

## **New media, new memory: 'oppositional' media, the remembering subject and the regulation of memory**

*Panel proposal for the 2011 IAMHIST Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark*

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Discussant : TBD

Memory pre-supposes an interest, indeed an investment, in the past. Thought on memory in the tradition of Halbwachs has stressed that such investment is also by its nature social: individual memory is only viable insofar as it is explicable in terms of an (imagined) collectivity of remembering subjects. As memory becomes increasingly mediated (Hoskins), so too are the social frameworks in which individuals are enmeshed, a situation which demands increasing work on the part of the individual to assemble and reconcile memories within a range of available frameworks. At the same time, however, the configuration of media platforms is not done freely by individuals but also by institutions that produce both media and content (Müller 2009). The construction of a freely (self-)remembering subject is thus also potentially accompanied by structures that limit modes of interpretation and memory.

This panel places these dynamics in a longer term perspective, exploring the nexus of media transitions, social formations and the re-inscription of memory within and across media platforms. Exploring different historical moments and different media, each paper shows how oppositional social formations (Protestant communities in the early modern era, pop music listeners in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Tea Party movement in present-day America) have embraced new media forms (printed Bibles, portable radios, internet blogs) to generate new media spaces and cultural practices that emphasize the individual work of the interpreting and remembering subject. At the same time, as each paper demonstrates, these interpretative spaces have been formatted to guide remembrance in specific ideological paths, and normally away from the configuring power itself. Taken together, the panel 's papers seek to chart the implications of these paradoxical dynamics across a range of disciplinary fields, from media studies to theology.

Literature:

Andrew Hoskins, 2009 'The Mediatization of Memory' in Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading, eds. *Save As: Digital Memories* (Palgrave) pp. 27-43

Eggo Müller, 2009 'Formatted Spaces of Participation. Interactive Television and the Changing Relationship Between Production and Consumption' in M. van den Boomen et al, *Digital Material: Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology* (Amsterdam UP) pp. 49-63.

Panel proposal "New media, new memory" Individual Papers:

**The Bible as "remembering machine": encoding Protestant identity through printed Scripture**

David Dault

The Protestant Reformation coincided with the birth of mechanical print technologies. Part of the Reformation's effectiveness in spreading its message stems from its use of rhetorics that, on their surface, undermine and contravene traditioned readings and interpretations of Scripture, with claims that the "true" or "proper" interpretation comes only from the *de novo* interaction of reader, text and Spirit. However, far from actually creating a "tradition-less" form of media, the Reformation instead created conditions under which "it was the *printed* text of Scripture that interpreted itself" (Edwards 1994, 115). That is, the process of designing and printing a Bible edition involved the visual and editorial encoding of elaborate (and often covert) guides to lead the reader to the "right interpretation" of the text. In this manner, a given edition of the Bible becomes a "remembering machine," a media device implemented to produce a certain theological identity in its readers even as other editions are producing alternate and competing theological identities. In fact, the overt rhetorics of interpretive independence can be seen to aid the total impact conveyed by the covert mechanisms of hermeneutic dependence encoded into the printed media. This paper will both illustrate this process (using examples from images of archival copies of incunabular and medieval Bibles -- such as the 1520 *Luther Werke* edition of sermons housed at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO, and the 1522 Luther "September Testament" and the 1576 Geneva Bible, both in the archives of the Pitts Theological Library at Emory University in Atlanta, GA -- as well as modern contemporary editions such as the Zondervan *Stewardship Study Bible* and the Thomas Nelson *Mossy Oak Great Outdoors Bible*) and offer an analysis of how these "media-driven identities" played, and continue to play, a role in shaping the landscape of religious identity in Europe and, to an even greater extent, in America.

Literature:

Mark U. Edwards, Jr. *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

**David Dault** (1971) is Assistant Professor of Catholic Studies at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee. He has a PhD in Theological Studies from Vanderbilt University. He is a founding member and board member for the Society for Comparative Research in Iconic and Performative Texts (SCRIPT) and is editor of the online forum *Material Scripture*. His book, *The Accessorized Bible*, is forthcoming from Yale University Press.

**Pirates, incorporated: offshore broadcasting and the commemoration of pop music radio**

Alexander Badenoch

Michael Curtis's 2009 comedy *The Boat That Rocked* is merely the latest in a long line of popular commemorations of the commercial offshore 'pirate' broadcasters that began in the late 1950s off the coast of Denmark and continued throughout the 1960s. While most stations were stopped by legislation and incorporation into legal, terrestrial frameworks by the mid-1960s, nostalgia for the stations began almost before they stopped, and, ironically, many

commemorations have since come from the very bodies that initially fought them. Such retrospectives have focussed selectively on a relatively narrow range of visual, technological and acoustic markers as indexical signs of the 'pirate' phenomenon, particularly its links to the emerging youth movements and mobile urban cultures of the period.

This paper takes such selective commemorations as a point of departure to investigate how changing modes of radio listening and pop music production helped to generate a memory culture surrounding them that was later incorporated into broader national memories. It focusses primarily on the stations off the British coast, but also notes parallels from the Netherlands and Nordic countries. It argues that the so-called 'pirates' mobilized certain configurations of the medium around forms of personal self-commemoration. Their flows of programming were geared to more mobile and exploratory forms of listening (in part long since envisaged by set makers and wireless guides), in which radio programmes could be activated more or less 'on demand' to allow mobile listeners – normally youth – to claim times and spaces as personal. The stations' marking of time, in turn, with a focus on live, personable DJs and up-to-date charts and music, offered possibilities to understand such moments in terms of a broader social framework. While pop music was only one portion of most stations' output, it is these elements around which practices of personal memory have been repeatedly structured, and away from the commercial interests of the stations.

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### **Constituting the Tea Party: New Media, New Memory, New Democratic Engagement**

Katy Scrogin

The growth of the various movements in the United States known collectively as the "Tea Party" is notable for its supporters' tendency to accept and to propagate assertions of questionable facticity. In crafting a version of national memory -- e.g., the Founders intended America to be a Christian nation, and the denial that contemporary Constitutional interpretations by the Supreme Court have validity -- Tea Party adherents send quick and ubiquitous volleys of information to the general public via new media, while simultaneously refusing to engage in substantive conversation with those of differing opinion.

As Tea Partiers' views and tactics gain ground, so, too, is the shape of democratic existence transformed. The apparent truth, or "truthiness," of contrafactual assertions—Barack Obama's adherence to Islam, or his lack of U.S. citizenship, for example—is facilitated by a media atmosphere that subtends this new approach to the factual, and often supported, ironically, by the language of scholarly media critique. This trend, coupled with the 24-hour news cycle's speed and the Web's ability to flood mediaspace with information, may bode ill for the deliberation necessary for democratic processes.

Through an examination of Tea Partiers' assertions, actions, and interpretations on popular websites central to the movement, this paper will explore the ways in which 'counter-facts' about US history are posited, authenticated and mobilized. Central to this examination are revisionist engagements with the US Constitution as both spiritual and legal foundation of the nation. It will show how thoughtful engagement with the document is actually discouraged in favor of "breaking" stories and circulating interpretations to a certain public. In the face of the glut of information made possible by new media, cultural practices and platforms seem to be emerging that encourage self-segregation into interest niches in the guise of a democratic engagement with the past.

**Katy Scrogin** is an independent scholar and freelance writer and translator based in Austin, Texas. She received her Ph.D. (2009) from Claremont Graduate University's School of Religion with her dissertation *Desire, Participation, and Self-Governance: Suggestions for Renewing U.S. Democracy*.