MCP, Special Issue: Studies in Cultural Memory

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The International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics (MCP) Special Issue: Studies in Cultural Memory

Call for Articles

Guest Editors:
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In 1925 Maurice Halbwachs placed memory in a social context when he argued that collective memories are socially constructed while his research and study have set the boundaries of the notion of collective memory ever since. Jan Assmann disagrees with this notion and constructed cultural memory as an analytical and methodological category, a category exceptionally closely related to politics. In his 1988 essay 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', translated in 1995 by John Czaplicka, Assmann separated collective memory (which he calls communicative memory) and its social basis from cultural memory and its cultural basis. Cultural memory differs from collective memory in two ways: first, it focuses on cultural characteristics that 'communicative' or 'everyday memory' lack. Second, it is different from history, which does not have the characteristics of memory. Assmann's focus on the first distinction, namely the distinction between collective/communicative memory and cultural memory, has its grounds on the fact that communicative/collective memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday. When we move from the everyday, we have cultural memory. For Assmann, cultural memory is based on fateful events of the past, on fixed points which he calls 'figures of memory' whose 'memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)' (Assman 1995: 129). Cultural memory's function is to unify and stabilize a common identity that spans many generations and it is not easy to change, as opposed to collective memory that has a three-generation cycle. Hence the representation of history through institutions and the arts becomes a matter of praxis, of transformation of the solidified narrative for the sake of society's stability.

Since Assmann's seminal essay, the interrelationship between culture and memory has come forth as an essential and central issue of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, involving fields such as history, literary studies, film and media studies, digital humanities, memory studies, archaeology, sociology, cultural studies, trauma studies, philosophy as well as neurosciences, psychology and psychiatry. The importance of the notion of cultural memory is not only documented by the recent growth, since the late 1980s, of publications, but also by the more recent trend to

integrate different research methods of this emerging field, that assert to the need to bring focus to this debate and to examine the theoretical and methodological challenges of this field. With this special issue of Studies in Cultural Memory we wish to offer a space for scholarly debate and dialogue on cultural memory, in a European context and internationally (mainly the USA) that assumes a distinctly cultural and social perspective.

This special issue welcomes research across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and seeks to provide a critical forum for dialogue and debate on the theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues central to an understanding of cultural memory today. Papers should address the ways in which cultural memory is formed, used, presented and represented, appropriated, and changed while being committed to the broad understanding of cultural memory as the interplay of past and present in socio-cultural and historical contexts. In particular, the volume encourages papers that examine questions of cultural memory, its manipulation and its understanding as a methodological and epistemological tool as well as papers that investigate the relation between cultural memory and new media(including the Internet, social media etc) as well as old media photography, cinema, TV etc).

Topics might address, but are not limited to, the following:
1) What can scholars, theorists and artists learn through Assmann's essay?
2) What role does cultural memory play today?
3) What is being done to critique it?
4) How is cultural memory embedded/constructed in film, television, literature,
comic books and graphic novels, visual art, and theatre?
5) Can cultural memory be manipulated?
6) What issues does post-memory raise?
7) How are memories used to mobilize groups and form identities?
8) What is the role of social media and the Internet?
9) How is nostalgia related to cultural memory? What is the role of nostalgia in
the formation of cultural memory?
10) What is the role of location in the construction of cultural memory?

MCP invites interested contributors to send (6,000-7,000 word) essays incl. references, short commentaries (2,500 3,000), and book reviews (1,000-2,500) on Cultural Memory to the Guest Editors at the following addresses:
kosmidourania@gmail.com and dermen@uoi.gr on or before 30th June 2015.
Contributors should also include their affiliation, contact details and a short biographical note of approximately 200 words.
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Reference:

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