



**Peter Seibert, Jana Piper, Alfonso Meoli.** *Anne Frank: Mediengeschichten.* Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2014. 272 S. ISBN 978-3-86331-199-5.



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### **P. Seibert u.a. (Hrsg.): Anne Frank: Mediengeschichte**

Seventy years after her death in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Anne Frank's story continues to appear in various works of art, publications, websites, and educational and memorial projects. Recently, a docudrama titled "Meine Tochter Anne Frank" was broadcast on German television, and a production of "Anne Frank - Der Film" was initiated just a couple of weeks earlier. The premiere of this first German feature film about Anne Frank is scheduled for the end of 2015. See and (22.02.2015).

The ongoing proliferation of Anne Frank-related projects also enjoys scholarly attention worldwide. To an already impressive body of articles devoted to what has been coined "the Anne Frank phenomenon" in 2012 alone, two books have appeared in which the wide variety of engagements with Anne Frank's work and life was labelled "a phenomenon." See David Barnouw, *Het fenomeen Anne Frank*, Amsterdam 2012 (a German translation is announced for May: *Das Phänomen Anne Frank*, Essen 2015), and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett / Jeffrey Shandler (Eds.), *Anne Frank Unbound. Media, Imagination, Memory*, Bloomington 2012. , we can now

add yet another volume: "Anne Frank: Mediengeschichten". The publication, edited by scholars from University of Kassel, contains fifteen essays and one interview with Walid M. Nakschbandi, the producer of both the abovementioned films. As the title indicates, the selected essays focus on the role of media in relation to Anne Frank. One of the editors, Peter Seibert, explains in the introduction that the authors not only highlight particular adaptations, but also aim to reflect on the multi-layered and dynamic process of the (re)mediation of Anne Frank throughout the past decades (pp. 8-9). In that sense, this volume clearly continues the course chosen by the editors of another book, "Anne Frank Unbound. Media, Imagination, Memory", published in 2012. See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett / Shandler, *Anne Frank Unbound*, pp. 7-8.

The subjects addressed in "Anne Frank: Mediengeschichten" vary from well-studied dimensions within the Anne Frank research (theatre or film adaptations of the diary, Anne's literary afterlives, and educational projects) to issues that have received little previous attention (Anne Frank in social media, memorials

devoted to her, and comic books). The essays are not explicitly separated into sections, but they are effectively organized according to the medium discussed. Essays on photography, theatre and film are gathered together, followed by an essay on music, two on comic books, two on social media, two exploring memorial practices, three on Anne Frank in educational contexts, and a final two articles devoted to Anne's literary afterlives.

Most contributors to this new volume succeed in avoiding too much repetition of pre-existing research, partly by focussing on unresearched aspects taken from the German context. Katja Heimsath compellingly traces the development of Bergen, a town near the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, into a *lieu de m moire*. She sees the so-called *Anne Frank Friedenstage* organised in Bergen since 2000 as a continuation of the *Flowers for Anne Frank* movement that started with visits to Anne's grave in March 1957. Based mainly on primary sources, her analysis reveals how this little German town has dealt with its dark past throughout the past decades and has developed to an international meeting place for youth.

Other authors chose comparative perspectives and analysed the relation between global, European and American readings of Anne Frank on the one hand, and the German reception on the other. Peter Seibert's essay analyses the layered semiotics of Anne Frank's monuments in several Dutch and German cities. His article makes it clear that not only monuments themselves but also their positions in respect to other memorial sites and the overall topography of a given city can change the way Anne Frank is remembered.

Three essays explore the educational value of Anne's life and diary. Deborah Krieg and Stefan H pping discuss both the limitations and the advantages of the use of Anne's story as a standard text in Holocaust education in Germany. Alexandra Ludewig looks more closely at how Anne Frank's story functions in an intercultural setting: a classroom with pupils with different backgrounds. All three authors stress the multi-functionality of the diary which, rightly framed, can be used in Holocaust education as well as in the process of raising awareness of the mechanisms behind discrimination in more general terms.

Since the reception of Anne Frank has not been studied much in connection to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, two essays touching upon this topic are particularly welcomed contributions to the field. Oxane Leingang sheds some light on difficulties in employing of

the figure of Anne Frank in the Soviet Union. She analyses references to Anne Frank in the work of several Soviet composers and examines their difficulties in producing and staging their work behind the Iron Curtain. Her essay also offers some insight into the relation between the official Soviet historical narrative and the neglected and marginalised memory of the Holocaust. Elizabeth M. Ward adds to our understanding with an interesting chapter on the political framing of Anne Frank in East Germany. Surprisingly enough, to make her point, Ward looks at *Professor Mamlock*: a 1961 film that, at first sight, has no reference to Anne Frank at all. Through Ward's analysis it becomes clear that Anne Frank was very strategically appropriated within the East German context.

What makes this volume particularly interesting is that not all essays confine themselves to analysing phenomena strictly related to Anne Frank. Several scholars merely depart from a specific form of mediation of Anne Frank's story in order to explore broader trends in global or more local remembrance practices. The volume opens with an essay on photography by Hildegard Fr h bis. She analyses how photographs of young Holocaust victims, including those of Anne Frank, shaped memory processes, especially in post-war West Germany. Two essays focus on comic books. Theresa Schmidtke and Sylvia Kesper-Biermann not only analyse graphic novels and manga (respectively) about Anne Frank but also reflect on the more general nature of these media forms and their function in the process of changing Holocaust remembrance in a global context. Two other essays look closer at social media. Kirstin Frieden and Hannes Burkhardt focus on Facebook profiles and pages dedicated to Anne Frank's universe in order to examine the role of social media in the changing memory landscape in a worldwide perspective.

The editorial commentary that accompanies the interview with the film producer (pp. 63-65) barely touches upon the revival of interest in Anne Frank in the contemporary German context. Even though this aspect did not receive more attention in the volume, the new trend towards the appropriation of Anne Frank as a German figure certainly requires more future research.

The book pulls together interdisciplinary and also partly comparative and transnational research, and therefore, it reads more like a journal than a book. A short synthesising epilogue or a more elaborative introduction could have justified editorial choices more clearly. Also, considering the variety of presented case

studies and aspects upon which this volume touches, it would have been desirable to include a thorough subject index. Nonetheless, *Anne Frank. Mediengeschichten* is a worthwhile collection of essays that contribute some new insights to the media history of Anne Frank in Europe and in the world. The wide selections of sources and

case studies (though most are, to a greater or lesser extent, connected to the German context) make the volume attractive not only to readers already familiar with Anne Frank research but also to scholars working in the field of memory or media studies in general.

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