

REVIEW ESSAY
COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN
A MULTIMEDIA AGE MARUŠA PUŠNIK

Tessa Morris-Suzuki: *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*. London: Verso, 2005, viii + 279 pp., \$ 35.00 (hardback) ISBN: 1 8598 4513 4.

Andreas Huyssen: *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, xiv + 177 pp., \$ 50.00 (hardback) ISBN: 0 8047 4560 9, \$ 20.95 (paperback) ISBN: 0 8047 4561 7.

Jenny Edkins: *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, xvii + 265 pp., £ 47.50 (hardback), ISBN: 0 5218 2696 9, £ 16.99 (paperback) ISBN: 0 5215 3420 8.

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Public Testimonies of Remembering and Forgetting

Various triumphs or tragedies of the past function as mirrors in which people observe the reflections of their present. Past events can interfere in the public debates on present acts; they can control political decisions, direct military acts, or control economic agreements. In this regard the past often manages the people's opinions of certain deeds or persons; it fosters certain alliances or strains enmities. In its name people can be mobilised, and as a result the bonds of membership within their community are intensified. Within the twenty-first century societies the people's knowledge of history depends less on their formal education or their parents' or grandparents' storytelling, and is becoming crucially determined by media and other popular historical representations, which provoke imagination and evoke certain identification caught between the past and the present when "connecting the present and the past and producing a context for interpreting the world" (Hardt and Brennen 1999, 5). This is the key message that can be identified in the works of Tessa Morris Suzuki, Jenny Edkins and Andreas Huyssen.

Media produced and controlled interpretations of the relationship between history and contemporary society function as constant public reminders of strict separations, gruesome killings and unfair subjections or devoted loyalty and steady fellowship. Such reminders bear great importance for a specific community and its members, such as the various representations of the Berlin Wall for the Germans, 11th September for Americans, the Holocaust for the Jewish society, anti-apartheid movements for the South African society, the battle of Kosovo Polje for the Serbian people, Tudjman's delegated military-police action "Oluja" for the Croats, to list only a few, all of which are addressed in the reviewed books. Remembering these events through various popular media becomes a crucial signifier of the present realities. The authors engage in a close inspection of the numerous mediated historical representations that enter and circulate the public space – such as film, music, television, the Internet, news, comic books, fiction novels, photographs, textbooks, museums, monuments, urban town planning or artistic sculptures. Remembering guides both, public attention and people's intimate worlds. Through such remembrance processes certain past events or mere aspects of these events are emphasised, while others are pushed into oblivion. In this sense, popular media representations or town architecture can become authentic public testimonies of the past events. As these books demonstrate a myriad of concrete examples, the selection of persons, events and objects that are worth remembering in a certain situation produces specific historical knowledge, which frames the public agenda and affects the people's feelings, identities and actions.

Accordingly, the authors resort to the 1990s Balkan military conflict in order to explain the dependence of the present situation on the past and to show how the past may be mobilised to motivate the present disputes as if they were rooted in the past. In the late 1980s, the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milošević, gained immense public support among the Serbian people by exploiting the media representations and their mythical picture of the direct bond between contemporary Serbia and the catastrophic battle on Kosovo Polje in 1389, when Serbia was defeated by the Ottoman Empire and at the same time sacrificed the life of its prince Lazar. In order to intensify the situation the Serbian media representations exaggerated the number of Serbian victims in the WWII massacres at Jasenovac, a crime committed by the

Croats. Croatian president Franjo Tudjman's political influence and popularity was shaped in a similar manner in the early 1990s. Contrary to the Serbian ones, the Croatian media representations downsized the Croatian responsibility for these massacres of Serbs and Yugoslav Jews at Jasenovac. Hatred, fear and feelings of revenge were intensified by the picturesque representations of these past events and nationalist feelings were strengthened on both sides.

However, the story of the relationship between the past and the present does not finish where the books stop, i.e. with the end of the Balkan war, but can be continued to include the most recent events that show how the past survives amongst the members of a certain community and constantly determines their everyday life. The recent arrest of the Croatian general Ante Gotovina (in December 2005) seriously divided the Croatian public, since the Hague Court accusations clashed with the memories of the Croatian people who sincerely believe in the righteousness of the "Oluja" military operation that was oriented against the Serbs in Krajina and through which Croatia ended the war. It should also be mentioned that this operation is considered to be one of the most important war triumphs in Croatian history. Slogans that appear nowadays on big posters throughout Croatia, i.e. *Prepared to defend our home and homeland we'll protect Ante Gotovina*,¹ promote a specific vision of this recent past event that rests on the memory of the murderous and aggressive Serbs who were finally beaten by the heroic Croats such as Ante Gotovina. But they ignore and forget those innocent Serbs who were killed or forced to leave their homes in Krajina at the time. Such simplified one-sided interpretations of history that appear not only in the popular realm but also in the political arena and schools (on both sides, Croatian and Serbian) shape memories, national feelings and direct the people's attention. As Morris-Suzuki suggests, we should be especially susceptible to "the way in which public knowledge of the past infuses, and is infused by, feeling and action" (p. 237).

The three books discuss the condition of memory discourses in the present age. In *Present Pasts*, Andreas Huyssen examines the contemporary obsession with the past and the all pervasive emergence of memory. His thesis is that the key concern in Western societies is no longer the "present future" that was so glorified by the modernist culture, but that since the 1980s these societies prefer to turn toward the past. In such a manner he proceeds to explain the relationship between people's uses of memory in a global, consumer-oriented world and their situation in the everyday lived spaces. For this purpose Huyssen mobilises the concept of the palimpsest as a theoretical and methodological apparatus with which he is able to investigate a number of various urban spaces and texts as mere lived texts or textual palimpsests that can erase old meanings and start conveying new ones, thus playing a role in the shaping of people's collective imaginaries. In her book, Jenny Edkins concentrates on memory and trauma and explores the consequences and implications of remembering traumatic events – such as wars or terrorist attacks – for the international relations in a contemporary world. The way she examines the role and the meaning of various commemoration practices does not contribute merely to the understanding of socio-cultural and historical dimensions of memory practices but also helps to elucidate certain important current political decisions and systems that are grounded in the "politics of memory." Moreover, she breaks with the persistent politically apathetic approaches to the

forms of remembering the past horrors and alludes to the possibility of political action by suggesting that such memories also have subversive and resistant potentials when they challenge the existing political systems that in fact produced these horrors. In *The Past Within Us*, Tessa Morris-Suzuki in a similar manner dissects the memory in the present age, however she is mainly interested in the ways media shapes our remembering of the past. She concentrates on the representations of history in the popular media and reassesses the problems of historical responsibility and its recent popularity within the domain of domestic and international politics which is heavily dependent upon the consumer-driven media society. In her view, memory has become a profitable commodity which makes it extremely important to understand how the medium can shape the historical knowledge or how media genres and conventions can influence the story of the past. However, she also argues that this same multimedia system also carries the possibility for communicating alternative, marginal histories and even for the development of historical imagination and evoking public awareness, although these capacities have not yet been employed.

All three highly interdisciplinary books offer a persuasive analytical apparatus for investigating debates on the past events that still divide numerous communities around the world and their authors support the need to understand how memories and interpretations of the past come to life. Their common idea is that we need to understand the emergence of existing memories in order to change them and their role in society. For instance, the contemporary debates in Slovenia as regards the role of the National Liberation War and the Partisans in WWII in opposition to the Home guard members – who collaborated with the occupying German and Italian armies – and the interwar and post-war killings of the Home guard members by the Partisans, clearly divide the Slovenian society politically and culturally. A number of representations, from museum to media, try to reinterpret the past and redefine the meaning of WWII in Slovenia – now offering a directly opposite view of the good and bad sides from the (no less extreme) views promoted during the socialist period. However, during that period the sides were inverted – the Partisans were always good and the Home guard members were depicted as bad and remembered as such. Referring to such one-sided interpretations of history, with no ambiguity or plurality allowed, brings with it radical transformations of the memory. Media representations, museum exhibitions, political debates, etc. today persistently devalue the meaning of the Liberation front and the resistance movement by controlling the “truth,” establishing new politics of truth and directing the people’s attention to particularities: stressing a different perspective and picking out what to remember and what to forget (e.g. stressing the numbers of killed members of the Home guard, privileging the personal stories and emotions of their relatives, demonising Partisans and refusing to set everything within the broader context of WWII). However, as Corcoran shows, such unstable conditions and non-consensual interests in divided societies prove to be a perfect laboratory for analysing the relationship between cultural processes and the political power in structuring the memory. Through this relationship specific memories are selected, controlled, instrumentalised and legitimated within the public consciousness “in order to generate public consensus and build ideological identity” (Corcoran 2002, 63).

This concrete Slovenian example illustrates the basic concerns of the books that contain helpful tools for its analysis. In this regard, Edkins’ and Morris-Suzuki’s

books explain how the past is framed by various representational forms, how the processes of shaping people's knowledge of the past are carried out by different texts, images or practices, and what their political consequences are. Morris-Suzuki emphasises the forms through which various collective memories – like those of the Holocaust, Balkan wars, Japanese colonialism, and atomic bombs – are built. In her book chapters are structured according to the form of the analysed media – they range from historical fictional novels, photography, films, and comic books to the Internet. On the other hand, Edkins places a greater emphasis on the shapes of memories that are constructed around these representational forms. She differentiates between traumatic and non-traumatic, everyday memories when she investigates how the memories of WWI, the Holocaust and concentration camps, Vietnam war, contemporary atrocities in the Balkans, and 11th September are inscribed in various representational forms around the world (from concentration camp museums to world famous monuments such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington or the London Cenotaph). She is concerned with the ways in which past events are incorporated through various public memorials into a collective memory and become important legitimate tools in contemporary politics.

Although both authors accentuate the growing importance of history in defining and redefining our place in the world and the increasing significance of various media in shaping our memories and understandings of the past, none of the two analyses succeeds to show why this is so and why is memory becoming increasingly important in the present age. In this regard Huyssen takes an important step further, for he explains the questions of memory as a key cultural and political concern in our time and defines the importance of the contemporary Western societies turning back to their past. He proves to be more successful in his argumentation than the other two authors when he explains the deeper structures of contemporary politics of memory in a constructive and critical, yet a bit shocking, philosophical debate. His book starts with a historical and phenomenological debate, grounded in the anti-positivist and anti-modernist epistemology, on the public obsession with memory and on the reasons for transforming the spatial and temporal experience in the contemporary consumer and media society, in which our experiences of time and space are drastically changing. The continuing chapters of Huyssen's book address certain concrete "mass-marketed memories" (p. 17) and examine how and why they are fabricated in specific material forms. His main concern is to elucidate how architecture, literature, media and modern art are involved in the politics of memory. Nevertheless, all three books are successful in explaining the global component of remembering in today's age of multimedia, emphasising the still predominant national(ist) politics of memory, which goes hand in hand with the memory transformed by technological and economic globalisation.

The Past as a Politicised Concept of the Present

Between 1920s and 1940s Maurice Halbwachs defined the social frameworks of people's memory in his book *The Collective Memory*, a landmark study of memory and a pioneering work in the area of mnemonic schemes. He discontinued the idealistic romantic vision of memories as simply emanating from the linearly structured past and from the inner nature of the individual. In Halbwachs view (1998) collective memories are affected by the present and depend on the mental

images of the present. He exposed the problem of the memory's relationship with history and, in this sense, tried to redirect the scholars' attention to the questions of knowledge as regards the past and its dependence on the present. On one hand, his works greatly affected the sociological scientific agendas and epistemologies, as well as left permanent marks on historiography. However, as Hutton (1997, 379-380) observed, the problem of the memory's relationship with history became a field of historical investigation only after the 1980s when memory studies slowly started to pave their ways into research agendas. Historians and sociologists, who were academically raised and predominantly socialised in the spirit of the French *Annales* school,² rediscovered Halbwachs' work on collective memory in the 1980s and brought it back to life. This was also the time, when "the history of the politics of public commemoration became popular" (Hutton 1997, 379). On the basis of the interests in the meanings of history for the present, rather than in history as a scientific field, and on the basis of the perception of historians as actively involved in the production of the past with their own accounts of the past, memory studies started to emerge within various academic disciplines and university programs during the last two decades, and have further developed Halbwachs' idea, "that the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (1998, 40).³

The works of Tessa Morris-Suzuki, professor of Asian/Japanese history, Jenny Edkins, professor of international politics, and Andreas Huyssen, professor of German and comparative literature, share these basic notions and concepts of the relation between memory and history as their starting points, arguing that history is a world which is brought into life by words and they perceive memory as a representation. Their works were visibly influenced by the ideas of Halbwachs and the *Annales* school. Morris-Suzuki and Huyssen even engaged in a short debate on the meaning of the new historiographical trends for contemporary humanities and social sciences and Morris-Suzuki assessed a range of Asian writings on history that are "still strongly influenced by positivist notions of scientifically verifiable 'historical facts'" (p. 10). Although the authors use various names to denote memory, from collective, cultural to public memory, they all conceptualise memory (in Halbwachs' manner) as a social phenomenon, dependent on the membership in a specific social group, and define it as a type of communication and a way of sharing representations of the past among people.⁴ The most obvious difference between Edkins', Morris-Suzuki's and Huyssen's works, is that the first two authors uncritically use Halbwachs' concept in their analyses, while Huyssen engages in a polemic with Halbwachs' theoretical legacy. He argues that Halbwachs' conceptualisation, which posits relatively stable formations of social and group memories, is no longer entirely adequate for grasping the current dynamics of memory and forgetting in relation to contemporary media. In this regard he also talks about "public media memory" (p. 17), for memory has changed profoundly in the multimedia age. Media influences the memory and people, for example, know more about the Holocaust or African slavery in America from the commoditisation and spectacularisation of these events in the movies, docudramas, and Internet sites (like Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* or *Amistad*) than from school or scientific books. Huyssen believes that today we should focus on the importance of both representations together, occupying the same public space and building memories, regardless of their either entertaining nature, fictional forms, or their scientifically validated

evidence based on traumatic testimonies, instead of simply dividing them into serious memory and trivial memory. Insisting on this old distinction would only reproduce the old high/low culture dichotomy of modernist thought – “as it did in the heated debate that pitted Claude Lanzman’s [documentary] *Shoah* as a proper representation ... of Holocaust memory against Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* as its commercial trivialization” (p. 19) – and would not help us understanding the formation and function of memory in the contemporary, multimedia age.

All three books address another important aspect of the past, which is structured according to the present time, and that is the role of memory in shaping the national consciousness. Many scholars, who are dealing with memory research, argue that memorialisation processes reinforce the idea of the nation. Amongst the first and prototypical works of this kind are Pierre Nora’s works on memory and the French identity from the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁵ Nora studied a variety of memorable elements that contributed to the French national elements over the centuries. He is famous for his thesis that memory is always motivated. In this regard he defined sites of memory, which can be material or symbolic (like museums, archives, textbooks, festivals, anniversaries, monuments, media texts and images, etc.) and are used to stop time, to inhibit forgetting and maintain the sense of continuity with the past (Nora 1996, 19). In their books all three authors resort to such national sites of memories. Huyssen admits that although memory has global proportions, the political site of memory is still predominantly national, not post-national or global. In Morris-Suzuki’s view, history remains increasingly mobilised in order to support the visions of national identity. Moreover, as Edkins maintains, the concept of the nation is central to the form of modern memory in our historical period. In this manner she focuses on traumatic past events (such as wars, genocides and terrorist acts) and ascertains that commemorations of traumas from the past are important for the continuation of national communities. Although her analysis of the acts of bearing witness to traumatic events deals with phenomena that seem mostly neurological, psychiatric and medical (e.g. WWI veterans who suffered from shell shock or Vietnam veterans’ post-traumatic stress) she innovatively connects them with the broader social problematic. In her opinion these traumatic events and memories are being rewritten into a linear time of national heroism through various memorial ceremonies, such as victory parades, remembrance celebrations, museums and monuments which speak of the nation’s glory, sacrifice, courage and grandeur and help to overcome these horrors from the past. The national state conceals the traumas that were, in many cases, also produced by the state itself, but invests a lot of energy and money into finding ways to incorporate painful events into the collective memories of their nations. As Edkins shows, the building of the Vietnam Veterans memorial was inspired by the film *Deer Hunter* in order to assure the public remembrance of the war, of all killed and missing, and to offer a comforting fantasy of imaginary closure not only to the ones who lost their relatives in this war but to the entire nation.

Although none of these three works can be seen as a historical work, they all narrate stories about the past, or, more precisely, about the role of the past in our present lives and the role of the present in our understandings of the past. When reading these books and digging through diverse past cultural milieus (e.g. the rise of the regime in Nazi Germany, the 1976-1983 military dictatorship in Argentina,

the pre-1945 Japanese military expansion into Asia, to mention just a few) the readers can behold: a) how past is politicised during the different periods for various purposes, b) how the force of history is used to legitimise specific authority, and c) how various cultural artefacts are used to explain specific stories about the past and thus influence public awareness and the formation of collective memories. In this sense it can be argued that memories are fundamental for the production of national communities, as well as the contemporary world order and international relations.

Accordingly, the production of memory has political, cultural and social implications. Practices of memory can (re)produce certain relations of power and represent those spaces where power struggles take place. Indeed, all three works build a broad theoretical framework for the analysis of power and memory processes. When they talk about the political role of memory for the present and the ideological effects of politics of the past, they lean on the theories of ideology and discourse, theories of subjectivity, democracy theories and postcolonial, subaltern theories. In this perspective, when explaining that memories and people's understandings of the past are as a matter of fact rather conceptions imposed upon the past and not merely knowledge emanating from the past, Huyssen's and Edkins' works are visibly inspired by Foucault's historiographical influence. In Foucault's view, every making of the history is a manifestation of the power of the groups that define its forms (2001, 10). To paraphrase Huyssen and Edkins, memory is therefore predominantly about organising the knowledge of the past, or, as Matsuda declares, memory is about the present choices over the contested images of the past, because modern memory is not to be construed as a retrieval of the past, but rather as a present judgment about which element to trust: "The past is not a truth upon which to build, but a truth sought, a re-memorializing over which to struggle" (Matsuda 1996, 15).

However, it is necessary to take a step further and detect in whose name specific memories and visions of the past are (re)produced. According to Hutton (1997), these memories are institutionalised in the name of the norms usually favoured by the state or society's elites and by the dominant discourses. Among the three authors only Edkins, who is interested in the political implications of memory discourses in the structuring of the contemporary world, explicitly points to definite agents that negotiate and manage the past, while Morris-Suzuki and Huyssen address this question on implicit levels, preferring to discuss the broader social structures of memory entanglement in power discourses in a manner of postmodern and (pos)structuralist interpretations. Consequently, it seems difficult to pin down the exact agents in their works.

Halbwachs said that society "in each period, rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium" (1998, 183). As Edkins' work suggests, this equilibrium depends on the relations of power that are reflected in the memories preserved within a specific society. She offers a number of examples how power, social order and individual subjects are constituted in the contemporary West through the practices of remembering. When talking about the treatment of war survivors, Edkins borrows and develops Foucault's idea of normalisation and medicalisation of survivors aiming at "recovery, or the reinsertion of survivors into structures of power" (p. 9). If Edkins explicitly resorted to Gramsci and borrowed his concept of hegemony at this point, her analytical approach could

be even more powerful and energising. She argues that the dominant views can be inscribed into memory, but the use of Gramsci's analytical apparatus could help her explain how this takes place – the memory can become a site of struggle for a hegemonic interpretation of the past, which means moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership of a specific interpretation of the past over all other interpretations, which would then occupy the central position in the collective memory (cf. Gramsci 1971, 351-370). The space of the struggle for hegemony is thus a space for winning the consent over the majority of the population and their memories. To use a case from Edkins' book, following traumatic events usually a struggle over memory emerges – e.g. the process of de-politicisation of memories in the case of Vietnam veterans. Edkins writes that a number of discipline and control methods were forged in the context of post-Vietnam combat trauma not only amongst the survivors, but among the entire population. Such disciplined memories served for the establishment of the world order after Vietnam: "Dominant powers can use commemoration as a means of forgetting past struggles" (p. 54). Remembering is always a political act, a struggle over what should be remembered and a struggle against forgetting. In this regard Morris-Suzuki talks about "historiography of oblivion" that is a characteristic of the contemporary age and its "purpose is not simply to 'revise' understandings of the past, but specifically to obliterate the memory of certain events from public consciousness" (p. 8). Another example, described in Morris-Suzuki's book, once again proves that the relation between power structures and memory are deeply rooted in our societies and that the one who masters the past also masters the present: the dispute between Japan and South Korea was caused by a Japanese history textbook, which according to Chinese and Korean governments, distorted the East Asian history and erased the history of Japanese expansionism and colonialism in the region.

Such politics of the past have specific effects for the humans' position in the social universe, since memories also shape personal identities. History, as Morris-Suzuki warns, is not merely an interpretation that offers us knowledge of the past, but it is also an identification, which involves imagination and empathy, and explains our relationship with the past. By remembering a particular piece of the past, by making it our own in our memories, we create our sense of belonging to a certain group of people.

Explosion of Memories

During recent years we have seen a rise in the popularity of historical genres and representations. The increasing interest in memories since the 1980s is one of the basic concerns that the authors address, although they devote various degrees of attention to this matter. Borrowing from Nora, Huyssen talks about the "hyper-trophy of memory" (p. 3). Nora argues that the imperative of our age is to preserve everything and to fill archives. Modern memory is archival, everything is archived and countless micro-histories are stored (Nora 1996, 8). An endless quantity of human stories, personal memoirs, testimonies, and traumatic memories appear all over the public space – in the media, politics, and even in science.

This present obsession with memories and the past also brings forth serious consequences. Edkins claims that contemporary cultures are predominantly testimonial cultures, rushing to collect testimonies while this numbs the citizens

who become passive bystanders of the repeating atrocities from the past. Morris-Suzuki widens her view and argues that in general such representations produce either amorphous apathy or frenzied enthusiasm as the two sides of the same coin. Huyssen offers an even more systematic analysis of these phenomena when he dissects the social structures that exist within contemporary societies and have their roots in the modernist age. New technologies, means of communication, the rise of the media culture, and new patterns of consumption, work and mobility have profoundly transformed the human perception of time and space. Media and consumer society compress time and space, spatial boundaries are collapsing and time is voiding. Huyssen's argument is that the more consumer capitalism prevails over the past and future, and the more the present extends, the less stable identities it provides for contemporary subjects and the more people escape to the past in search of stability. To put it in other words, unstable contemporaneity produces our desires for the past and memories because they can compensate for this loss of stability by offering traditional identity forms.

But Huyssen sees a paradox in this turn towards memory; on one hand the public anxiety of forgetting is on the spread, while on the other hand new media are able to store and bring us more memories than ever before (e.g. CD's, DVD's, etc.). But these mass-marketed memories are mostly imagined and not lived memories and this is why they can be easily forgotten. At this point Huyssen flirts with Nora's notion of prosthetic and communicative memory, although he does not mention it directly. Nora's conception of the prosthetic memory is similar to what Huyssen calls mass-marketed, imagined, media memory, because it depends on external props, such as media texts and technologies. It is a vanished memory in Nora's terms, an external memory because various technologies remember instead of humans. On the other hand, communicative memory is synonymous to Huyssen's lived memory, it is a memory lived and transmitted through people's communication (Nora 1996, 10).

Modern memory, transported by media, is thus less immediate and more indirect. As Morris-Suzuki demonstrates it started to form in the nineteenth century through the popular realist historical novels (e.g. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Scott's *Waverley*, Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*), which offered their readers a new form of empathetic identification with the past events. But new techniques for representing the past, such as technologies for recording vision and sound, changed our understandings of the past even more drastically. Morris-Suzuki ascertains that the important influence of these processes on the form of memory was the ever deeper blurring of the dividing line between fact and fiction. In her view, history is becoming a mass experience for pleasure and people are turning to it for comfort.

This political-economical perspective is one of the most important aspects to the questions of memory in the present age, but the books, with the exception of the one by Morris-Suzuki, overlook and do not place enough stress on this. One should keep in mind that history has become a big business, a profitable industry. Evans asserts that among the media imagery historical films are the highest-grossing movies of all time (2004, 11).⁶ In this regard Morris-Suzuki shows that already the historical novel and especially today's forms of popular historical representations are limited by the sheer economics of cultural production. Popular historical representations operate in a specific cultural economy, their publishing is often extremely oligopolistic and the forms and visions of history are carefully selected.

She talks about the “economics of outrage” which functions according to the logic that the more extreme and controversial a representation of history is, the more likely it is to sell: “A relatively careful and literal reconstruction of some historical event ... is rather less likely to attract a mass readership than an egregiously one-sided and offensive version” (p. 203).

Memory Landscapes and Social Amnesia Reconsidered

Much of the prominence and inventiveness of all three books lay above all in the authors’ heterogeneity regarding the memory sites they investigate from a range of academic disciplines (history, anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, sociology, media and communication studies, political studies, psychoanalysis). Various “devices of memory production” (to use the words of Edkins, p. 35), bring the past to present and shape the landscapes of collective memory. Today, more than ever, the images of the past are framed by the multiplicity of representational forms, the mixture of texts, images, practices, urban spaces, all of which pervade real, material public spaces and the world of objects we live in.

Although none of these works offer an explicit methodological apparatus and advice how to deal with memories, they do not ignore the methodology, but rather offer a strong suggestion that there is no proper or incorrect method or procedure of social science investigation when analysing memory. In the first phase they all use qualitative methods in which they dig out and examine the existing memory forms, while the second phase consists of analysing the memory formation out of the texts, images, practices and the modifications it has undergone. Their methodological apparatus is a mixture of semiological analyses, textual and discourse analyses, with special respect to Foucault’s methods of archaeology and genealogy, as well as comparative historical analyses.

Their main goal is to examine how the processes of remembering, evoked by various material artefacts, influence the formation of political identities and collective imaginaries. When researching the structures and formations of public mnemonic schemes, they presuppose that it is not only the individual who remembers, but also communities, such as nations. Morris-Suzuki, Edkins and Huyssen guide us into the complex memory processes and in this respect provide the answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the article regarding the Slovenian case of the transformation of memories of WWII. Nowadays, heated public debates about the role of the resistant Partisans and the collaborationist Home guard members push collective memories of the Slovenian people through significant changes, when transferring the focus on the parallels between the crimes of the Partisans and the Nazi collaborators and thus suggesting a symmetric responsibility between both sides, or, in a way seeking to shift the focus of responsibility away from the collaborators. The present political and cultural alliances within the Slovenian society are made on the basis of these specific past events. This case proves Morris-Suzuki’s thesis as regards the historiography of oblivion because: 1) it shifts the arena of discussion away from the overall meaning (atrocities of WWII) towards a more narrow matter of definitions (Partisan crimes), and 2) it subjects a small number of selected pieces of evidence to sustained critical scrutiny (the numbers of killed Home guard members). Socially produced amnesia is too extensive to be ignored; as Huyssen stresses, it has important consequences for the structuring of the society and for opening or closing the public debates within it.

As these authors teach us the imaginative landscapes of the past – where memories are produced – are extremely complex, and this is why it is possible for us to believe in one version of history today and in another version tomorrow. Nowadays, when memories dominate public discourses all over the world (from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union to Africa) and when the culture of memory is spreading geographically, politically and culturally, it is extremely important to introduce such critical perspectives on memory and politics in the present public debates. The three reviewed books can serve as an excellent instruction tool that can be used to enlighten us how, why, with what effects and at what costs we memorialise the past events.

Notes:

1. In Croatian: *Za dom spremni i za domovinu čuvat ćemo Antu Gotovinu*. The powerful poster campaign in Croatia has provided more slogans like *The hero! And not the criminal [Heroj! A ne zločinac]; I believe in you, Lord [U tebe se Gospodine uzdam]* on this poster Gotovina is pictured together with the former pope John Paul II.; *I know where Gotovina is! You don't have enough money [Znam gdje je Gotovina! Nemate toliko lov€]; Don't pay the ticket to EU by Gotovina [Ne plaćajte Gotovinom ulaznicu za EU]*. In Croatian "gotovina" means "cash." (<http://www.iskon.hr/galerija/vijesti/gotovina>, 13.12.2005).
2. The Annales historiography is the reaction to the previous styles of historical writing and thought, especially to the nineteenth century historiography of Leopold Von Ranke that was based on the hard science approaches to history. The Annales school, formed around the Annales journal and centred in France, rejected the centrality of political history, great men, great deeds and wars, and contributed to the fall of the grand, heroic historical narrative, since it rejected the practices of traditional historians, preoccupied with the studies of origin, to provide linear descriptions of the past events. Scholars of the Annales school, e.g. Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, started to write histories from below and drew inspiration from the social theory (cf. Burke 1993). Ordinary people and their collective mentalities entered the historiography and it was the promotion of ordinary people's history that later intensified with the Marxist social history tradition (e.g. E.P. Thompson) and today's new cultural history trends.
3. In the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century the institutionalisation of history as an objective, hard science academic discipline with heroic narratives about leaders, wars and based on "origin theories" went hand in hand with the building of the nation states and their institutions throughout Europe. Historical writings thus profoundly helped people imagine their national communities.
4. In the vast archive of memory literature, which is still rapidly growing, it is possible to find various terms to denote remembrance processes: from collective (Halbwachs 1998), social (Connerton 2003), cultural (Epstein and Lefkowitz 2001; Corcoran 2002), public (Bodnar 1993) to popular memory (Foucault 1989). But all these different terms are used to denote the collective understandings, or constructions of the past, by people in a given socio-historical context.
5. Already in the early 1980s Benedict Anderson argued that various media, such as newspapers and novels, can nationalise history; they can create links between the past and the present, between the readers' lives and the imagined spaces of the society's past (1995, 22-36).
6. In the recent years a number of blockbuster films were based on historical themes: *Titanic*, *The Patriot*, *Braveheart*, *Gladiator*, *Amistad*, *Pearl Harbor*, etc. History is also a hot topic on television screens. Edgerton established that historical documentaries brought profits to cable networks in the recent years, because of their low-budget production in comparison to fictional programming and "many of these shows that have some historical dimension are just as popular with audiences as sitcoms, hour-long dramas" (2001, 2). In this regard the popularity of *The History Channel* should also be mentioned, which reaches over 200 millions households in more than 70 countries all over the world.

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