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Andrea Greenbaum, *The Tropes of War: Visual Hyperbole and Spectacular Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 72 pp, ISBN: 978-1-137-55076-7

Today, at a time when the media have access to every sphere of our lives, it is indeed difficult to avoid discussing their role and influence. Covering literally all events that occur in the world – from political issues to ecological disasters to the latest gossips and scandals – the media have therefore proven their all-embracing and omniscient nature. Unsurprisingly, a problem complex as war is not neglected by the media, and frequently becomes the central topic of a number of reports. War is clerarly not a recent phenomenon as, looking back in history, one realizes that various nations and groups have frequently found themselves in conflict. Yet, modern wars coincide with the era of media technologies, and the media's ubiquitous presence, therefore, has made war more tangible and understandable, bringing it into our civilian lives as never before. In *The Tropes of War: Visual Hyperbole and Spectacular Culture*, Andrea Greenbaum attempts to investigate the problem of this radically-clear visibility of war that the media make possible, and to examine what role war and various war events that the media may skillfully turn into a spectacle play or rather, what purpose these visual performances serve.

Greenbaum presents a very concise yet scholarly, elaborated study that focuses mainly on two media, i.e., documentaries and graphic novels, to discuss such pivotal issues as war, peace, human coexistence, and memory. The uniqueness of this scholar's project is that it gives answers to these complex questions through the analysis of the primary means that various media employ. Namely, the author contends that it is "visual hyperbole" (9) – the term introduced by Greenbaum – that facilitates the media's effect on the audience. In order to corroborate her argument, Greenbaum cites a number of examples, including Franklin's photo depicting firefighters raising the flag over Ground Zero at the World Trade Center that is so reminiscent of Rosenthal's photograph showing American Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima; the rescue of Jessica Lynch that was filmed and shown worldwide; the videos of the collapsing Twin

Towers; the videos of terrorists decapitating their hostages; etc. What Greenbaum finds problematic about such kinds of videos and images is that, by multiple repetitions and zooming, the visual messages that they transmit become somewhat exaggerated and, thus, might potentially create a distorted understanding among viewers. The author underscores that today visual images have become much more important than verbal communication, for messages tend to reach their audience faster and more effectively. What happens when these images become hyperbolized? Greenbaum answers: "[…] the real costs of hyperbole translate into deaths of civilians, a global resurgence of anti-Semitism, a hydra-headed profusion of terrorist organizations, and the creation of a climate of fear and anxiety" (9).

The scholar continues her book with the analysis of Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* and Ari Folman's animated documentary *Waltz with Bashir*. The author's choice to examine graphic narratives is justified as they are also a visual medium that tries "to document the fractured experiences of war" (20). These experiences are, indeed, very subjective and, at times, exaggerated. Thus, war in graphic novels can be considered another type of visual hyperbole. Yet, Greenbaum is more interested in analyzing the issues of trauma and memory and how they transform over time. In spite of their fragmentation, graphic novels, according to Greenbaum, can be considered a reliable medium that reveals the horror, psychosis, and torment of war.

Turning to the discussion of the issue of masculinity, Greenbaum attempts to examine another "trope of war." By the example of Junger's and Hetherington's war documentary *Restrepo*, the author investigates a so-called "synecdoche of masculinity" (30). She analyzes the problematic aspects of masculinity that are born in war – a typical men-made and made-for-men environment. For example, the question of brotherhood as an equivocal phenomenon is discussed in detail. Indeed, even from a linguistic perspective, the word is designed as the one that describes the relations between *men*, excluding women. Additionally, it is possible to state that the genre of documentary frequently utilizes visual hyperbole as a documentary film selectively includes specific images and videos that are aimed at supporting or promoting a certain political viewpoint.

Greenbaum concludes her book with the discussion of "The Comic Book Peace Project" that she organized in 2012 to bring together Muslim, Christian, and Jewish children to not only teach them how to create comic books but also to discuss how to deal with the problems of national and religious hatred that may emerge among people who live in the same country.

The statement that the scholar makes, namely that "we are entering the Age of Babel, a post-language, post-humanities epoch, ruled by the visual and the visceral, truncated discourse, beyond the reaches of reason and logic" (57), aptly sums up the main argument that she carries throughout her book. *The Tropes of War: Visual Hyperbole and Spectacular Culture* is a very fresh, insightful project that manages to discuss crucial issues that emerge in the modern era of war and the media. Those interested in visual analysis, film, graphic novels, as well as war and media studies will find this book a remarkable reading.