H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jose van Dijck. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age: Cultural Memory in the Present.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. 232 pp. $21.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8047-5624-2.

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Published on H-DigiRhet (May, 2008)

In *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, Jose van Dijck proposes a conceptual tool for theorizing emerging intersections among the fields of neuropsychology, media and technology studies, and critical cultural studies in terms of memory construction and (re)mediation. Dijck spends the first two chapters defining the specific coordinates of overlap among these disciplines, and what each offers to the project of theorizing mediated memories. Then, in successive chapters, Dijck examines three technologies that both determine and are determined by physiological and cultural memory formation. Although Dijck relies on repetition of ideas and themes to solidify her points, the reader should begin with the first two chapters to become familiar with the particular facets of the divergent disciplines the author seeks to (re)unite. With this grounding, the reader can take the remaining chapters in any order depending on his/her interests and lose nothing of the overarching theory with this hypertextual movement.

Dijck's purpose in chapter 1, "Mediated Memories as a Conceptual Tool," is to establish the need for a cross-disciplinary conceptual tool that takes into account the notion that "'personal' and 'cultural' are the threads that bind memory's texture: they can be distinguished, but they can never be separated" (p. 6). What is at stake in this interpretation of cultural memory is a blurring of the boundaries of public and private, as well as of individual and community. In building her case for the transdisciplinary study of how memories are both formed and are formed by forces of biology, technology, and culture, Dijck must confront scholars who study these forces in isolation and who posit the contingency of memory and media on one another based on "a set of fallacious binary oppositions" (p. 15). Such arguments posit memory as ***either*** internal ***or*** external, as corporeal (real) ***or*** technological (artificial). Further, media are "qualified ***either*** in terms of their private use ***or*** of their public deployment, as mediators of respectively personal ***or*** collective memory" (p. 15, italics mine). To uphold the "strong defense," Dijck sets out to show how these binaries are false dichotomies, and, rather than have the terms situated at odds with one another (an either/or grammar), she demonstrates how they are in continual

"dialectical" tension with one another (a both/and grammar).[1] In her words, "Memory is not mediated by media, but media and memory transform each other" (p. 21). Crucial to the understanding of mediated memories is that they "should be understood as a process," one that is not static in time or place (p. 22). Dijck's rationale for the creation of her conceptual tool is that theorists, like Marita Sturken, "approach cultural memory from the right angle of collectivity.... In contrast, this book approaches memories from the opposite direction, privileging private memory objects, regardless of whether they have gained recognition in the public realm" (p. 23).

In chapter 2, "Memory Matters in the Digital Age," Dijck focuses on the "matter" of memory. Her thesis in this chapter follows the grammar of the strong (both/and) arguments established in the previous chapter. She states, "Mediated memory objects ... can be located ***neither*** strictly in the brain ***nor*** wholly outside in (material) culture but exist in ***both*** concurrently, for they are manifestations of a complex interaction between brain, material objects, and the cultural matrix from which they arise" (p. 28, italics mine). Citing recent developments in neuroscience, Dijck aligns herself with those who posit a reconsolidation theory of memory. If, according to the reconsolidation scheme, memories are located both within the brain and outside of it in affective objects and if memories are capricious, then the weak argument, which Dijck refutes, is that memory and personal memory objects can be separated out from the technologies that create them and the cultures in which they are born.

To bolster the claim that personal memories have important social value, Dijck cites Michel Foucault's notion of "technologies of truth and self" (p. 39). Paradoxically, technologies of self are "technologies of sharing," which promote the blurring of boundaries between self and community, between personal memory and public experience. Dijck argues that digitization of memory objects makes them ***more*** social, ***more*** malleable, and ***more*** susceptible to eventual destruction: "By nature of their creation, many digital memory items are becoming networked objects, constructed in the commonality of the World Wide Web in constant interaction with other people, even anonymous audiences. Technologies of self are--even more so than before--technologies of sharing" (p. 48).

In the following chapter, "Writing the Self," Dijck's objectives are to show how diary writing--and, by extension, blogging--is both individual and communal, and that it is also both private and public (again, the strong argument). Just as she argues against the "default mode" of diaries as ***only*** personal, Dijck also points out that it is just as fallacious to ascribe a default mode of blogs as ***only*** communal by virtue of their presence online. Dijck notes, "Reciprocity is not a standard feature of blogs: still half of all Internet diaries are nonreciprocal" (p. 71). Additionally, Dijck claims that insomuch as blogging is a discursive event, the ability for bloggers to choose (via the functionality of their blogging software) who will constitute their readership is a rhetorical outcome, one that demonstrates that "intimacy and privacy as well as openness and publicness are less intrinsic features of the genre than implications of technological scripts and users' choices" (p. 72).

Dijck concludes the chapter by considering the implications of diaries-gone-digital. Here, she makes two important points. She states, "In the life of bloggers the medium is not the message but ***the medium is the experience***. If the meaning of experience is slowly changing, so is the meaning of memory.... Although the Internet is often characterized as a transient, evanescent medium, lifelogs have both the ability to fix and the potential to morph" (p. 75). These statements are in line with one of the main argumentative strands that run throughout the book--namely, that memory is as malleable as the technologies that contribute to the creation and emendation of memory objects.

Dijck further draws out the interconnectedness of personal and cultural memory by examining recorded popular music, its associated technologies, and its forums in chapter 4, "Record and Hold." She discusses neurocognitive and cultural-semiotic theories driving explanations regarding memory's embodiment in both the brain and in "musical signs" that allow us to rationally interpret and viscerally appreciate music. To make explicit the link between personal autobiographical memory and cultural memory with regard to these theories, Dijck examines narrative comments left by thousands of listeners on Dutch (Public) Radio 2's "Top 2000" Web site. She explains that the Top 2000 is a listener-enabled cultural and musical event in which people from all over the world submit their picks for the top five greatest pop songs. Along with each selection, listeners sometimes include short narratives in which they expound on their lived or mnemonic experience(s) related to the song(s). It is from these personal-turned-collective narratives that Dijck derives (admittedly nonempirical) data pertaining to the notion that "the unmistakable intertwining of personal and collective memory ... is obvious: narratives about music often braid private reminiscences into those of others or connect them to larger legacies" (p. 85). In addition, Dijck points out that the technology through which a recorded piece of music is experienced is often inextricably bound to the memory of the song itself. She notes, "In semiotic terms, the indexical function of the musical sign is bound up with its auditory materiality: hearing a familiar song on the radio constitutes a different memory experience than playing that very song from one's own collection" (p. 90). She again uses narratives from the Top 2000 to substantiate her claims.

While Dijck concedes that many of the enabling technologies of the last forty years allowed users to privatize their listening experiences (i.e., transistor radios, walkmen, discmen) and that such private listening experiences are vital to the formation of personal identity, she lucidly notes that being able to compile idiosyncratic collections of music encourages the dissemination of this personal music in collective situations. Dijck points to mixtapes, burned CDs, and remixes as signifiers that demonstrate "an individual's desire to contribute to the formation of communal tastes and group identity" (p. 93). She concludes the chapter by hailing the Dutch Top 2000 as an event in which the collective cry for a "creative commons" is met (p. 97).

The fifth chapter, "Pictures of Life, Living Pictures," explores how the uses and function of the camera have evolved in tempo with the shift from the analogue to the digital age, and the implications this shift has on personal memory, cultural memory, and patterns of individuation and social interaction. Dijck cites Roland Barthes's work on photographic subjugation to invoke one of the chapter's main points: the issue of personal control of mediated memories in the networked age. Dijck does well to point out that image manipulation (an aspect of personal control) is not new to digitization. What *is* new with respect to the ubiquity of digital camera technologies and the issue of control is the practice of digital image performance and recontextualization. Dijck observes, for example, that camera phones "permit entirely new performative rituals, such as shooting a picture at a live concert and instantly e-mailing the image to a friend. Emerging digital tools are thus deeply affecting the way people socialize and interact and, by extension, the way they maintain relationships and consolidate them into personal memory" (p. 110). She concludes the chapter by arguing that the movement from analogue pictures to digital ones affords individuals both more and less control. After elucidating the potentially disastrous consequences of image recontextualization using the Abu Ghraib photographs as a telling example, Dijck sums up the double-edged nature of control when she says, "We may hail the increased manipulability of our self-image due to digital photography while at the same time we re-

sent the loss of power over our pictorial framing in public contexts" (p. 120).

In contrast to the still images discussed in the previous chapter, the focus of chapter 6, "Projecting the Family's Future Past," is on moving images. Dijck's goal here, as before, is to lay out contemporary theories of (home) movies, memory, and video-enabling technologies' role in constructing identity and culture. Although she lauds the neurobiological work done by Antonio Damasio in the area of mental image maps ("movies-in-the-brain") and Gilles Deleuze's philosophizing on the nature of memory as an act in the present that is always in "a state of becoming," she contends that the work of these and related thinkers does not go far enough in positing also the interconnectedness of culture in the mind/body/technology paradigm (pp. 125-126). To demonstrate her thesis that "all mental and technological constructs of past family life are always also social and cultural constructs," Dijck adopts the theory of "home mode" developed by James Moran (p. 131). In brief, home mode is defined as "a historically changing effect of technological, social, and cultural determinations--a set of discursive codes that helps us negotiate the meaning of individuals in response to their shared environment" (p. 131). Examining portrayals of family life via mainstream television in the 1950s, personal camcorders in the 1960s and 1970s, and documentary cameras in the 1980s and 1990s (through the theoretical lens of home mode) leads Dijck to some interesting observations regarding cultural norms and personal and cultural memory. After elaborating on specific shows (such as ***An American Family*** and ***The Osbournes***) with respect to the technologies involved in filming these depictions of family life and the impact the shows had on popular conceptions of how families function in a historical and personal context, Dijck concludes, "While (cognitive) philosophers show little interest in the sociological component of converging brains-cum-apparatuses, cultural theorists such as Moran tend to disregard mental-cognitive functions when describing the home mode. And yet, I think we need a merger of both approaches" (p. 139).

The last part of the chapter is spent discussing the implications the 2003 documentary ***Capturing the Friedmans*** has on what families regard as their past. Since the documentary is a montage of different types of mediated familial and public images, and since the events that transpire in the life of the Friedmans (and in the film) remain perpetually unclear due to conflicting testimony and video evidence, Dijck uses the documentary to again assert that "memories never just are; they are always in a state of becoming," and that "remembered families are ... projected families--the simultaneous products of mind and matter, and home and Hollywood. Therefore, the future of memory will be determined as much by our tools for remembering as by our imaginations" (p. 145).

In chapter 7, "From Shoebox to Digital Memory Machine," Dijck analyzes four recent efforts by software designers and commercial interests to design a "memory machine" similar (in concept) to Vannevar Bush's memex. As Dijck repeatedly points out, efforts to build a viable memory machine have failed because they erroneously posit a one-way interaction between the mind and machine, rather than allowing for a discursive interconnectedness in which each shapes the other. Ultimately, Dijck is disappointed with the memory machines because the research behind them does not reflect transdisciplinary efforts. If software engineers collaborated with psychologists, neurobiologists, cultural anthropologists, and new media theorists, they might devise a machine that does work on the multiple planes of interaction Dijck discusses throughout the book--the interconnectedness of mind, technology, and culture. This type of fruitful interaction across disciplines could result in the construction of a machine that not only houses digitized memories, but also accounts for the mutability and creativity inherent to memory, as well as the idea that the very tech-

nologies that enable memory production play a crucial role in the memories that are produced. Such a machine would not be exclusionary by any respect; it would work from the premise that "memories are narratives as well as artifacts, performances as well as objects--things that work in everyday lives and cultures of people" (p. 169).

In *Mediated Memories*, Dijck thinks through what is becoming ubiquitous scholarly conversation. By focusing on memory as the psychobiological concept under study and by interrogating--via social phenomena (the Dutch Top 2000, blogging, etc.)--how tools of technology not only shape but are also shaped by the physiological processes of memory construction, Dijck makes a strong case for transdisciplinary study of the intersections of the brain, technologies, and cultures.

Note

[1]. Richard A. Lanham "The 'Q' Question," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (1988): 653-700.