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Hagedoorn, Berber

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The Past in Visual Culture: Essays on Memory, Nostalgia and the Media

Berber Hagedoorn

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The final chapter concerns itself with ‘Broadcasting and Cultural Democracy’. Both private and public radio broadcasting claimed to offer programs which were for the entertainment and benefit of their audiences. Kuffert found that private radio stations concerned themselves with commercial success and their own ideas about what their audiences wanted, while the CBC was often too nationalistic, despite its profession of diversity.

This is a seminal work in the study of the culture of radio. Kuffert’s vast research into many untapped sources has produced a book that is meticulously documented, well-written, and completely engaging. Indeed, his conclusion ties neatly together all of the strands of thought into a fine reflection upon his academic journey to define and identify Canadian national culture as revealed through its early radio history. Kuffert has successfully opened up the door to future research in this arena for the next generation of scholars. This outstanding contribution to media scholarship is highly recommended to both academic and general readers interested in Canadian radio history and culture.

ERWIN F. ERHARDT, III

University of Cincinnati

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The Past in Visual Culture: Essays on Memory, Nostalgia and the Media

JILLY BOYCE KAY, CAT MAHONEY and CAITLIN SHAW (eds.), December 2016

Jefferson, NC, McFarland

pp. 264, illus., \$39.95 (paper)

Over the last decade, academic research has increasingly explored the dynamics of memory in contemporary and converging media cultures. The aim of the edited volume *The Past in Visual Culture: Essays on Memory, Nostalgia and the Media* is to consider the impact of different visual cultures on our relationship with history and memory, within a media landscape that is pervasive and saturated with images of past and present. Doing so the authors wish to further explore questions around memory, history and nostalgia in popular visual culture, specifically for media platforms whose boundaries are becoming more fluid and ‘recirculate and question nostalgic moods’ (p. 5). The volume’s central questions were in their initial form raised at the 2014 ‘Mediated Pasts: Visual Culture and Collective Memory’ conference, held at De Montfort University in Leicester. The volume is edited by Jilly Boyce Kay (research associate in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Leicester), Cat Mahoney (doctoral candidate in the Department of Media and Communication at Northumbria University) and Caitlin Shaw (PhD candidate in Film Studies at De Montfort University).

The first two parts of the volume consider representations of the past in visual media. Part I (with contributions by Christine Sprengler, Debarchana Baruah, and

Cat Mahoney) focuses on the representation of the twentieth century in different cases of recent historical fictions, specifically contemporary film and television programmes that depict the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in the United States and Britain. Each essay explores how the cultural significance of the given historical period is sustained and reworked in popular media representations. Part II (with contributions by Jilly Boyce Kay, Claire Sedgwick, and Kaitlynn Mendes) also considers history and memory through historical representations, but here with a focus on the mediation and negotiation of feminist historical narratives and counter-memories in television programmes; feminist magazines; and story production around the global anti-rape movement SlutWalk via social media activism. Each essay considers the power relations at play in the production and visualization of these feminist stories, and the role of feminist archives in (re-)theorizing such 'rhetorical struggle[s]' (p.104).

The latter two parts of the volume consider how visual media become sites of memory, history and nostalgia, and how such sites are re-negotiated to meet demands of the present. Part III (with contributions by Caitlin Shaw, Marta Wąsik, and Laura Mee) zooms in on the cultural exchange of memory and nostalgia in relation to technological innovations and the increased significance of new media, facilitating the recycling of memory in our everyday lives. The three essays consider the repurposing of defunct technologies and how the collective past is remembered through the media, via practices of techno-nostalgia, cinophilia and retromania in popular American and British film and documentary. Finally, Part IV (with contributions by Rowan Aust and Amy Holdsworth, Jo Whitehouse-Hart, Vanessa Longden, and Helen Wood and Tim O'Sullivan) focuses on different mediated spaces, objects and ephemera as 'sites of memory' that repurpose iconic archival television footage. These three essays demonstrate how 'television's "double articulation" between the material and the symbolic is routinely in play in the production of memory' and 'in its reconstruction and appeal to the past', for instance how old television sets as well as old television programmes 'are used to mobilize memories of the relatively recent past and act as generation markers', as Wood and O'Sullivan also discuss in relation to the National Space Centre (p. 237).

The volume seeks to give new impetus to present-day debates around representations of the past and contemporary media forms as dynamic practices of memory. The authors do so in three significant ways. First, by refraining from a demarcation by medium. Instead, multiple media practices are discussed, from period screen fiction, nonfiction media histories and memories in journalistic, filmic, televisual and artistic media forms, to cinematic nostalgia and recycling. Second, the authors take into account that 'it is increasingly the case that important academic work is emerging on the relationships between television, memory, affect, and intimacy' and they therefore consider television as an object of analysis and television studies as a mode of analysis which together provides 'a particularly rich terrain for the study of memory, allowing specific insights into the realms of intimacy, domesticity, and the gendered temporalities of the everyday' (p. 2). Finally, the volume encourages the analysis of the interplay, intersections, junctures and exchanges between fiction and non-fiction media, and between films, television, online media, print media, visual arts, video games and other visual cultures as

‘co-exist[ing] and (...) explicitly or implicitly in dialogue with one another’ (p. 3), and their impact on memory practices as such. By this exploration of interrelatedness through the different themes in the four parts of the volume, the volume seeks to hold contemporary debates around history and memory in ‘productive tension’ and as such to ‘foreground the media as perhaps the key site of contemporary memory practices’ (p. 4). The volume has a considerable British and American focus, but is open to global perspectives as well.

Considering the multi-media, interconnected focus on the volume, in places there are opportunities to even further explore television as a memory practice more in relation to its function of what I have previously termed ‘a constellation of dynamic screen practices’ in the current ‘multi-platform’ era. For instance, when the point is raised how video streaming and other online platforms sustain the memory boom initiated by the television text *Mad Men* (p. 41). The volume includes reflections on participatory media, online and DIY culture, but given this specific interest more contemporary theoretical work in the field of transmedia and cross-media storytelling could have been engaged with, beyond Henry Jenkins’ 2006 notion of *convergence culture* (p. 129). Finally, the volume would have benefited from a concluding chapter in which the authors reflect on the diverse themes and the overall methodological approach. The volume is very readable and recommended for both specialists and students in the fields of media, culture, and history, particular those with interest in memory, nostalgia and visual media.

BERBER HAGEDOORN

University of Groningen, the Netherlands

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You Win or You Die: The Ancient World of Game of Thrones

AYELET HAIMSON LUSHKOV, 2017

London, I. B. Tauris

pp. 219, index, \$15.95 (paper)

I doubt that anyone needs to be told, *but Game of Thrones* (Home Box Office 2011–2017) is an adaptation of the eponymous cycle of novels by George Martin. Its labyrinthine structure combines extreme violence with explicit sexual behaviour. *Game of Thrones* (both the literary and televisual version) can safely be described as a cult text, in that it creates a complex world with its own laws and practices and a range of protagonists who seem to have an autonomous life of their own. Moreover, it has a fan-base with recognisable traits and merchandise favourites. There are *Game of Thrones* key-rings, weddings, costumes and enactments. In this cult aspect, *Game of Thrones* has much in common with, for example, *Star Trek* or *Lord of the Rings*.

Such a crucial cult text will inevitably produce a sort of industry of critical ascription and comment. *Game of Thrones* is particularly open to this, and it notably