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On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age

MOTTI NEIGER, OREN MEYERS and EYAL ZANDBER (eds)

London/New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

xvi+300 pp., illus., index, £55.00 (cloth)

This book results from a workshop and brings together a wide range of established and some junior scholars around the topic of media memory, defined by the editors as ‘the systematic exploration of collective pasts that are narrated by the media, through the use of the media, and about the media’ (p. 1). The book is part of a wider Palgrave Macmillan ‘Memory Studies’ series that also includes Any Holdsworth’s *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*, and Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering’s *Creative Memory*, amongst others.

On Media Memory studies media memory from the perspective of collective memory, which is considered as ‘an inherently mediated phenomenon’ (p. 3). While this insight is not new, the book sets out and succeeds to provide refreshing perspectives on the multi-faced and complex nature of media memory, and to pose new questions that result both from recent developments (e.g. the impact of mobile digital media on the nature, process and changes in media memory) and changing insights into meaning creation through memory. The book does this by combining theoretical and methodological chapters discussing key concepts and tools, with a diverse range of case studies, looking at the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

Part one focuses on theory and methodologies and includes contributions by Barbie Zelizer, Jill A. Edy, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Jérôme Bourdon. Barbie Zeilize’s contribution provides a very inspirational conceptual toolbox to study the meaning creation and recreation that is memory building. In particular, she focuses on how ‘the global news media environment is instrumental in cannibalizing local mnemonic impulses’ (p. 29). Jérôme Bourdon discusses and thereby bridges the apparent gap between individual life stories and collective memory.

The second section is made up of three chapters discussing media memory, ethics and witnessing. It focuses on seemingly forgotten suffering and how old and new media can provide witnesses with tools to reconstruct their own and thus also a collective story. The chapters discuss very interesting projects that centre around mediating and mediated witnessing, focusing on Israeli veterans of the second Palestinian intifada (Tamar Katriel and Nimrod Shavit), the 1967 Asaba massacre (S. Elizabeth Bird) and Palestinians passing military checkpoints (Tamar Ashuri).

The third part of the book provides case studies of media memory and popular culture. Paul Frosh’s interesting case of television series *Life on Mars* explores how media texts reveal the entanglement of memory and imagination and its implications for the role of media as mnemonic agents. It reveals the interesting duality between representation and invention, referring to the notion of “reproductive imagination”: the capacity for making present to mind images derived from previous perception of things’ (p. 123). The other chapters in this section focus on this and similar concepts for a range of cases, including the evolving representations of Jewish historical figure (Na’ama Sheffi) and the Israeli adaptation of the television format *Such a Life* (Avner Ben-Amos and Jérôme Bourdon), among others.

The subsequent section focuses on journalism and media memory as it relates to journalistic practices. While journalism and journalistic practices seem focused on

the here and now and the objective, factual reporting hereof, journalistic texts and practices are also prime memory making tools, employed implicitly or knowingly in the reconstruction of history. Each of the four contributions in this section covers a different inroad into journalism and remembering, ranging from Carolyn Kitch's analysis of memory making through 'keepsake journalism' to Neta Kligler-Vilencink's application of agenda setting to media memory.

The fifth and final set of chapters focuses on the role of new media in Media Memory. One contribution in particular stand out: Anna Reading discusses the dynamics of the global memory field as digital and mobile media require the rethinking of collective media from a global(ized) rather than the traditional national perspective—an issue that pops up in other chapters in the book but is focused on here. She sets out six dynamics—and thus provides as many conceptual tools—to understand this new media memory: transmediality, velocity, extensity, modality, valency and viscosity.

The seemingly very diverse chapters together manage to achieve the editors aim of the book: to explore 'five characteristics in the dynamics of the shaping of "collective memory": as a (1) multidirectional process of (2) concretizing a (3) narrative of the past into a (4) functional, (5) socio-political construct' (p. 9). Overall, the book provides ample food for thought for people interested in media history from a memory perspective. For a social scientist, some contributions seem somewhat lacking in rigorous empirical backing of ideas and concepts. Yet, all chapters are convincing invitations to explore further (also empirically) these concepts and ideas relating to media memory as an important factor in collective memory. One aspect of media memory that could have been elaborated on somewhat more is the role of media in individual life stories and how new insights from media memories in a collective context can feed our understanding of the role of media memories in the process of remembering by the individual—as is mentioned in the introductory chapter and Jérôme Bourdon's very interesting methodological chapter. The fact that this has received lesser attention is probably because media memory is conceptualized within collective memory. However, this does not take away any of the overall quality of this edited volume.

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Hollywood's War with Poland, 1939–1945

MIECZYSLAW B. BISKUPSKI

Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 2009

xii+362 pp., illus., bibliography and index, \$60.00 (cloth)

Whereas Hollywood's treatment of the Second World War has been given considerable academic attention over the past few decades, the newest monograph of the Polish-American historian Mieczyslaw Biskupski delves into a rather peculiar and undoubtedly lesser-known aspect of American film production during the war