



Monika Palmberger

*How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 254 pp. €29.96 (Published Open Access).

**Reviewed by:** Giulia Carabelli, *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany*

*How Generations Remember* is a most welcome contribution to the literature on the city of Mostar in Bosnia Herzegovina. It thoughtfully reflects on the ways in which different generations of Mostarians account for the city's contested history, not only to cement a version of the past but also as a tool to navigate the present and build a future full of opportunities (as well as unforeseen limits).

In the book, written in an intriguing and engaging ethnographic style, we meet three main generations of citizens who share with us their memories, habits, expectations, and frustrations. We start with the "First Yugoslavs," those who spent their younger years when Tito was in power and who, at the present, live largely in retirement homes. When asked about "the war," the "First Yugoslav" thinks back to the Second World War rather than the most recent secessionist wars, although both events are felt as dramatic and life changing. We then meet the "Last Yugoslavs," those who were born just before the dissolution of Yugoslavia whose younger years were spent during the wars; some of them migrated to make ends meet only to return "home" later, while others stayed in the country throughout the conflict. Yet the lives of all these diverse "Last Yugoslavs" were suddenly disrupted just when they were about to start careers or a family, or enter adulthood. This generation, according to the author, is the one who suffered most from the effects of conflict as their lives were interrupted at the very moment of their beginning. Finally, we encounter the "Post-Yugoslavs," the younger generations of citizens who were born after the independence of Bosnia Herzegovina. These are the citizens who have little or no memories of the conflict; they have always experienced Mostar as an ethnically divided city, and yet they often recall the lost pre-war town through the memories shared with their parents and older family members. This is the generation who attend ethnically divided schools, with little or no possibility to meet people "from the other side," yet whose visions of the present and the future of Mostar are often surprisingly far from the hopelessness embodied in the more pessimistic view of a continually divided Mostar. Rather, some of these inhabitants see a possibility for peace and reconciliation to become a concrete reality in the hands of the youth.

Palmberger intelligently navigates the many complexities produced by the interplay of these different memories. Her analysis does not simply classify what people remember according to their age, gender, or class. Rather, she discusses how people remember in relation to how their lives have been disrupted by the event of war. Furthermore, she re-locates the assembled memories in the city to discuss how contemporary practices of division and reconciliation can be traced back to different modes of remembering, which legitimize, silence, or challenge a certain version of the past in order to build a path toward the future.

I believe the author makes at least two major contributions: first, her book enriches the scholarly literature on Mostar and contributes to important debates within the field of memory studies. Whereas Mostar is usually depicted as a city divided among two monolithic ethnic groups that seemingly resist reconciliation, this book approaches the study of Mostar's division from the perspective of the citizens. Rather than picturing Mostarians as victims at the mercy of corrupt politicians or as nationalist perpetrators of war, Palmberger delves into the unassuming day-to-day rhythms of the city, highlighting the fluidity and malleability of categories of belongings, beliefs, and even memories of the past. By discussing how different generations remember, the book also explores the complex ways in which individuals attach and detach from ethnic politics, often inconsistently, and by means of accounting for a certain narrative of the past. It

also discusses generational commonalities that disregard ethnic borders without implying that nationality has become less important in the process of identity formation. Rather, Palmberger engages with identities as complex and contradictory. In doing so, the author contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the city, which diversifies mainstream representations of Mostar that portray the ethnic division as the ultimate factor in processes of identity formation, life orientations, and aspirations.

Second, as the title suggests, the book makes clear reference to Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (1989), which discusses how generations transmit or receive memories. As such, Palmberger's book draws on Connerton's, yet goes thoroughly beyond it by focusing on the centrality of the individual who "is the actor in the present that gives meaning to the past [...] and [i]t is this field of tension between collective and personal, and between persistence and change that is central in the discussion of generational positioning" (p. 8). By focusing on individual narratives, the author highlights the agency of the actor who remembers, shares memories, and acts upon them while also participating in wider processes of group or community remembering and the constitution of social memories.

The methodology adopted by the author is also particularly praiseworthy. To study how individuals, society, or generations remember is indeed a challenging task especially from the methodological perspective. The author conducted a long ethnography in the city, and this, I believe, is the main strength of the book. Her knowledge and understanding of Mostar goes well beyond the stories she collected and presents in the book. It was in fact by observing, living in, and listening to Mostar that the author was able to navigate the city, its people, its memories, its contested past and uncertain future. Not surprisingly, Palmberger made friends in Mostar and became known in her neighborhood. As a researcher she merged and participated in daily routines and rituals, such that of drinking coffee—for which Mostar is well known. If anything, this rich account of Mostar may have been even more enriched through the elaboration of such quotidian meditations, as well as a more reflexive account on the limits and privileges that such methods afford, perhaps exploring critically the positionality of the researcher in relation to the reproduction of the memories she was eliciting and recording for the book.

This book will undoubtedly be of great interest to students and scholars working on the region of former Yugoslavia, ethnic conflict, divided cities and memory studies. The depth and breadth of the interview material and observational data collected by the author will transport the reader to Mostar and give a glimpse of the city's dynamics, past and present. The book will also inspire those who aim to uncover how generations remember in different contexts, offering a great example of how to embrace ethnography for the study of memories.

Andrea Hajek, Christine Lohmeier, and Christian Pentzold (eds)

*Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 284 pp. \$100.00.

**Reviewed by:** Red Chidgey, *King's College London, UK*.

There has been a call within memory studies for a third phase of scholarship that attends to the "entangledness" of personal and collective memory as its trajectories move across time, media and commemorating groups (Bond et al., 2016; Erll, 2011; Feindt et al., 2014). The volume *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction*, edited by Andrea Hajek, Christine Lohmeier, and Christian Pentzold, is a worthy contribution to this agenda, with particular strengths in discussing methodology, the affordances of digital platforms in constructing memory practices, and an