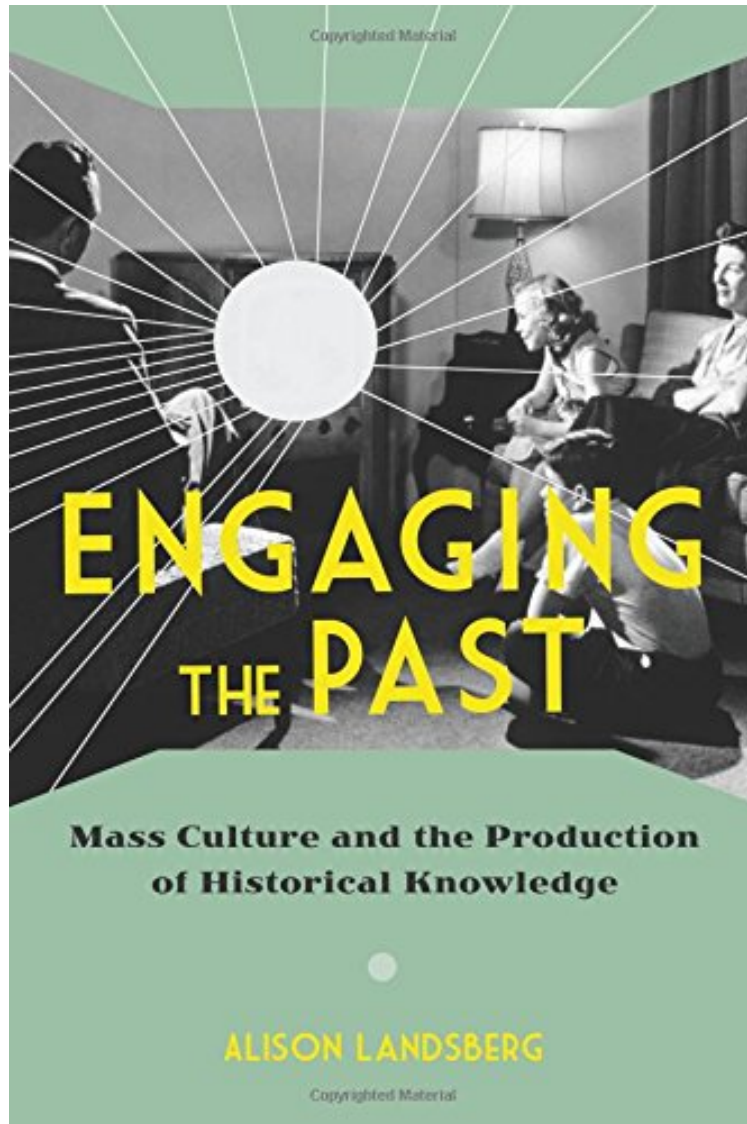


(Ebook pdf) Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge

Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge

Alison Landsberg

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Alison Landsberg : Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge:

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introduction into the intersection of history and film studies while making an important contribution to the field. As a lecturer it has helped me to think about how I use audio-visual material in the classroom, and as a TV viewer and film goer it's made me think about my own relationship to history on the screen.

Reading films, television dramas, reality shows, and virtual exhibits, among other popular texts, *Engaging the Past* examines the making and meaning of history for everyday viewers. Contemporary media can encourage complex interactions with the past that have far-reaching consequences for history and politics. Viewers experience these representations personally, cognitively, and bodily, but, as this book reveals, not just by identifying with the characters portrayed. Some of the works considered in this volume include the films *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005), and *Milk* (2008); the television dramas *Deadwood*, *Mad Men*, and *Rome*; the reality shows *Frontier House*, *Colonial House*, and *Texas Ranch House*; and *The Secret Annex Online*, accessed through the Anne Frank House website, and the *Kristallnacht* exhibit, accessed through the United States Holocaust Museum website. These mass cultural texts cultivate what Alison Landsberg calls an "affective engagement" with the past, tying the viewer to an event or person and fostering a sense of intimacy that does more than transport the viewer back in time. Affect, she suggests, can also work to disorient the viewer, forcibly pushing him or her out of the narrative and back into his or her own body. By analyzing these specific popular history formats, Landsberg shows the unique way they provoke historical thinking and produce historical knowledge, prompting a reconsideration of what constitutes history and an understanding of how history works in the contemporary mediated public sphere.

Alison Landsberg skillfully penetrates one of the most interesting yet elusive questions about popular representations of the past. What kinds of knowledge of the past do they offer? In elegant and precise analyses of selected texts, she demonstrates how they engage affect and emotion through experiential modes of communication. Contrary to many assumptions about such forms, Landsberg brilliantly argues that these reenactments have the potential to provoke self-conscious historical thinking much sought after by more conventional historical modes of communication. (Ann Gray, emerita professor of cultural studies, University of Lincoln) The book is carefully structured, sensitively expressed, and the analysis of the various media a contribution to thinking differently about cinematic uses of past. (Critical Inquiry) About the Author Alison Landsberg is an associate professor in the Department of History and Art History and the Department of Cultural Studies at George Mason University. She is the author of *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*.