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Reconfiguring Memory Studies as Event Studies

This paper poses a challenge to the project of memory studies and collective memory, inasmuch as such studies make unwarranted assumptions about event life spans and the dialectic of flow and form in the shaping of events. Assessing the nature and capacities of the forms in which events live and through which they move is an alternative and, I would argue, more fruitful way of understanding the relationships between events, memory and social and cultural mediations. As such, the paper maintains that events behave like both particles and waves and thus require sociological analysis that is sensitive to both movement and form. The analytical framework of 'Political Semiosis' is proposed as a mechanism capable of analyzing event formation, mobility, and deformation and thus presents an alternative to the frame of memory.

Robin Wagner-Pacifici is Chair and University in Exile Professor of Sociology at the New School for Social Research. She has researched and written on social, political, and violent conflict and its termination. She is the author of *The Art of Surrender: Decomposing Sovereignty at Conflict's End*, *Theorizing the Standoff: Contingency in Action*, *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia vs MOVE*, and *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama*. She is co-author (with Meredith Hall) of a 2012 Annual Review of Sociology chapter on "Resolution of Social Conflict." In memory studies, she co-authored (with Barry Schwartz), "The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," (*American Journal of Sociology* 1991). Robin is currently writing book developing a theory of events, titled: "What is an Event?" An ongoing collaboration to analyze the official language of national security using computation textual analysis has recently (2013) generated the first of several anticipated publications, "Graphing the Grammar of Motives in U.S. National Security Strategies: Cultural Interpretation, Automated Text Analysis and the Drama of Global Politics," with John W. Mohr, Ronald L. Breiger, and Petko Bogdanov, in a special issue of *Poetics*.