

media are tools, it depends on what one does with them' argument? Or is it simply a matter of relative numbers of users for dominant/resistant purposes (in which case, it would seem, hegemonic media practices will generally prevail)? The authors seem to imply that their argument is more comprehensive and structural in nature: that something in the banality and triviality of standard social media use pushes it in ways that are fundamentally acquiescent politically. But what that something is and how it functions remain questions that are not entirely resolved here. In this sense, *Digital Militarism* continues – and in some places kicks off – an important theoretical conversation regarding the interplay of social media, technology and ideology. For any number of theoretical and political reasons, it is important that this conversation proceeds.

## References

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*Communicating Awe: Media Memory and Holocaust Commemoration*, Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2014; 185 pp.: £60.00

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This is a very interesting study, clearly articulated, of Hebrew Israeli media content and production on the official Israeli holiday officially known as the 'Remembrance Day for the Holocaust and the Heroism' (hence, Holocaust Remembrance Day or HRD). It will be of much interest for scholars of memory of the Holocaust, of media memory, for Israeli scholars who focus on the political and cultural role of the Holocaust in Israeli culture and more broadly for those who study the way societies build and confront the memory of major traumatic event.

The first chapter, on the press, has most historical depth. It is an analysis of eight daily newspapers from the early 1950s to the 1990s. In particular, it illuminates the political struggles between some different subgroups of Israeli Jewish society: the choice of the day, the content of the commemoration, nothing was obvious. It shows how the mainstream Zionist hegemony triumphed here, as in other fields. Witness, for example, the way the ultra-Orthodox newspaper had to acknowledge the official date in the end, if only 'by publishing articles which opposed it' (p. 28). The chapter also discusses the choice of the people who were given the authority to write, especially the kind of witness, a category emerged slowly as in the beginning this was a question of 'memory

without rememberers' (Zertal, quoted p. 34). The conclusion of the chapter is crucial: almost all newspapers (except *Haaretz* and the ultra-Orthodox one) presented the Holocaust as a trauma that belongs 'also to the here and now' (p. 55).

The second chapter is an analysis of radio content. It is based on an analysis of the songs played on HRD from 1993 to 2002. From the point of view of cultural analysis, this is the most original part, as this material is often neglected. One sees how a specific sonic landscape was created, with a given repertoire played over and over again. The content is made of slow, sad, lyrical songs, whose words (p. 69) refer to sad feelings, to romantic landscapes, to poetic metaphors, but, with little, if at all, to the events of the Holocaust itself, and obviously not in the language of the event but in modern Hebrew. The authority to perform is linked to the relation with the Holocaust of composers, performers: which mean mainstream Israeli, Ashkenazi music at least on national stations. Of special interest is the analysis of the programming of local radio stations, with their divergences according to culture and location (for example, a Tel Aviv radio station is the only one which allows itself some international songs).

The third chapter is devoted to an analysis of the programming of public channel 1 and commercial channel 2, from 1994 to 2009, from 7:30 p.m. to midnight. The authors compare routine programming with Holocaust Day programming. Much like for radio, some genres are considered 'fit' for the Holocaust: first, documentary; second, news; and third, live state ceremonies. Some genres disappear: reality, comedy. Only channel 2 broadcasts drama. Overall, the channels tend to converge, or, rather, commercial channel 2 gets closer to public channel 1. There is almost no foreign content (some documentary). Strikingly, the victims are all Jewish, and the Holocaust becomes a purely Jewish event. Overall, the authors conclude, television offers an opportunity to participate in a 'mourning ritual' which is Jewish and highly consensual.

Chapter 4 is devoted to an analysis of the interviews with the professionals involved in Holocaust Day programming. Again, the question of authority is central: and persons linked to the Holocaust (children of survivors, especially) feature prominently. This is the chapter where most contradictions emerge, relatively to the ritualistic, consensual view of Holocaust Day suggested in some parts of the book. Some producers mention the fact that if you want to draw attention to a specific Holocaust-related programme, it is best NOT to programme it on Holocaust Day. A rather unsaid (publicly) constraint is the fact that costs should be cut on that day for channel 2, as it does not broadcast advertisements. The chapter also provides an interesting discussion of 'border management', or the way the newscasts 'guide the audience' in and out of the ritual space of Holocaust Day. The news is in a paradoxical position, as they should be devoted to novelty and yet must deal with the past: so the solution is to focus 'more on the current way in which the past is remembered' (p. 142).

The book has interesting, but not clear-cut, theoretical implications as it is not based on a single, overarching framework. From the title, and the opening sentence, it seems to adopt a functional, straightforward view of communication: 'how can a society communicate awe? How can an event so markedly positioned at the limits of human experience be mass mediated in a manner that is intelligible and meaningful yet retain the aura of awe' (p. 1). In the introduction, the authors also emphasize Durkheimian sociology and propose to analyse the operation of Israeli media on Holocaust Day as a media ritual.

Yet, as we shall see, the book does not suggest that the media simply communicate awe and does not propose an analysis of a single, major media ritual. It does both more, and less than that, in a way which is not devoid of tensions and contradictions.

The book moves away from the notion of 'communicating awe', and from ritual, when it resorts to LaCapra's (via Freud) psychoanalytic categories of 'acting out' and 'working through' (pp. 15, 54, 154). It proposes an overall interpretation of the content analysed as 'acting out'. What the media would do is to suggest an experience of the historical trauma as reoccurring, 'to the extent that the past, the present and the future become indistinguishable'. This is opposed to 'working through', a mode of confronting a collective trauma which (quoting LaCapra): 'implies the possibility of judgment that is ... Argumentative, self-questioning and related to mediated ways to action' (p. 154). But these notions are not closely articulated with the content, and, even theoretically, with reception. Obviously, the authors are limited by methodology: 'acting out' and 'working through' are psychoanalytic notion elaborated by doctors observing patients. It is not easy to operationalize them as a collective level (focus groups? analysis of talk shows, especially phone ins? individual interviews?). Besides, not all media contents proposed in the book corroborate the opposition between 'acting out' and 'working through'. It is not sure if it fits the analysis of music, which seems to be about a general sentimentalization of the Holocaust, neither 'acting out' nor 'working through'. More is needed here.

However, the theoretical framework most discussed in the book is also, in my view, the most relevant: the political struggle around memory (no psychoanalysis is needed here, and no integrative ritual is described). Chapter 1, especially, and chapter 2 are rich in suggestions in this respect, and to a less extent Chapter 4, showing both consensus on key points (e.g. the Holocaust as central to Israeli identity, the state of Israel as proper answer – hence, the privilege given to testimonies of survivors who live in Israel, p. 152) and the strong divisions even within Jewish (Ashkenazi) Israel. One could go deeper and wonder about those who are excluded from the Holocaust discourse. The Mizrahim are obviously at stake: what can a population from Arab countries do with an event which was European, about European Jews? There is only a reference to some Mizrahi music broadcast by a local radio. Furthermore, the fifth of the Israeli population known as Israeli Arabs are exposed to a collective memory which is definitely not theirs, and sometimes treat them as enemy when Arab enemies are metaphorized as Nazis. There is one reference to Arabs, through a 1988 article of *Haaretz*, in keeping with the comment that this is the only newspaper 'that consistently calls for critical and reflexive self-examination of the Israeli Holocaust discourse' (p. 42). What happens to these audiences? But also to other Jewish minorities?

An analysis of the politics of memory could also be articulated to the collective psychoanalytic view of the trauma. 'Trauma as identity' (acting out) certainly blocks reflexivity. It is also extraordinarily exclusionary for those who do not feel they are part of a history reduced to the traumatic event endlessly repeating itself (or, in the mouth of politicians, endlessly threatening to repeat itself). A Mizrahi Tel Aviv University professor who grew up among families of survivors told me about the mystery which surrounded their lives and half-jokingly said that he had suffered from 'Shoah envy'. But maybe this is the topic of another book ...