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It is the summary of the following edited volume:

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**11. Ayaß, Ruth and Cornelia Gerhardt, eds. 2012. *The appropriation of media in everyday life*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, vii + 208 pp., EUR 95.00.**

**Key words:** media; reception; interaction; appropriation

This interdisciplinary edited volume focuses on how people appropriate media in their daily lives. It describes naturally occurring interactions in different media reception situations with conversation analytic or related approaches. It has become clear that media do not function like a hypodermic needle injecting messages into the masses. Still, media studies have for the most part ignored the actual point in time when people use media in their everyday lives. This book analyses the minutiae of the moment when people actively appropriate different types of media for their own purposes in different fashions. All papers are empirically based and rely on audio(-visual) recordings of mundane behaviour in natural settings. Methodologically, they stress the importance of qualitative

studies of natural data, i.e. the analysis of media-related behaviour of existing groups of media users (families, friends) using media spontaneously and voluntarily in their everyday life (in contrast to research based on interviews and other ex-post elicitations or focus groups and other artificial constellations, or, obviously, quantitative studies).

In contrast to earlier studies, the notion of appropriation takes into account that mass-media propaganda (the stimulus) has only little influence on the audience (the response), in comparison to other forces such as, in the case of politics, e.g. family background or the reception situation (cf. Lazarsfeld et al. 1944). Effects of media use are not direct and cannot be quantified. Audiences are not empty vessels into which contents can be poured. Instead, media are appropriated by their users, literally made their own, endowed with meaning (cf. Holly et al. 1993). The term appropriation has first been used by Michel de Certeau in 1980 in a much more general sense, to analyse everyday practices of social actors appropriating their lifeworlds (1984):

By appropriation he rather aimed at the uses of language or public space, of housing and cooking: the appropriation of language by a speaker who uses it, the appropriation of public space by pedestrians, footstep by footstep, in order to make it their own, etc. It is this individual and at the same time social appropriation of an initially outer reality that we refer to with our term 'appropriation of media'. (p.2)

The use of media in everyday life has been marked by two dominant developments. First, one can witness an 'everydayification' of media. They are all-pervasive, and used habitually and unceremoniously. While approaches in cultural criticism have often demonized this omnipresence of media and posited a demise of interpersonal communication, this volume seeks to show that, empirically, media are often used a resource for communication. Secondly, media use is marked by 'boundary dissolution'. For instance, the telephone has moved from its traditional place in the homes and offices, and started travelling with us, penetrating other fields such as sports or hobbies. Hence, it broke its former temporal, spatial and social boundaries (cf. Krotz 2007), and was also given new functions e.g. as an alarm clock or the weather forecast. These developments are based on two technological evolutions, miniaturization and mobilization: (apart from the television,) media devices have continuously shrunk, altering our world through the aforementioned everydayification and boundary dissolution:

On the one hand, today's lifeworlds are pervaded and imbued with media and their use; media, that is to say, change the world within our reach. But, on the other hand, media also dislocate the boundaries of the life-world. They alter the temporal and spatial range of its inhabitants, allowing humans to cross the borders of their lifeworlds. (p. 5)

After the seminal introduction by Ruth Ayass and an overview of the contents, the volume comprises three sections with three original research papers each. The first section focuses on different patterns of reception in everyday contexts: “With the term ‘pattern’ we refer to the recurring forms of communication that have been established in reception communities as modes of appropriation.” (p. 18) The television is used as a case in point. In the second section, different genres and their specific forms of appropriation are analysed. The question is how different genres and the forms of communication by the viewers, listeners or users relate. The final section concentrates on the relation between mediated worlds and “reality”. Notions discussed in the papers include the fictionalization, the imitation or even the breakdown of such mediated worlds.

The papers assembled in this volume are diverse: some analyse data from the primary reception situation, i.e. the moment when the medium is used, whereas others concentrate on the subsequent use of references to media discourse or quotes from media texts in other settings. The media studied not only encompass the television, the radio and game consoles, also, in some cases, other media are again used in the process of media appropriation (e.g. an answering machine for a radio phone-in show). The reception communities consist of families and groups of friends, but also fans and opponents of certain media products are analysed. In one article, a brand new medium is implemented in a training situation by firemen. The genres appropriated are varied: video games (Lorenza Mondada, Arja Piirainen-Marsh), quiz shows (Alla V. Tovares), children’s cartoons and films (Kristy Beers Fägersten), comedy shows (Kristy Beers Fägersten), political shows (Heike Baldauf-Quilliatre), talent shows (Janet Spreckels), commercials (Ruth Ayaß), and sports broadcasting (Cornelia Gerhardt). The languages studied comprise English, German, French, Swedish and Finnish.

This interdisciplinary volume provides a multi-faceted overview of the appropriation of media today. It is essential reading for those interested in the reception of media, or in interactional or conversation analytic studies in media contexts. It is of interest to linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, and media scholars alike.

#### References:

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