

**Book review****REVIEW OF THE BOOK**

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Odeta Žukauskienė, Žilvinė Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė. (2018). *Trajectories of memory and glance: a reflection on visual culture*. Vilnius: Lithuanian Culture Research Institute.

Odeta Žukauskienė, Žilvinė Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė. (2018). *Atminties ir žvilgsnio trajektorijos: vaizdo kultūros refleksija*. Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas.

He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments. No image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside—that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance progresses from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier.

Walter Benjamin. 2005. *A Berlin Chronicle. Selected Writings*, volume 2, part 2, 1931-1934, translated by Rodney Livingstone and others. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 597.

New book “Trajectories of Memory and Glance: a Reflection on Visual Culture” is an important contribution to the field of memory studies, which opens up a discussion about memory and visibility as two significant trajectories within the present world that have caused a culture change. This book aims to show how visual plane of memory actually covers a wide field and why memory and visibility are two “signatures” of our epoch, transforming the collective mindset. The structure of *Trajectories of Memory and Glance* is not linear: it works through the personal and collective categories of memory, nostalgia, art, culture and media, focusing

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on different groups and societies. The book consists of nine chapters that include such issues as interplay between memory and image, longing and communication, nostalgia and global consumer culture, topography of culture and memory, place and non-place, memory of Holocaust, paradigms of visibility and visuality, and others.

The authors suggest that the reason of this process – the growing importance of memory and its connection to new modes of visuality – rooted in the second half of the XX century when nostalgia intertwines with repentance, recollection with reminding, turning back our gaze to the past, complex and traumatic collective and individual experiences. Aiming at recovering memories of the faded history, it was possible to observe the growing interest for cultural heritage and testimonies of national identity. In the memory of poignant historical experiences, the withheld and suppressed content was reanimated, and it gave way to fault recognition and repentance. The logics of memory induced such processes of memorialization as immortalization of memories, outbreak of commemoration, the necessity to rescue and restore heritage. Cultural memory and memory culture there is no doubt has taken its place now as leading terms. The “vehicle of memory” includes such things as books, films, museums, commemorations, and other.

Trajectory of memory has own specific sense but at the same time it is partly match up with common definition, which means the curve described by a projectile, rocket, or the like in its flight. In geometry – a curve or surface that cuts all the curves or surfaces of a given system at a constant angle. This “constant angle” allows finding common patterns in the events, images and emotions that from the first view do not look too much similar.

The first chapter “The Interplay of Memory and Image” delves into the reciprocal action of memory and image as well as forms of the changing expression of memory and visual culture. The memory and image in the culture is constructed and conceptually updated, so that authentic surviving memory remains beyond the created representations and image systems, or requires subtle and thoughtful forms of expression. The radically changing tools, ways, forms are based on *ars memoriae*, on our own requirements for memory, which changing the depth of subjectivity and the community’s identity.

The logics of memory induced various processes of memorialization, immortalization of memories, outbreak of commemoration, the necessities to restore or ruin ambiguous past heritage, memory conflicts and memory consumption. The culture overwhelmed by images has also undergone vital transformations that extended visuality beyond cultural life – images have penetrated social and political spheres and visuality have opened new horizons of meaning. Eventually it has become a culturally legal form of capital, able to bring down the hierarchies of basic human values. From my point of view, it is a bit narrow view from the reason that “commodification” of culture is general process that includes politics, religion, sciences, moral demands and criterions. At the same time, I agree that global visuality influenced cultural and national mentalities, affecting memory reflection, mediation, communication, institutional settings. The growing powers of image have turned visuality into an active agent of political combat and the stiffening social and cultural collisions.

Authors in the search of subtle forms of memory’ expression, representation, (re)mediation pose difficult questions: Is intensifying life already vanishing from time scale, in which the past and maybe that wandering in the labyrinths of memory just pulls away from the

present? May be because of the future pushed to the futuristic perspectives of information technology? How to define the culture of memory and its diverse fields of research? What positive and disturbing signs emanate from global capitalism in memory culture? The answers to these questions we can find partly in Lithuanian historical, sociological, literature and art studies researches. This monograph has transdisciplinary view on memory through different scientific fields, concepts and approaches where every case study submits by one goal: pass them through the prism of memory revealing the social mechanisms of forgetting, its recovering and focusing on new visual modes affect these processes. The particularity of visual plane of memory is that it covers a wide cultural field: “the culture of writing is also a culture of images... the culture of writing was also an important area of cultural memory, forming a national cultural heritage and forming a cultural identity” (Žukauskienė & Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė, 2018, p. 20).

Authors formulate the purpose of book to show that modern culture has returned to the image as a powerful aesthetic tool that has emerged in all aspects of cultural and social space. The variety of case studies illustrate and deepen this purpose. Following Guy Debord's idea about growing cultural place of images and visuals have emerged, forming a “visual society” and so-called “visual turn”, they underline necessary off to develop “visual literacy” that is contributes to the confrontation against for new situations of “colonisation and self-colonisation” and can create preconditions for deeper reflection on images. This little bit utopian idea is important for Lithuanian pedagogical society, which can use global, cosmopolitan “visual literacy” as a tool for national memory and values formation and development.

At the same time, a broader perspective includes the history of Lithuanian art, photography and cinema that can be rewritten as a cultural memory story. Authors emphasizes, that for them “in the context of memory exploration it is not so important to present new facts in particular field of art, but more importantly to highlight how their meanings reach and affect the present, how they are continued, updated, changed. As past and present images, where the memories are concentrated, intervene in life, manifest themselves, and become active” (Žukauskienė & Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė, 2018, p. 20).

This context of memory gave authors possibility to look on such different events and phenomenon as interplay of memories, (re)mediation of memory, cinema as media of memory, Holocaust (re)presentations, museum culture, global visibility and cult of visibility, image activism, visual conflicts and wars, memory virtualization and digitalisation.

Nowadays in the media, we deal with the Debordian *spectacle* and Kavolian *theater*, which reduces reality to an endless fragmentation, while encouraging us to focus on appearances. Both underline that contemporary society and its culture that theatrical structure has penetrated into the inner life of man, turning it into an actor whose actions require viewers. Contemporary visual culture is close to the stage of “metaphysical theatre”. In the era of global vision, new relationships with space and time are emerging, and new experiences of cultural consumption are formed that change the trajectories of consciousness and memory. The dynamics of change in cultural identity and memory are discussed in the chapter “The Shifting Topography of Culture and Memory”, with the emphasis on features of postmodernity that have determined the multi-directional articulation of memory and the dispersion of the theoretical concepts of multiplicity and volatility. The structure of integral cultural identity and memory created in modernity was

replaced with a diversified model. Being based on the visual imperative, postmodernity substituted rational reasoning with spectacularity typical of screen culture. The authors marked that topographic identity has also undergone change. They found that the meaning of place has been overshadowed by the dynamics of non-place, which have consolidated the global dimensions and visions of memory. I agree with this conclusion but it is not only reason why territory and place have a considerable relevance: it consolidates and stabilizes the identity, language, a sense of home and boundaries that protect against others. For traditional society, the dynamics of non-place looks mostly no relevant that it was built on the territory through centuries were own cultural, religious and social topography.

I would like to focus on authors' interpretation and application of several definitions and beyond.

Nostalgia

Authors understand nostalgia not just as a sentimental longing for the past and places, which is no longer the longing. For them, nostalgia is not only an intense and pathological condition resulting from irreversibility, potential loss, and loss of consciousness. Nostalgic longing for other realities, other times, other realities, gives it the features of utopia. It has own patterns and traits such as selectivity, diversifying the fear of historical change speed and growing gap from the past, fear of identity loss. The "nostalgia for ruins" inherent in modernism was replaced over the world by discourse about memory and trauma, genocide and war. In addition, "nostalgia for ruins" created such phenomenon as memory tourism, theories of manipulation and diversification of memory. For me is interesting idea, that nostalgia and selectivity of memory give often more conservative respond to the challenge of globalization.

Holocaust

The Holocaust problematics found enough big place in the book. It is not only separate chapter named "The Regained Memory of the Jewish nation" but also it possible to find trough research of all kinds of dilemmas and suggestions about trajectories of memory and its glance. Memory reversals have been prompted by the Holocaust memory phenomenon that has crossed the borders of separate countries. The discontinued policy of silence has stimulated the processes of painful past realization and commemoration. The decolonization of this subject helped to express a more personal relationship with a history that was lacking in historical research: including what was silent, traumatic experiences, mishaps and painful bodily experiences. In the ground of this process was the paradigm, based on the universalizing Holocaust example, reflecting a variety of memories and preservation necessities, testimonies, and repentance. Today after so many tragic events of postmodern history we start looking and understanding Holocaust as dark side of totalitarian system and ideology as such that help us to pay international attention to every sing and symptom of totalitarianism. Xenophobia and negation of Other' rights are starting point of totalitarian thinking and action. I agree with idea that realizing the preserving the memory of survivors, victims and rescuers is important for history that should not be recreated and distorted by anyone.

Creativity

The memory is creative as such, it makes assemblage from different memories and remembrances, and creativity is driven by memory. Firstly, it means that for any creativity task, it is crucial to find memories that will help you to perform the task. Secondly, creative insights always come from combinations of existing memories. New ideas, vision of events, evaluation of history and own life don't just appear out of air. They build on existing memories, imaginations, and perceptions, which we stored in your mind over the years. Juri Lotman distinguished two kinds of cultural memory: informative and creative memory. He underlines that creative cultural memory opposite to time and cultural memory as such is grounded on interaction between codes and texts. As a result, creative memory became a new way of events and texts interpretation, reinterpretation and encoding.

Examples and citations

The book replete with many examples, which illustrate every theoretic idea and detail from arts, historical, cultural and social facts. Sometimes it looks as too much but get a grasp I understood narrative multilevel and interdisciplinary: it expands the circle of readers, connects exclusive theory with everyday political and cultural life.

The monograph features reference to the methodological attitudes and reflections of famous memory researchers: Andreas Huyssen, Svetlana Boym, Aleida and Jan Assmann, Ulrich Beck, Michael Rothberg, Astrid Erll, Marianne Hirsch, Paul Ricoeur, Bernard Stiegler and others. In addition, it analyses research in visual culture and art criticism, cultural anthropology, sociology, philosophy and media. The authors expanded and complimented the field of theoretical thought, as well as transferring theoretical concepts into the Lithuanian context. This transdisciplinary and multi-branched approach reveals the more general structures at the core of the present world which are responsible for the hybridity and ambivalence of visual and memory cultures, exposes contemporary dynamics of capitalism, criticism of cultural industries and industrialisation of memory.

The civic open society is impossible without pass barrier of consumer ideology and political instrumentalization. The quotations are relevant and informative. These quotations as such help for readers to imagine wider international context that especially concerns to understand civilization and global crisis and its discourse. European migration crises and the process of border's deconstruction confirm this conclusion.

The authors paint a complex and controversial but tranquil picture of memory trajectories in the contemporary world. I hope that this book will resonate with current cultural discourse and inspire further research in visual culture and memory.