Review of

Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading (eds) Save As ... Digital Memories. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009

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This review traces some of the important achievements of *Save As...Digital Memories* (Garde-Hansen et al.: 2009). This collected edition will no doubt offer a variety of resources for researchers interested in how new digital technologies are affecting memory. For the most part, the contributing authors have suspended certain political and moral judgements regarding what is at stake for memory, and by extension humanity, in a digital society. And so it would be hard to read this collection of articles as a call to arms for humanist technophobes or anti-humanist technophiles alike. Instead each contribution to the edition details and explores certain peculiarities that memory, in digital contexts, faces. A shared research orientation, 'that any attempt to save memory always entails loss and forgetting as well as additions and supplements' (p19), steers the edition through a rich variety of digital projects, events and media. As such, the organization of these diverse interests is useful and lends itself to the systematic mood of the edition; this involves a structure that divides chapters around three general themes, they are discourses, forms and practices.

Andrew Hoskins' discussion of the mediatisation of memory opens the first of these sections. Hoskins notes three unique conditions of the digitization of memory discourses that include increase in access, visibility and mobility (p29). The gravity of these novel features "blurs" the dichotomy of personal and public memory for individuals involved in memory-making within mediatised networks (p40). These networks suppose a particular space for inserting memories, rather than Big Media or elite institutions, these spaces are constituted at the 'interstitial level of social life'. Now imbued with the 'softness of a media-memoryscape' (p29), Hoskins concludes, these networks produce a new media ecology. A sense of the interstitial character of space is shared in Paul Arthur's chapter. Arthur details

the democratizing possibility for saving "ordinary" lives through online biographies. He notes that publishing and recording biographic details no longer rests exclusively with elites. However, we should suspect the 'other side of this free and egalitarian digital world' that Arthur argues 'is chaotic and uncontrolled – a free-for all' (p51). The same technologies that allow life stories to reach wide audiences also expose those lives to ugly politics of self-promotion and capricious desires of social network providers. In concluding Arthur questions whether the 'emancipatory trend will actually work against the saving of 'ordinary' lives for prosperity' (p57). Sidney Eve Matrix then hones analysis on editing memory discourses, which she finds has the effect of bringing the past and future into unprecedented relations. Hollywood cyberpunk films such as *Vanilla Sky, The Final Cut, and Minority Report* reveal that narrating memories always involves editing; what Matrix describes as a kind of digital memory work. The novelty the cyberpunk genre offers in this regard is experimentation with cyborgian and synthetic desires that in turn results in a kind of "technoshamanism" (p70). Matrix argues the depiction in films of shared pasts, irony, technolust, utopia and social criticism, highlights how these 'mnemonic technologies enlarges human functionality' (p72).

In the course of discussing the mediatisation of memory, Hoskins poses the question 'what would Maurice Halbwachs have made of such formations?' (2009:29). One frequently overlooked aspect of Halbwachs' work involves his distinction between personal memory and a kind of technical memory. Halbwachs (1992) distinguishes between the two by referring to the zones of personal relations and the zones of technical relations. Consider for a moment the incredible capacity of clerks to recall an elaborate index of data, or administrators to negotiate intricate bureaucracies, managers using overcomplicated command systems, and barristers that spontaneously cite precedent. These isolated moments of recall present zones of relations when they cause technical outcomes, such as an acquittal or sanctioning a promotion. These and many other aspects of working life have been digitized as a result of post-Fordist ideas about work practices. Surely, then, the digitization of memory discourses is a situation that presses urgently upon subjectivities-at-work. These zones of technical relations are rife with the issues of memory-making that Hoskins notes, the democracy Paul Arthur is concerned for, and the editing that Matrix highlights. We might well agree with Terranova that the 'digital economy, then, challenged the postmodern assumption that labour disappears while the commodity takes on and

dissolves all meaning' (Terranova, 2004:90). Now, after *Save as...Digital Memories*, it would be interesting to play on Hoskins terms, and ask what a political economy of memory-making might involve.

The second section of the edition is concerned with digital memory forms. Anna Reading opens the section by drawing attention to what she calls wearable memories. The appendage of digital memories to the body, in the form of mobile phone images, modifies forms of self-narration (p86). As a result, Reading argues, the stock of shared stories in society changes in nature and becomes live; a shift from I *was* at *x* location to I *am* at *x* location. Furthermore, the development of mobile technologies to incorporate photography implies frequent multimodal capture of the unfolding of one's life experiences. In data form, these digitized memories enjoy a seamless network life facilitated by Bluetooth, MMS and/or email. Reading calls the emergence of memory in this digital form "memobilia". Ultimately she finds these 'allow for a wearable archive, that can be both deeply personal and playful, as well as seriously panoptical' (p92). The chapter by Andrew Jakubowicz follows the development of the webumentary – *The Menorah Project*, which commemorates the migration and settlement of Jews in Shanghai during the twentieth century. Jakubowicz finds the emergence of interactivity of online resources post-web 2.0 that invite an unprecedented tactility to digitized memory forms. The webumentary organized the artefacts, discourses, people and affects of the past in a topographic form; an arrangement Jakubowicz concludes could prove valuable for mediating academic research in the future (p112). Bruno Lessard is also interested in the mediation of academic work in his chapter outlining Jean-Louis Boissier's efforts to archive on CD-ROM the work of Rousseau. The indexation of Rousseau's writing allows Boissier, through hyperlink, to cinematographically present text and image; what the archivist calls a "dramaturgy of interactivity". In concluding, Lessard makes an interesting observation regarding the temporality of the archive which 'does not engage Rousseau's past as past; it concerns the revivification of Rousseau's past from a future perspective' (p126).

The governing aspect of demonstrative memory forms, such as monuments and public silences, is well documented (Brown, 2011). However, the insights presented in the three chapters outlined above expose of how digital forms bring forth new subjugations and micro-emancipations in mundane as

well as profound aspects of social life. Most people are familiar with what is paid for access to memobilia is commitment to an eighteen or twenty four month phone contract. It is the case that digital memories impose upon the future, as well as finance, in the form of a contract. Recognising that a digital memoryscape might also be an apparatus of control invites researchers in the future to interrogate how the economic grid of global capitalism is both challenged and reinvented by digitization.

The final section of the edition concerns practice. Joanne Garde-Hansen's contribution shares Paul Arthur's interest in social network sites (SNSs). For Garde-Hansen, the maintenance of structure, identity and ideology of SNSs implies the appropriation of a user's creative exteriorisation of personal memory to the imperative of corporate memory (p136). That 'digital memories are practiced and performed rather than simply recorded and shared' (p142) exposes the limitation of the online "architecture" that spatialises memory practices. Despite disciplining the user to 'engage with the archiving archive', Garde-Hansen sees these power relations necessarily shifting with the rise of what she calls the *prosumer* (producer *qua* consumer); particularly as younger people, endowed with more leisure time, familiarise with digital practices quicker than those burdened with work lives. In a similar way, Margaret Anne Clarke is concerned with personal memory practices in institutionalised settings, but finds a more sanguine fervour in the case of the online Brazilian Museu da Pessoa. The virtual museum project hosts some six thousand citizen narratives and the topography of the museum simultaneously allows discourse and image to map the "plurality of the nation" in a way that 'counteract the inherent dangers of homogenisation, loss of local cultural identities and widened social divisions' (p164). Jenny Kidd's contribution to the edition details a participatory project organized by BBC Wales. Project *Capture Wales* has helped over 500 members of the Welsh public to digitize life stories through a process of workshops and familiarity with video editing software. Within the iterative process of rehearsing narrative stories Kidd finds the 'idea of permanence itself has become myopic, and archives (full of *wholes* yet simultaneously full of *holes*) go against the very notion of memory in the twenty-first century' (p180). In the final chapter of the edition Shaun Wilson challenges *perfect* and *imperfect* notions of memory. Wilson describes the bricolage of cultural work found in forums such as wikis, youtube and blogging, a kind of digital *détournement*, where hitting the delete

key can be a dangerous historicisation of infallible and emotionless digital data. This suggests superficially the mechanisation of the human capacity to forget, fictionalise and edit difficult pasts. However, Wilson quickly makes problematic any humanist distinction between man and machine, noting that digital architectures often incorporate *versions* of the past similar to the way renovation simulates earlier architecture and forgets the process of disrepair, i.e. broken hyperlinks.

The findings noted here will no doubt bear upon debates about knowledge and power. Michel Foucault (2008) argued that, during the twentieth century, the market became the site of veridiction. Because of a particular epistemological ability to measure population and security the market produces new subjects of knowledge. The digital trends in memory practices described above suggest that the market, though implicated in digitization, no longer exercises sovereign control of truth production. Readers of *Save as...Digital Memories* will recognise a displacement and digitization of the locus of truth production has occurred. Contemporary apparatuses for sharing knowledge about the past, producing digital memories, clearly have implications for the production of new truths. The challenge for research in the future is to interrogate those mutations between producing analogue truths and the emerging truths that new digital practices are producing and sustaining; drawing on Foucault's famous studies we might anticipate a future of cyber-sexuality, digital-discipline and cyborg-madness, couched in of digital memory discourses.

To close, as a result of the publication of this collected edition, researchers will no doubt respond to emerging challenges in memory studies in ways that are suspicious of the democratic function of digitization, attentive to the idiosyncratic personal memories of digital users, and informed in contemporary forms of the mediation of memory. The introduction to the issue announces a challenge to a series of commonplace dualisms held in social sciences and hard sciences, including: old/new, history/memory, organic/inorganic (p77). Accordingly, the edition will not fail to set new trajectories for future research in memory studies; particularly in a field where interdisciplinary studies are most likely to afford new insights into digital memories.

References

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