

Introduction

Rethinking Social Memory in the Age of Information

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The clamor of the past can be almost deafening: it preoccupies us through speech, texts, screens, spaces, and commemorative spectacles; it makes demands on us to settle scores, uncover the “truth,” and search for justice; it begs for enshrinement in museums and memorials; and it shapes our understanding of the present and the future. However noisy and ceaseless the demands of memory and of the past may seem, in every act of remembering there is something silenced, suppressed, or forgotten. Memory’s inherent selectivity means that for every narrative, representation, image, or sound evoking the past, there are others that have become silent—deliberately forgotten, carelessly omitted, or simply neglected. In an age of information the relationships between remembering and forgetting, deleting and saving, posting and archiving have changed. It is the tension between loud and often spectacular histories and those forgotten pasts we strain to hear that this volume seeks to address.

For those who study social memory, the tension between silence and spectacle is especially productive. As the past often serves as a screen on which we project our present ambitions and future aspirations (Huyssen 2003; Rothberg 2008; Freeman, Nienass, and Melamed 2013), both what is silenced and what is loudly remembered tell us much about the present and what we expect of the future. This tension illuminates what has been selected for remembering and why; allows for alternative memories and understandings to emerge; reminds us that forgetting may sometimes seem necessary; and ultimately deepens our theoretical and empirical understanding of memory and its processes.

In this volume, we employ Guy Debord’s notion of the spectacle as a conceptual apparatus through which to examine the changes of the

contemporary landscape of social memory. We utilize Debord's canonical 1967 text as an inspiration, rather than an instruction manual. For Debord, the spectacle was characterized by an obsession with, or, at least an inability to look beyond, the present moment. We seek to answer how this concept might be developed now, in an age that has been criticized as an era dissatisfied with the present, nervous about the future, and obsessed with the past. We argue that this is precisely the moment to re-introduce the notion of spectacle. Perhaps now "spectacle" can be thought of not as a tool of distraction employed solely by hegemonic powers, but instead as a device used to answer Walter Benjamin's (2003 [1940]) plea to "explode the continuum of history," to bring our attention to now-time. By drawing on Foucault's concept of spectacle as a metaphor that can encompass dynamic heterochronic experiences (1968), rather than simply describe a snapshot of halted social interaction, we attempt to update Debord's theory in order to contribute to theories of social memory.

The relationship between memory and spectacle merits particular attention. According to the logic of spectacle, "[w]hen the spectacle stops talking about something for three days, it is as if it did not exist. For it has then gone on to talk about something else, and it is that which henceforth, in short, exists" (Debord 1998 [1967]: 20). For Benjamin, one of the outcomes of a modern society characterized by spectacle was the "impoverishment of memory" and the "standardization of perception" (Crary 1989: 103). One counter-strategy to this dulling and amnesia-inducing spectacle lies in memory. In evoking past images and narratives that are threatened by the radical presentism of the spectacle, memory can help build a repository for critique and political change. For both Debord and Benjamin, counter-spectacle also implies a notion of counter-memory. It is precisely because past, present, and future become indistinguishable in the spectacle that a new focus on the past can break up these impoverishing and standardizing tendencies to interrupt the flow of present moments.

Following Debord and Benjamin, the strategy for defying spectacle does not necessarily include direct access to a past or present reality or truth, but rather must, at least in part, also employ spectacular means—it is a matter of "using the tools of spectacle against itself" (Debord 1994 [1967]: 15; Martel 2006: 89). Spectacle, seen as the drawing in of careful attention, and not simply distraction, provides a chance to look at the past with new eyes, to focus our attention from different angles in order to allow for critical reflection and perhaps even social and political action. That is not to say that some of the characteristics of spectacle criticized by Debord and Benjamin do not still stupefy and attempt to thwart critical thought and political endeavor. Yet, there is something vital to be

discovered through this lens of spectacle, enacted through new media, such as the Internet and social networking sites, or older media, such as photographs and museums that have been mobilized in new ways.

The chapters in this volume address the interplay of silence, screen, and spectacle while raising a number of pressing questions about absence, the politics of forgetting, and the challenges of new media, which will be increasingly important for future studies of social memory and communication. What does silencing the past mean in the age of digital media? Is silence still largely the product of hegemonic projects? Or, rather, is it now a byproduct of chaotic and cacophonous memory debates as a result of an “all access” approach to the past? Is silence perhaps a consequence of numerous parallel spectacles—of too much noise—or, is silence still best understood as either absence or the repression of one narrative by another? In other words, is the lack of a unifying narrative a silence in itself? Should the diversification of narratives be viewed as a welcome challenge to oppressive memories controlled by the few? If so, then how do we renegotiate the co-existence of different views about the past in an age of increased access and augmented storage capabilities? Does the proliferation of screens, from Times Square to Tahir Square, mean more opportunity for screening memory or for screen memories? And how do we tease out the complex relationship of spectacle to screens and silence?

Spectacular Memory: Memory and Appearance in the Age of Information

Social memory in the age of information is shaped by new relationships to attention and distraction. We have crossed “certain thresholds of acceleration within the general machinery of culture, with all its techniques for handling, recording, and storing information,” which has resulted in an “acceleration of history,” or, more specifically, the way we perceive and organize history (Derrida 1984: 20; Nora 1989). New technologies of mass communication and social media have shifted our engagement with the present and the past, new challenges to the ethics of memory have arisen, as well as new opportunities for once-silenced memories to appear or reappear. Along with Avishai Margalit (2002), we see social memories “not as a simple aggregate of individual memories,” but instead as memories that require the aggregation of “different perspectives” through communication. In contemporary times, there are more means and opportunities to communicate than ever before, but that does not mean that the lines of communication or the ability to be heard is equal for everyone. Communication gets a voiceover, subtitles, and flashing

sidebar content, and is interrupted with breaking news or by a test of the emergency broadcast system; messages and communiqués are shouted over, silenced, muffled, suppressed, and unplugged.

Spectacle can either draw attention to or complicate our ethical engagement with the past. While Debord sought a true unity with the past, as opposed to the false unity displayed by the “society of the spectacle,” we argue that ethical remembering requires plurality and dexterity with respect to communication and reception. Communication must be more than just information; it must carry with it “the ability to share experiences” (Benjamin 2003 [1980]: 143), and it must emerge from a diversity of voices and mediums to reach equally diverse listeners and responders.

In “Haunted by the Spectre of Communism: Spectacle and Silence in Hungary’s House of Terror,” Amy Sodaro shows how one spectacular museum falls short of this goal and instead is used as a “political device” that attempts to stage support for the current government by simplifying the nation’s past. The House of Terror purports to be a space of moral education by showcasing the oppressive regimes that controlled Hungary throughout much of the twentieth century, but, as Sodaro illustrates, there are limits to the success a museum of this sort—a museum of terror—can achieve. In fact, the space ultimately functions as a kind of stun technology that overloads the visitor’s circuits with stories and sounds of torture and torment. The museum’s theatrics, which are architectural, aural, and visual, bombard the visitor with selected memories, keeping most of the past out of the script. Sodaro rightly calls this process “the sacrifice of information” which results in “more of a communist crimes theme park than museum.”

Within the museal space of the House of Terror dramatic sounds and images do most of the communicative work with only minimal text; each room has a single quote that is intended to impart the essence of the past on display there. Yet, one pithy phrase cannot be expected to carry a complicated social and political past with multiple regimes of terror and numerous historical actors. And because this is a national museum, Sodaro writes, “the museum’s silences become official forgetting by the Hungarian political establishment.” The problem is not in the brevity, but rather in the assumption that this is *all* there is to be said. Of course with every act of remembering there are parts of the past that are left out, obscured, deliberately or accidentally forgotten, but when a mnemonic space, such as the House of Terror, attempts only to convey a feeling of heightened fear and oppression, memory is quashed anew. In spaces such as these, mock violence can result in real violence to memory.

National museums dedicated to painful pasts are productive spaces to focus on for the study of the changing social memory landscape, espe-

cially when they address wrongful acts committed by the nation-state. Increasingly, apologizing for past sins has become an imperative for nation-states across the globe and a source of internal and external legitimacy (Olick 2007; Nienass 2013). In “Making Visible: Reflexive Narratives at the Manzanar U.S. National Historic Site,” Rachel Daniell focuses on the “self-reflexivity” on display at a former World War II Japanese American incarceration camp, now a U.S. National Historic Site. There is a marked tension in Daniell’s case, where the recognition of the historic site is attributed to years of grassroots activism but in the end is funded by the state. Daniell questions what kinds of knowledge can be produced in state-sponsored historic sites, in spaces where what is commemorated is “the repressive actions of the same government that is its primary funder and architect.” While the museum at Manzanar is undoubtedly a state spectacle, can the “activist heritage” that worked for the creation of the museum be passed on to a new generation of visitors? Can including the activist origins of what has become a state-run site of memory within the spectacle inspire more “productive remembering” (Huysen 2003)? Daniell argues that sites such as Manzanar do have the potential to go beyond their own histories to address larger questions of state power and domination. In other words, new self-reflexive museal spaces can re-link lines of communication among past, present, and future concerns.

Memories circulate; they travel, defy spatial and temporal constraints, disappear, and reappear. They can potentially divide communities—such as national communities cut along racial and colonial lines, as seen in Naomi Angel’s “The Everyday as Spectacle: Archival Imagery and the Work of Reconciliation in Canada.” As memories re-emerge, as they “flash up in an instant,” they drag traces of the past into the now (Benjamin 1968). At these moments, recognition can be sparked and new interpretations can occur, but we should be careful not to conceive of this process as straightforward. Multiple looks and multiple ways of looking are required. With seized memory-images come questions of “truth,” evidence, and witnessing, as well as queries of the social, political, and cultural structures and processes around these memories: how they have been produced, nurtured, buried, or preserved.

Angel addresses how photographs from the Indian Residential Schools of Canada function as “spectacle,” as a “social relation among people, mediated by images” (Debord 1994: 12). She shows how the photographs, the spectacular images mediating social relationships, were designed, developed, and reproduced through the colonial darkroom. Like many images on display in Manzanar, the image at the focus of Angel’s chapter has an “everydayness” or “ordinariness” that becomes poignant when critically considered; an illustration of Barthes’s assertion that

“[p]hotography is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks” (1981: 38).

Angel shows how a photograph can endlessly signify (think) and inspire thought. The potential for the thinking spectacle is precisely the possibility we see in the contemporary social memory landscape. The possibility is productive, but can also be disorienting, so we must pay close attention to the multiple readings images from the past can reveal. This is what the anthropologist Kathleen Stewart might call “slow theory”¹; it takes time to develop. For example, the photograph of children that Angel addresses can be read as evidence of ordinariness or as proof of colonial brutality. The trick is that it should be read as both. A photograph such as this should not be simply information, which closes in on itself with a gesture of finality, but rather a memory trigger—a vehicle for narrative (Benjamin 2003 [1940]; S. Stewart 1993).

The crimes of colonial oppression magnified by everydayness become harsher in their accepted banality. The image, if not read on multiple levels, risks functioning as a “memory stand-in,” which blocks or screens out the brutal history of the Indian schools. The danger of this photograph and others like it is that the harsh reality of the past can be so easily concealed by the appearance of everydayness. Looking back from the twenty-first century, the images of the last century’s aboriginal school children can and should be read as the colonial state’s “self-portrait of power” (Debord, 1994: 19). Armed with this knowledge, Angel shows that these images can re-circulate in the present, undergoing constant re-signification. In the hands of relatives and friends of those depicted, the portraits are not only of the state’s oppression, but also of loved ones in the course of their everyday lives. These images become spectacular in their resurfacing, as survivors from a past event. While there are recoveries of lost pasts to be found in these images, in this circulation and re-circulation of knowledge, understanding, facts, truths, and even names and dates are inevitably lost and forgotten. What has been lost complicates the current process of reconciliation in present day Canada. To understand what *has* happened in order to imagine what *can* and *should* happen is a difficult task, but an absolute necessity if a deeper past is to be revealed and a richer future is to be constructed.

Screening Absence: New Technology, Affect, and Memory

Communications and memory scholar Peter C. van Wyck writes that in the twenty-first century, “we have come to understand the previous century as a time that authored the *unspeakable*” (2010: x). Catastrophic

events piled up, rendering understanding and remembering difficult tasks in themselves and their communication even more challenging. What emerged from the challenge of the *unspeakable* were not only silences, but also new ways to transmit knowledge of and about the past—new methods of “screening.” In the contemporary age, remembrance is shaped not only through more traditional ways of commemorating and mourning, such as festivals, monuments, and memorials, but also by video activism, social media, and digital archiving. These new forms of memory and communication technologies work “not only as ‘screens’ . . . but also as collective surfaces and media for the production of memory” (Sosa, this volume). What these technologies often screen is absence or silence, becoming fecund spaces that open up possibilities for critical thinking in the vein of John Cage’s provocative 4’33” recording—a spectacular performance where the musician “plays” silence for four and a half minutes, effectively screening silence for the listening audience in a way that allows them to hear it anew. As Cage shows, when a person actively produces silence, there is no possibility for “true” silence; there is always something being communicated.

Cecilia Sosa’s chapter, “Viral Affiliations: Facebook, Queer Kinship, and the Memory of the Disappeared in Contemporary Argentina,” takes up a particularly poignant example of how absence can be screened through new technologies, spreading through far-flung social networks at a rate that would have been inconceivable just decades before. Sosa compares two activist campaigns that sought to draw attention to the thousands of disappeared persons who were victims of state violence during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship in Argentina. The first concerns the *Siluetazo* (the Silhouette campaign) of the early 1980s. This venture resulted in the posting of thousands of life-sized painted silhouettes around Buenos Aires, standing in for those persons missing from that city and elsewhere—their bodies’ whereabouts, and even whether they were living or dead, still unknown. In the second case, which is the focus of the chapter, Sosa analyzes a Facebook campaign launched three decades later on March 24, 2010, the anniversary of the dictatorship’s seizing of power. The Facebook effort asked participants to remove their profile pictures, in effect to “disappear” their images in an act of commemoration and resistance. Facebook’s default profile image—the wavy outline of a head and shoulders—echoed the *Siluetazo* outlines of the past. Other participants chose to replace their own profile pictures with those of disappeared persons. These contemporary online campaign strategies have been mobilized in similar ways for other resistance and memorial movements, including the move to transform profile pictures on Facebook to black squares in order to protest the execution of Troy

Davis by the U.S. state of Georgia in 2011 or the Facebook status updates intended for broad circulation that end with the phrase “please repost.” Social networking sites provide a different kind of group forum in which participants can be in each other’s “presence” and remember together.

The new visual memorial strategies addressed by Sosa are employed through social media, through spaces that are geographically fluid. These spaces become digital monuments to absence. Yet, while they draw attention to what has been lost, they also communicate memory in new ways. Vinitzky-Serrousi and Teeger have pointed to the fact that “silence can ... be used to facilitate recollection, [while] talk can be used to enhance amnesia” (2010: 1104). In the spaces Sosa addresses, absence is displayed through a proliferation of empty profile frames that make the larger absence present.

Sosa shows how virtual social spaces link and re-link communication lines where the transmission of stories from the past to the present may have been interrupted. Through her case studies, Sosa demonstrates how memories of a previous generation can be “queered,” connected with, communicated, and re-interpreted beyond the bloodlines of the family or nation. Sosa’s work on Argentina shows a “postmemory” that goes beyond a “DNA performance” and extends to communities of affinity (Taylor 2003; Butler 2005; Hirsch 2008). Imagining the future sometimes means smuggling the missing or disappeared parts of the past—its absences—into conceptions of what is possible. The spectacle of absence in Sosa’s chapter is an interruption that allows for the severed ties to the past to be re-sewn in new ways.

The proliferating technologies of video production and circulation also offer new ways of screening memory. Laliv Melamed’s chapter “Learning by Heart: Humming, Singing, Memorizing in Israeli Memorial Videos” considers the way in which the production of “domestic” Israeli memorial videos contributes to the affective impact of private storytelling and publicly shared memories. The videos, which commemorate Israeli soldiers who died in violent conflict, are aired on Israeli television on Israeli Memorial Day—they are private memories that circulate in the public sphere. Melamed shows how “domestic” videos recall the soldier as an individual first, “a singular, irreplaceable, particular lost loved one,” and as a citizen of the state second. These two identities are then stitched together, as songs and images work both to trouble and to travel historical distance and political terrains.

Melamed goes on to examine the ways that folk and popular music woven into the mostly non-professionally produced videos further emotionally charge the films and work to produce affect in its viewers and listeners. The soundtrack here is of utmost importance. The songs used

are widely known to the Israeli audience who view and hear the films; they are, as the author points out, popular songs that carry the ability to “sound as if [they were] directed towards and playing especially for you.” Further, they provide a “haunting melody” to the memorial images—a melody which often continues in the memory of viewers once they have turned off the television. The stories accompanied by the familiar music smuggle their way into the watchers’/listeners’ consciousness because the music is always already part of their memories. The melody “haunts because one actually forgot that one heard it. . . . The haunting melody is the remembering of forgetting.” Melamed links the “haunting melody” to involuntary memory and affect production, thereby theorizing beyond the image-based analysis that is often the focus of social memory studies.

Samuel Tobin also moves beyond the image to explore the corporeal embodiment of social memory in his study of disappearing spaces of play with the emergence of new gaming technologies. Through ethnographic and interpretative methods, Tobin shows how video arcades and the social practices they encouraged are being forgotten, while other social gaming practices are reemerging and being remembered, both aesthetically and practically, in other forms of individual and collective game play. The relationship of forgetting to fluctuating social spaces is particularly poignant in his chapter: Tobin notes the new absence of the arcade spaces that had shaped gaming culture, including the loss of Chinatown Fair on Mott Street, the last traditional video arcade in New York City, which has closed since the writing of this introduction.

When spaces of interaction disappear, previous social rituals and practices morph into new social rituals and practices—Tobin calls this process the “corporeal memory work of new game players.” Tobin’s research shows how we can remember these disappearing and disappeared spaces by looking for their traces in the new, while reminding us that other practices will inevitably fall off or be forgotten. And while we can lament what has been lost, we can also look for new ways to act in the future, both alone and in concert with others.

Silence and Memory: Erasures, Storytelling, and Kitsch

In contemporary times, silence appears in many guises: as a void, as avoidance, as a whisper drowned by shouting, or as cacophonous voices talking at once producing only noise. These myriad modes of silence are evidenced even in social memory practices less centered on new media—although they show up there too—such as storytelling, the construction of memorials and museums, and the organization of festivals

and heritage events, as well as active ignoring and forgetting. While often ignored, this section shows how silences are active “participants” in the production of social memory.

The resurfacing of forgotten or ignored pasts, particularly as they manifest in unexpected or historically inaccurate ways, is the topic of Timothy McMillan’s chapter. He takes as his case study the campus grounds and archival fields of the University of North Carolina. McMillan deftly shows how institutional memory goes through cycles of forgetting and remembering, of erasure and monumentalizing. McMillan’s analysis begins to peel back layers of the complex, painful, and violent racial history of the United States. Mystifications arise when stories about this history are told too neatly, too succinctly, and when real historical persons are transmuted into merely symbolic figures on campus and elsewhere. In his examples, the namelessness of former slaves exemplified by recent UNC monuments stands in stark contrast to the individualized attention granted to other actors in UNC’s memorial landscape. Ultimately we are left with a presumably self-reflective acknowledgement of “unsung” heroes, “unknown” workers, and “unnamed” activists, even in cases where more specific information is readily available on the campus itself. In McMillan’s chapter we see how brokers of history play a game of hide-and-seek with the past, often guided by present concerns to such an extent that they provide “agency to those who invoke the (forgotten) black past of Chapel Hill, but in many ways den[y] agency to the actual black people being remembered.” Most importantly, the campus continues to tell a story about forgetting itself, in its material traces as well as in the debates that surround each new controversy about the university’s legacy and responsibility.

In “The Power of Conflicting Memories in European Transnational Social Movements,” Nicole Doerr examines the relationships between storytelling and silences in the era of new transnational activist public spheres and their related forums of communication via the Internet. She takes as her case the European Social Forum, a public sphere dedicated to debating alternatives to neoliberal globalization. Through an ethnography of storytelling, Doerr shows how conflicts over silenced memories can eventually cause more tension than conflicts over power struggles that take place out in the open. The silenced memories resurface as tensions that are acted out under the pretense of other discussions. Attempts to take political action in the present become inflected with the conflicts of the past and the exclusions of differentially valued voices.

“Remembering forgetting” plays a central role in Joanna B. Michlic’s account of Polish memories of Jews and the Holocaust. Michlic fleshes out the common tropes of Polish Holocaust remembrance—the Christian

rescuer, the nostalgic Pole who laments the loss of a multicultural community, the neighbors who turn malicious during the fog of war—and casts them in a new light. She shows the difficulty Poles have had in integrating the darker stories of their past into the historical narrative. Her research maps a constellation of Polish responses torn between ethical demands, pragmatic short-term considerations, and the constant wish to “create” silences. Ultimately, evoking Goethe’s famous dictum that “everyone hears only what he understands,” Michlic provides a rather bleak outlook for a possible mediation between these different motivations.

Building on Timothy Garton Ash’s (1990) concept of “refolutions,” (a reform-revolution fusion), Susan C. Pearce shows how a new type of political revolution, characterized by its nonviolence and a “multi-faceted reconstruction in the realms of culture,” has affected seven countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were members of the state-communist “Eastern Bloc” until 1989. Pearce looks at what happens when memories long silenced are “heard” again, when national boundaries are redrawn and leadership shifts, when the archives are cracked open and the machinations of secret police forces are laid bare. What is left, Pearce tells us, is “the unfinished business of revolution—and its partner, the unfinished business of memory.”

So how does one address these two lacking processes? In her analysis of the current memorial landscapes of this region, she sees the emergence of two opposite poles of mnemonic strategy: “a nostalgic souvenirization” and a “re-traumatization.” Both of these processes distance the past from the present and lack the critical and analytical tools to achieve a more complex telling of the past. The question remains then, how should nations begin to untangle the outright deceptions and tergiversated social memories of the past decades—the airbrushed photographs, the falsified or destroyed documents, the manipulated audio, and all the industries of propaganda, churning out everything from cereal to pamphlets to museums? Perhaps one answer here is to call on multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2008), to begin with a position of plurality and difference that can provide a more comprehensive analysis of the past; another option is to incorporate spectacular strategies, which utilize new forms of media and communication technologies to draw attention to the past in order to act in the present and the future.

Contributions and Connections

This volume, while firmly situated within the debates of the field of social memory studies, breaks new ground in the discussion of absence,

both in terms of addressing specific “absent” or underrepresented dialogues, texts, monuments, and communities in its various case studies, as well as with regard to conceptualizing “disappearing” modes of living and relating to the past. In addition, we show the emergence of counter-memories and new communities of memory in the particular context of new technologies, as they compete with and compliment older technologies. The volume thus attempts to explicitly address new possibilities for thinking about the relationship between spectacles, screens, and silences in ways that acknowledge the changes in our ability to store, access, and control the past. Does increased access to debates about the meaning of the past necessarily lead to a new plurality of voices? And if so, how are these different voices weighed, combined, debated, and sometimes even co-opted? Who and what gets excluded and by which means? The chapters in this volume address these questions by highlighting new modes of intervention and expression in an age of spectacle without neglecting the new silences that are created in their wake.

One of the major themes that emerges from this volume is that of an absence or an emptiness caused by events in the past that continues to affect the present. As these chapters show, spaces of memory, including former spaces of death, repression, or atrocity, continue to haunt the present across the globe, from Argentina, to Israel, to the United States, to Central and Eastern Europe, to Canada. Sosa draws attention to the ghostly *Siluetazo* campaign of 1980s Argentina; McMillan shows how the complex racial history of the University of North Carolina haunts the symbolic landscape of the campus; Melamed describes the “haunting melodies” of commemorative videos; and both Pearce and Michlic address the absent communities that ache like phantom limbs for parts of Central and Eastern Europe. As these chapters demonstrate: “To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it” (Gordon 2008). The problem of emptiness brings up many questions about how we should think about the past. Do these spaces always need to be filled? Or, should spaces of atrocity be left empty? Is a museum always necessary? In places where the politics of history make the past an ever shifting ground, memory activists worry about leaving former spaces of atrocity empty. This, they fear, could be the first step towards erasure of the past and to forgetting. Instead, the challenge is to present “absence,” to combine the spectacular with a reflection on silences and their political meaning.

Another connecting theme throughout the volume is the practice of storytelling and its relationship to social memory. Doerr’s article shows how even in settings where storytelling from different historical and national perspectives is encouraged, the space to be heard is not equal, and

the result is often a kind of double silencing. In this process the narratives are firstly ignored and secondly drowned out by the voices of more powerful actors. In Melamed's chapter, we see how video testimony allows for the silences, repetitions, and melodies of collective memories to be read on multiple levels, imploding public and private memory spaces. And in Daniell's chapter, the author looks at a more traditional form of storytelling—the state-sponsored museum—but shows how, even in nationally funded spaces, a new reflexivity towards stories about the past is emerging.

Lastly, kitsch or the fear of kitsch runs through many of these chapters. How can the past be preserved for a mass audience without employing some of the tricks of mass culture? Do spectacular museums, souvenirs, and historically themed tours and festivals distort, damage, or silence memory? As Pearce notes, in the former East Germany there is a neologism to define a particular nostalgia—"ostalgie." The sentiments of *ostalgie* and nostalgia, more generally, tend to attach themselves to objects—often mass-produced products only available in certain places at certain times. The objects at the time of their production can now be conceived as pre-souvenirs. In the present, they are available for easy purchase at museum exhibits and themed commercial spaces devoted to these pasts. The question then is, do these objects work as memory triggers? Or, do they run the danger of simply hollowing out the past?

The chapters included in this volume address these pressing questions; they provide not definitive answers but new conceptual tools and new critical spaces for thinking about contemporary issues of social memory as affected by global and local politics, social media, technology, and "spaces of memory," both emerging and traditional. We have attempted to bring back voices of the formerly unheard, while simultaneously addressing the question of what "being heard" and "unheard" can mean, and how they function in an age of the spectacular.

Notes

1. Stewart presented the concept of "slow theory" at a talk at Eugene Lang College, The New School, in October 2010.

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