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VIEW

Editorial

The field of media/memory[1] is developing fast, after a long period during which the association between the two terms was considered as some kind of an oxymoron. Media and memory have been studied as 'separate entities'[2], with the media fostering oblivion, through a continuous flow of sounds and images. The medium television in particular has been accused of being amnesiac or a producer of forgetfulness, as reflected in Jameson's statement that "[m]emory seems to play no role in television (…) nothing here haunts the mind or leaves its afterimages in the manner of the great moments of film."[3] However, researchers have since discovered the many ways the mass media, including television, transform memories and affect not only the way societies remember, but also the way memories must be studied and conceptualized. The media/memory field is now part of a new, larger field well exemplified by the role taken by the journal *Memory Studies* since January 2008.

Collective memories are often seen as institutionalized memories, which we can analyse through official manifestations such as ceremonies, monuments, or even major television programmes. Beim has argued – from a cognitive and interactionist point of view - that researchers must go beyond the accent on institutionalized collective memories, and to try to understand "the bundles of culturally available memory schemata that people use to make sense of the past."[4]

While the texts presented in this issue do not deal with the theory of collective memory, they will suggest various ways of conceptualizing memories, not at the stable, "hard" level of institutions, museums, monuments, but rather at the level of more dynamic memory practices that take place in the contemporary media landscape as an ongoing, active and performative engagement with the past. This is in line with the shift in emphasis from stable points of reference or sites of memory "towards understanding cultural memory in more dynamic terms: as an ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting in which individuals and groups continue to reconfigure their relationship to the past and hence reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites."[5]

The authors in this issue study television programmes (either as text or production, but mostly, both), whose place in the distinction between "institutionalized memories" on the one hand and "memories schemata" observable at the level of social interactions on the other, is far from clear. Television texts provide, in a paradoxical way, social memories about the past, which are both institutional (in the sense that television stations, at least the ones analysed here, are identified as institutions) and extremely liquid and changing.

This is especially true as we consider political and historical contexts. When political regimes have changed, and in their wake, the legal regimes of television stations have also changed, can we still talk about "institutionalized memories"? As institutions negotiate with new situations, they reconsider older programmes, which are supposed to be living in the actual (non-institutionalized, but cognitive) individual and social memories of (some) viewers.

Many of our contributors write about ex-socialist countries and their uneasy relation with the socialist past, oscillating between official rejection *in toto* and the need to provide a sense of continuity. While Imre offers a general framework to interpret this, both Bloch and Bednařík resort to various methodologies to show how television stations in Poland and Czechoslovakia have tried to capitalize on memories of the socialist televisual past. In both countries, two television stations have tried to revive, unsuccessfully, former socialist series. Referring to the former division of Germany, Anderson bases his analysis of two fictions – one Western, one Eastern - about Martin Luther on a

1 Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers and Eyal Zandberg, eds., *On Media Memory*, Palgrave, 2011.
2 José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, Stanford University Press, 2007.
3 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, 1991, p. 70-71.
4 Aaron Beim, '*The Cognitive Aspects of Collective Memory,*' Symbolic Interaction, 30, 1, 2007, 7-26, p. 21.
5 Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, De Gruyter, 2009, p. 2.

distinction between two different strategies – appropriative and normative – vis-à-vis the national past. Ruiz, Lafond *et al.* deal with historical programmes in the former dictatorships of Spain and Portugal, with a focus on the televisual metamorphosis of former dictators, whose "televisual statues" are being thrown down and replaced by more critical, down-to-earth, if not satirical views.

The contributions mentioned so far can also be read as discussions of the continuous (re)formation of the national memory. The question of the nation comes to the fore in two different papers. Widholm discusses the way "pan-European" or "international" channels have dealt with the 2004 enlargement of the E.U. in quite a celebratory manner, saluting the way Europe (or part of Europe) was putting a past of divisions and wars to rest. The nation is at the centre of McElroy and Blandford's paper on the production of a "national story" of Wales by the regional-national station of BBC Wales, a particular case of the construction of a quasi-national narrative in a "post-devolutionary" old European nation. Garami focuses on a close textual analysis of two Israeli historical documentary series, showing the link between narrative form and political ideology.

The authors also consider reception and the experience of viewers, through archives of institutions (Bednařík, Bloch), the press (Bloch), and, especially, memories of viewers. Penati pleads for the use of television memories as historical sources in combination with other sources, so as to reconstruct the arrival and reception of television in Milan in the fifties, emphasizing the different "rural" and "urban" perceptions of television. While Penati shows how television viewing was gendered and contributed to changing gender relations, Collie focuses on the memories of female viewers from various generations in the UK. She shows the many ways television memories are gendered, as "television's domestic presence" has been a precious tool supporting women in their memory work over their life course. Lepp and Pantti bring us back to the nation and its troubled political history, with an analysis on the memories of Finnish television in ex-Soviet Estonia. On the basis of this example, we can claim that there's still much to be researched on trans-border viewing, a non-institutional form of television with strong implications for national memory and political history.

Finally, two papers in this issue suggest how these television memories, however liquid they may be, may dissolve into new forms, as the ways we consume (and research) television changes through digitization. Van Gorp reflects on the experience of a researcher confronted, for the first time, with new tools for accessing television archives. Her experience might be compared partly to that of future (or even present) television viewers. Hagedoorn analyses a digital cross-media platform and the various possibilities of access to what were once institutional archives, and shows how the televisual past can be retrieved in different ways. She puts forward the notion of television as a "hybrid repertoire of memory", which may be indicative of more dispersed viewing, but also of the transformation of notions such as memory and nostalgia.

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Biography

Jérôme Bourdon is professor at the Department of Communications at Tel Aviv University and associate researcher with the Center for the Sociology of Innovation (CNRS/Ecole des Mines) in Paris. You can find a sample of his publications and full CV **here**.

Berber Hagedoorn is a lecturer and PhD candidate in Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She is currently writing a dissertation which focuses on television as practice of cultural memory and the televisual poetics of representing the past in the multi-platform era. After working as a researcher with the projects *VideoActive* and **EUscreen**, Hagedoorn currently works as a researcher with **EUscreenXL**. You can find out more about her work at **http://berberhagedoorn.wordpress.com** and **http://uu.academia.edu/BerberHagedoorn**.