

JUSTYNA TABASZEWSKA: Pamięć afektywna. Dynamika polskiej pamięci po 1989 roku [Affective memory. Dynamics of Polish memory after 1989]

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The aim of the publication *Pamięć afektywna. Dynamika polskiej pamięci po 1989 roku* is to map the entangled temporal relations that shape the work of Polish memory. Justyna Tabaszewska examines all three time periods in her temporal map of Polish culture: the past, the present, and the future. Until recently, the debate about the future in memory studies has mostly concerned the goals of memory, in particular the process of forgetting, or the future of this field of study. Tabaszewska's book raises questions about the role of the future in memory work, thus making an original contribution to the debate on a non-linear understanding of memory. The book offers innovative and inspiring insights into the state of Polish memory and memory work in general.

Pamięć afektywna focuses on the functioning of Polish cultural and communicative memory after 1989. This pivotal year was chosen not only because of the political transformation in Poland and other post-Soviet countries that activated previously forbidden or censored modes of memory; Tabaszewska argues that 1989 is crucial for understanding the ongoing dynamics of Polish culture. For her analysis, she has chosen contemporary Polish fictional literary texts and films, which she sees as media of memory as defined by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney. These are cultural texts that not only reveal the mechanisms of memory, but also actively co-create frames and patterns of memory. Tabaszewska explores the changes currently taking place in the work of Polish memory

and describes Polish memory as extremely dynamic and unstable, burdened with internal contradictions and tensions. According to her, Polish memory is a constantly looping one and in order to better understand changes in memory work, we need to look beyond the past and the present to the future as a point of reference.

The book has a very well-thought-out structure at the level of parts, chapters and subsections, which reflects both the precision of the theoretical discussion and the depth of the analyses carried out. In the first, theoretical part, Tabaszewska presents the theories and concepts she will use and introduces a broad but consistent set of analytical tools. The second, third and fourth parts are devoted to cultural texts dealing with the past, the present, and the future. Each part begins with an introductory theoretical chapter that clarifies the theoretical framework in relation to the time period analyzed and presents the state of research on this issue in Polish academic discourse. After this theoretical clarification, Tabaszewska interprets selected cultural texts. Although each of these parts focuses on a single time period, Tabaszewska always keeps in mind the interplay between the three time periods, revealing their fluid, non-linear nature.

Autor's basic methodological framework consists of theories within memory studies and affective studies. She follows the insights of contemporary memory studies, where the relational and dynamic nature of collective, cultural, and communicative memory refers

not to a two-point system of past–present references, but to a three-point system of past–present–future references, which she argues should rather be captured as future–present–past references. As Tabaszewska shows, thinking about the future is essential for making decisions about the present and our experience of the present influences how we perceive the past. In contrast to Aleida Assmann, she argues that there is no common future, no single version of the future. Static thinking about the future is a mistake: “There are many futures, not only in the sense that they exist and we simultaneously consider different versions of the future or different plans for the future, but I also think that we use far more than one scheme for imagining what the future actually is and what place it occupies in the structure of time. For the future is not only something to come, it is also our motivation for action in the present, it is the horizon of events embedded in everyday experience, and finally it is also part of the past as once shared visions of what might come” (74). As Tabaszewska argues, the relationship between time and memory can be better analyzed if we incorporate the findings of affective studies into our research. In memory studies, therefore, the question of the future requires introducing new concepts and theoretical tools, such as past futures, affective facts, or alternative histories. Tabaszewska integrates concepts from other fields of research, such as the study of emotions, historiography, philosophical reflection on memory, imagination, time, and possible worlds. Her interdisciplinary approach is primarily inspired by the theories of Brian Massumi (*ontopower*), Lauren Berlant (*affective event*), Sara Ahmed (*happy futures*), Si-anne Ngai (*ugly feelings*), and Charles Altieri (*an aesthetics of the affects*). Tabaszewska also uses the affective neuroscientific approach of Jaak Panksepp (*core self*) and the psychological approach of Lisa Feldman Barrett (*constructed emotion*). The proposed theoretical framework allows her to analyze affective modes of memory work in the experience of the present.

Tabaszewska uses a number of concepts from memory and affective studies that are indispensable in contemporary academic discourse. Her book also discusses new concepts and terminology useful for the study of memory work, such as *affective memory*, which she defines as memory based on the current affective structure produced by past futures. Memory of the future is an extremely dynamic part of memory, as Tabaszewska points out: “the visions of a certain future, once produced and articulated, are then remembered, which means that they are transformed and changed according to the mechanisms of memory, that is, they are constantly revised to harmonise with our ideas about the past and the present” (33). She also uses the category of the *memory loop*, a situation in which the normal functioning of memory (such as the transformation of communicative memory into cultural memory) is interrupted. Memory loops are compulsive returns to the same moments in the past, associated with specific visions of the future that were present at that moment but were not realized. Tabaszewska also draws upon the concept of *poetics of memory* to study the relationship between text and memory. This category offers the possibility of studying the literary text “both as a medium of memory and as a space of free literary expression” (63).

The cultural texts in the analytical sections are both representative and diverse. The second part explores affective perceptions of the past, based on the novel *Morfina* (Morphine, 2012) by Szczepan Twardoch and the works of Magdalena Tulli as well as the films *Miasto 44* (Warsaw 44, 2014) by Jan Komasa, *Wołyń* (Volhynia, 2016) by Wojciech Smarzowski, and *Ida* (2013) by Paweł Pawlikowski. In the third part, which focuses on the post-transformation present and the ways in which its memory is mediated and remediated, Tabaszewska interprets works by authors such as Małgorzata Rejmer, Mikołaj Łoziński, Ignacy Karpowicz, Dorota Masłowska and Andrzej Stasiuk. The fourth part focuses on the future, past futures, and

alternative histories and analyzes works such as *Rzeczpospolita zwycięska* (The triumphant republic, 2013) and *Siwy Dym: albo Pięć Cywilizowanych Plemion* (Fracas or five civilized tribes, 2018) by Ziemowit Szczerek, *Xavras Wyzryn* (1997) and *Lód* (Ice, 2007) by Jacek Dukaj, *Widma* (Specters, 2012) by Łukasz Orbitowski, and the Netflix series *1983* (2018). In selecting cultural texts for analysis, Tabaszewska applies several criteria: first, how a given cultural text relates to a currently existing memory cliché, second, whether it is capable of evoking an affective response, third, to what extent a given cultural text is popular (read, watched, discussed), and finally, whether a given cultural text can become a collective text, i.e. if it will be able to shape our past in the future.

Pamięć afektywna. Dynamika polskiej pamięci po 1989 roku is not only an important and original contribution to memory studies, but also a very inspiring one. On a theoretical level, the book shows how

our ideas about the future affect our perception of the present and our recollections of the past. On an analytical level, Tabaszewska formulates a thesis about the instability of Polish memory, which is caused by the fact that some chapters of Polish history remain open. This instability, i.e. the constant attempts to close the past and the failures experienced in this process, result in loops that determine Polish memory. Although the book focuses on the mechanisms of Polish memory, the transformations in memory work described by Tabaszewska are not only specific to Poland but have an almost universal character.

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