

Simon Ward

Urban Memory and Visual Culture in Berlin: Framing the Asynchronous City, 1957–2012, Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2016; 212 pp.: £64.00

Reviewed by:

All cities display signs of their past, and these signs cover a wide range from buildings and streets through initials carved on park benches and faded names on gable ends to sites of commemoration in a more avowed manner, such as statuary and blue plaque houses. The range is certainly much wider than that covered by Pierre Nora's term *lieux de mémoire*. In this book on Berlin, Simon Ward turns away from traumatic sites, for considerable work has already been done on memory of the locations of acts of atrocity in both halves of the city. His focus instead is on place memory and the role in this of visual culture and its technologies of place-making. Ward begins by tracing the emergence of local memory work in Berlin from the late 1950s through to the mid-1970s. This included public debates about urban reconstruction. He then moves from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s in exploring how place memory developed across forms of visual culture, particularly through conscious modes of curation in the production of spatial images in architecture as well as photography and film. A further chapter examines the codification of place memory work in forms which establish the city as a museal space, so taking us up to the early 1990s. The final substantive chapter attends to the ways in which Berlin's memory culture has responded to the porous condition of the city in a globalising world. As an extended case study, this book provides a thoroughgoing treatment of the mechanisms by which a relationship with the past is fostered and maintained, most specifically through the remembering of place.

Renee Hobbs

Exploring the Roots of Digital and Media Literacy through Personal Narrative, Temple University Press: Philadelphia, PA; Rome; Tokyo, Japan, 2016; 264 pp.: \$27.95

Reviewed by:

This book is based on a novel idea, or at least an idea that is novel in thinking about media and digital literacy. It is based on the notion of having an intellectual grandparent. Each of the contributors writes about a man or woman they feel has served as a grandparent in this sense, with the overall intention being to explore the historical roots of digital and media literacy. They do so through a personal narrative concerning their life histories and their encounter with the work of the person chosen; this then becomes intertwined with the historical figure under scrutiny. Following an introductory chapter on media literacy by the editor, the result of this is a set of cross-generational encounters with such assorted scholars and thinkers as Heidegger, McLuhan, Barthes, Bakhtin, Foucault, Allport, Adorno, Marcuse, de Beauvoir, Dewey, Bruner and Barthes. As this roll call may suggest, the history of digital and media literacy is approached in the book from a range of different intellectual positions and academic disciplines. This book certainly provides

a fresh way of introducing new readers to key intellectual thinkers, some of whom were writing about media, education, technology and culture a good while before media and communication studies emerged as distinct fields. It is also an entertaining read, with an engaging mix of individual accounts, well-chosen quotation and scholarly discussion. Both old hands and novitiates will find many points of interest in this collection.

Ulla Carlsson (ed.)

Freedom of Expression and Media in Transition: Studies and Reflections in the Digital Age, Nordicom: Göteborg, 2016; 199 pp.: SEK 140; €22

Reviewed by:

The issue of freedom of speech has been on the Nordicom agenda for some time, with earlier collections devoted to it, and it is good that it remains there, for it has many facets and many relations that require continuing examination and consideration. This makes the current volume a welcome further contribution to discussion and debate on freedom of expression, press freedom and communication rights. As Ulla Carlsson notes in her introduction, there are many obstacles, for

not all citizens are in the position or condition to exercise their rights, due to extreme poverty, social injustice, poor education, gender discrimination, ethnic and religious discrimination, unemployment, or lack of access to health care – as well as lack of access to information and knowledge. (p. 11)

A further obstacle is the power of global media corporations whose priorities are profit accumulation or political control over media output or both. All of these stand in the way of freedom of expression, yet this is the axiomatic principle of democracy and civic engagement. The articles gathered together here are based mainly on research in Nordic countries, but they include collaborations with researchers elsewhere in the world, while the questions raised and problems broached are applicable in many other regions. Recent and current changes, and the ways in which these are impinging on matters of free speech, are very much to the fore, along with the aforementioned (and other) threats to freedom of the press and the exercise of free expression. A final section takes up the reporting of war and conflict, with the issues of safety and civil rights a major preoccupation.

Leon Van Brussel and Nico Carpentier (eds)

The Social Construction of Death: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke; New York, 2014; 278 pp.: £55.00

Reviewed by:

Death takes us all, but our own personal takes on death are given shape, meaning and significance by the social and cultural orders in which we live. This imparts to death a constructed nature, for it is through the social construction of death and dying that we