



Cultures of Memory: Memory Culture, Memory Crisis and the Age of Amnesia

Marty Roth

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There is no work in English that covers the field historically and across disciplines as this one does. It gives researchers in many disciplines the full picture of the range of memory studies and once more shows us the critical value of having a memory culture that is an essential construct of civilization and literary and historical culture. This study focuses on several centers, among them the opposition between passive and active models of memory, the split between singular and plural memory, the memory crises of the last two centuries that so deeply marked modern and postmodern consciousness, and the technological outsourcing of memory, first denounced by Plato, which shadows its subsequent configurations. These clusters relate to one another but do not form a smooth line of development, hence the book offers a fascinating albeit somewhat challenging ride. This work is at once a critical survey and an organization of memory studies. While the project features the masters of modern memory, notably Bergson, Proust, Maurice Halbwachs, and Benjamin, its two governors are Nietzsche and Freud. Both accomplished revolutions in the field of memory: Nietzsche reversed the polarity of remembering and forgetting, forging an association of memory with pain and sickness and of forgetting with pleasure and health. Freud persuaded growing sections of the intellectual community that memory did not transparently recover past experience, that the division between memory and fantasy was a problematic one at best, and that the mind had mechanisms of its own that could fabricate the effects of naive memory.

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