suggested permanence, but their journeys also recalled experiences of migration and preserved communal and family memories. One folder in the archives in Bethel has a single page from the front of a Bible commentary which was owned by the Krehbiel family entitled 'Pro Memoria'.<sup>68</sup> It is a little potted history, telling how Jacob Krehbiel bought the volume in 1791 in Krimmerhof which then passed to one of his sons, Johannes and then to Johannes' brother, Jacob. When the family emigrated to America in 1831, the book remained in Weierhof in the Palatinate as it was too difficult to transport. However, it was so important to Jacob that in 1836 he wrote to ask friends to bring it with them when they too came across the Atlantic. Christian Danner obliged and transported the Bible commentary to Clarence, New York State. Jacob records fondly that at the time of writing in 1837 the book had been in his family's possession for 46 years and asks his 'Dear descendants' to preserve it. The memorial slip has been archived separately from the book, though the memory of its history is evident on the page. Once I ordered up the volume, it quickly became clear why the book was unwieldy to transport but also how important it was as a physical object. Rather than a single volume, it is an eight-section commentary bound in four volumes printed in the 1720s and 1730s, each one substantial in size.<sup>69</sup> Memories of early modern pasts are enacted by continued use of these objects.

The materialities of everyday life such as ceramics, clothing, furniture and personal items also evoked chronological and geographical connections. Many contemporary Hutterites, Amish and conservative Mennonites maintain distinctive forms of dress and culture which suggest simplicity and humility, and some domestic objects like books have

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<sup>66</sup> Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> The only known surviving copy of the 1564 edition of the *Ausbund* for example is now at the Mennonite Historical Library in Goshen, Indiana, bought by Harold S. Bender in 1928 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Ervin Beck, 'Goshen alumnus restores rare 1564 *Ausbund*'. 3 May 2017. *Canadian Mennonite*. <https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/goshen-alumnus-restores-rare-1564-ausbund>. Accessed 5 October 2019.

<sup>68</sup> MLA Kansas, Small Archives I, Box 13, 249, 'Page from a Bible commentary owned by Jacob Krehbiel'.

<sup>69</sup> MLA Library Kansas, M 220.531, H363b, Rare Bk. Coll.

survived migrations. Clock making evolved as a specialist technique amongst the Vistula Delta Mennonites from the eighteenth century, most notably the Kroeger family but also the Mandtlers, who made simple wall clocks without casements and with little decoration. As Mennonites moved from Prussia to Russia and then North America, they took not only skills and craftsmanship with them but also the clocks, which hung on walls of homes, marking out the passage of time.<sup>70</sup> Families went to great lengths to save their clocks and the daily tick of the timepiece marked a continuity of daily time even as years passed and places changed. Despite their size, clocks or multivolume books were precious enough to be taken across oceans. As objects they combined a dynamic tension of the comfort of domestic settled life and the reality of migration. This spatial dialogue between both settlement and travel, and the past and present is dramatically evident in the decision by Canadian Mennonites in the 1960s and 1970s to move from Ukraine the monuments to Johann Bartsch and Jakob Höppner, the delegates who negotiated the migration of Mennonites from Prussia to New Russia with the Tsarist government in the late eighteenth century. Their graves remain in Ukraine, but their stone memory is part of the Steinbach heritage centre in Canada.<sup>71</sup> Material practices of memory have created a powerful public heritage.

spatial connections to the past underpinned the practice of transporting books, objects and even graves, and materiality of place and the landscape was important to memories amongst Anabaptists. Because exiles are in motion, memories necessarily involve the construction and inhabitation of diaspora space.<sup>72</sup> Spatial connection to the diaspora does not necessarily equate to nostalgia for a homeland to which Anabaptists wish to return, although communities often have a profound sense of a connection to migration as well as the Swiss, German, Dutch, Polish, Ukrainian or Russian parts of their past. Communities even took parts of the landscape with them. Mennonite communities across north America have planted acorns from the great Chortitza oak which grew in the lands settled in Ukraine, whilst Manitoba Mennonites carried seeds when they migrated to replant grasslands. Place and environment were integral to community memory.<sup>73</sup> There was always a tension in diasporic memory connected to space. between the attachment to one location and the connection with the wider community, the local and the translocal, as well as the reality that even exile communities often did settle in their new locations. However, this constant dialectic between movement and settlement was also productive in the way it as express the local community's particular place within a broader diaspora.

## Conclusion

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<sup>70</sup> Arthur Kroeger, *Kroeger Clocks* (Steinbach, MB, 2012); James O. Harms, 'The Search for Jacob Mandtler, Clockmaker', *Mennonite Life* 64 (2010).

<sup>71</sup> Urry, 'Memory: Monuments and the Marking of Pasts', *Conrad Grebel Review* 25.1 (2007). Available at: <https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/issues/winter-2007/memory-monuments-and-marking-pasts>. Accessed April 30, 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, Border, and Transnational Identities." *Cartographies of Diaspora*. 1996.

<sup>73</sup> On the Chortitza oak see Schroeder, *Mennonite Historical Atlas*, 116, 120; Preface in Robert Zacharias, *Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature* (Winnipeg, 2013). Susie Fisher, '(Trans)planting Manitoba's West Reserve: Mennonites, Myth and the Narrative of Place', *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017), 127-48. See this issue of the journal more broadly on Mennonites and landscape.

For descendants of the Anabaptist tradition, the Reformation and the early modern period is a time of martyrdom and exile. They remember this period in a unique way which has shaped and continues to shape the Anabaptist diaspora. As communities or individuals went through hardship, resettlement, persecution or migration, the collective memories of exile, pacifism and martyrdom, connected to the Reformation era, were integral to identity. Tensions existed in these memories: in the attempt to make the lived present recreate the past; in the notion of global space as the diaspora spread and people migrated but also the highly specific memories of individual locations; in the expansive genealogies of martyrs but the deeply personalised records of family and community membership. The ability to manage this tension is at the core of Anabaptist diasporic memory. Memories of persecution and pacifism have been shaped to tell a particular narrative, which forgets, excludes and obscures more violent early modern pasts in Münster or the military service of Prussian Mennonites. Indeed, the dissonance between the collective memories of martyrdom versus the reality of prosperity in the Dutch Golden Age or migration and survival in the twenty-first is not without its problems.<sup>74</sup> But the power of these memoryscapes which have allowed the Anabaptist diaspora to evolve are unquestionable. They must be part of our accounts of memories of the Reformation and its legacies and cannot remain peripheral.

Interrogating these histories is not always easy. It involves travel across the dispersed locations associated with Anabaptists. Visits to the heat of Kansas in the summer or bitterly cold Poland in winter have made me feel that I am inhabiting the diasporic spaces of Anabaptists. But the parallel is also problematic. Driving to archives and around cemeteries in the comfort of a car and recording records with an iPhone, is very different from the experiences of exiles and displaced persons. However, there is a productive tension since being aware of this difference draws attention to the material remains of Anabaptists, to the material conditions of the production of history and sources, the contexts which shaped it and the distances of space and time in these dispersed communities.

The diasporic memories of Anabaptists explode understandings of the meaning of legacies of the Reformation, as well as making us reconsider the concept of diasporic memory itself across places and times. The history of Amish, Mennonite and Hutterite communities is connected to questions about the rise of democracies and nations, obedience to the state, refugees, and global connections before the era of globalisation.<sup>75</sup> Both local and transnational contexts shaped experience and memory in the Anabaptist diaspora as communities responded both to communal and individual problems but also large scale historical phenomena such as eighteenth-century Prussian militarism, Russian Tsarist reforms, north American migrations, or the 2017 Luther anniversary. Memories amongst these communities underscores the importance of uncovering the diverse legacies of confessional cultures and of understanding the experience of non-conformity, exile and migration in global or trans-local contexts.

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<sup>74</sup> Rebecca Plett, 'From Martyr Narrative to Medical Discourse: Writing a Contemporary Mennonite Subject', *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017), 339-55.

<sup>75</sup> See also Urry, *Mennonites* and Driedger, *Obedient Heretics*, 3.

