

# RECALLING MEMORY: THE USAGE OF PERSONAS IN POPULAR GAZETTES

**ÖZGE MUMCU AYBARS**

Abstract

Cultural and ideological consumption is observable in the production of a given culture. As reflected by Schneider: "memory remains as a future act: not yet recalled, if also never yet forgotten."; therefore there is a cultural dimension of the mind. What and how a given culture remembers set the cultural aspect of the cultural memory. Memory is social and cultural which provides the tools on how the "past present" to be analyzed. In a given society, people acquire their memories. People recall, recognize and localize their memories also in a given society. Memory can be reproductive, and remembrance can be performative. In recent years, in Turkish printed press, gazettes which are focusing on popular personas with a created narrative gained much popularity. Memory and media have a reciprocal relationship. Also, the usage of digital media and the narrative of memory has become one of the important topics needs to analyze, too. In this paper In this paper, I'll try to concentrate on these popular gazettes on how they use the memory of a given popular persona while creating a meta commodification by using the symbolic repertoire of given persona and the performative function of the remembrance and the creation of memory as a product through the use of popular personas in popular gazettes.

**Keywords:** cultural memory, gazettes, memory, press, commodification

**Word Count:** 2704

*Contact: omumcu@gmail.com*

*Received: October 2017 – Accepted: November 2018*

## **Introduction**

Memory and media have a reciprocal relationship. The narrative of memory in mediums with the use of social media has become one of the critical topics needs to be observed. Cultural memory with the performative function of remembrance is one of the vital sources for the continuity of the memory within a given culture. Cultural memory is identic with the individual things meaningful to the society. In this article, the questions on the performative function of the remembrance and the creation of memory as a product through the use of popular personas in popular gazettes while these popular gazettes on their usage of the memory of popular personas while creating meta commodification by using the symbolic repertoire of given persona will be examined.

## 1. Cultural Memory

In Western culture, the terms “ars memoriae” or “memorativa” are one of the five fields of rhetoric in ancient Rome. According to this mnemo technique: “Some locations are selected, and imaginative images of what is desired to be settled are created, then these images are linked to certain places. Thus, the sequential order of these places keeps the order of the events, and at the same time, they describe themselves and their images.”<sup>1</sup> Past come into existence only with now. “To be in a relationship with the past, the past must be settled into our consciousness as past.”<sup>2</sup> The reason for the existence of the consciousness of the mind with its resilience to individual memory is to survive for further generations. The particular memory of the individual remains in cultural memory with the knowledge of society. As quoting from Nietzsche, “... while in the world of animals genetic programs guarantee the survival of the species, humans must find a means by which to maintain their nature consistently through generations. The solution to this problem is a cultural memory, a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation.” (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to survive in further generations, own memory transfers into cultural memory, as in Nietzsche’s terms. Following Derrida, “Memory projects itself toward the future, and it constitutes the presence of the present.” (Anon, 2018)<sup>4</sup> The memory remains in the present using the different variety of forms to exist. Quoting from Schneider: “memory remains as a future act: not yet recalled, if also never yet forgotten.” (Anon, 2018)<sup>5</sup> Since Nietzsche argues that cultural memory is essential for further generations, memory is a future act; how to preserve and keep a memory remains a question mark. “Humans yearn to remember, although they mostly forget,” (Anon, 2018)<sup>6</sup> states Victor Mayer Schönberger. Since people crave to remember, the collective memory of the society relates to the cultural dimension of the memory if memory is taken as both what and how that a culture remembers. Society recalls memory through discourses and social practices. “Memory needs to be understood as an effect of a variety of institutionalized discourses and cultural practices.” (Anon, 2018)<sup>7</sup> Memory can be social and cultural and cling to memory is the essential points of departure in this sense. Therefore, “If memory is social and cultural, it is also performative; making the past present in ways that can be experienced, generating knowledge of the relationship between past and present that is often troubling, other times comforting.” (Anon, 2018)<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1. Commodification and Memory: Performative Memory

In the 21st century, cultural and ideological consumption is observable by different mediums in the production of a given culture. As a general term, commodification defined as “the subordination of both private and public realms

---

<sup>1</sup> Assman, J. (2000). “*Kültürel Bellek*”. İstanbul, Turkey: Ayrıntı Yayınları, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Assman, J. (2000). “*Kültürel Bellek*”. İstanbul, Turkey: Ayrıntı Yayınları, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Czaplicka, J., Huyssen, A. and Rabinbach, A. (1995). Introduction: Cultural History and Cultural Studies: Reflections on a Symposium. *New German Critique*, (65), pp. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

<sup>5</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

<sup>6</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

<sup>7</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

<sup>8</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

to the logic of capitalism. In this logic, such things as friendship, knowledge, women, etc. are understood only regarding their monetary value. In this way, they are no longer treated as things with intrinsic worth but as commodities." (Cla.purdue.edu, 2018)<sup>9</sup> For Halbwachs, the memory is formed, constructed and protected by the social context "Apart from this frame, there will not be another memory in which people living in the society can fix their memories and find them again."<sup>10</sup> Although memory belongs to the individual mind, it also constructed by the social context. "The concept of "communicative memory" includes those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications. These types, which M. Halbwachs gathered and analyzed under the concept of collective memory, constitute the field of oral history. Daily communication characterizes by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization." The manner of daily communication for Halbwachs is socially mediated and relates to a group. "Through this manner of communication, each composes a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is (a) socially mediated and (b) relates to a group." (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>11</sup> Cultural memory while turning from individual memory is socially mediated and culturally transmitted to further generation. Additionally, "Contemporary studies of cultural memory indeed emphasize that memory 'require[s] the active agency of individuals and public,' he carries on as: 'Such agency entails recognizing and revealing the production of memory as an ongoing process involving inscription and reinscription, coding and recoding.' Memory, then, includes agency. Perhaps memory is even an act of identity formation that serves to narrate and produce the self ... Memory bridges the gap between the lived past and the imagined future." (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>12</sup> Memory is a bridge between the past and the imagined future. For Assmann, "cultural memory has normative and formative powers since it serves to actively construct the identity of social groups from families to nations, which in turn 'socially mediate' individual memory. Memories are thus shaped by their social, generational and cultural context."<sup>13</sup> (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995). Social, generational and cultural context shape the memories. In "Present Past (1993), Richard Terdiman forcefully makes a case for memory as representation, explaining memory's activity as follows: 'A content of some sort is registered, with whatever fidelity the registering system can manage. Time passes. A representation appears, responsive to the content previously registered. What has happened is the memory. Whenever anything is conserved and reappears in representation, we are in the presence of a memory effect'(Anon, 2018)"<sup>14</sup>

Since what has happened is a memory, its mere representation is the presence of a memory effect. Subsequently, "Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these "figures of memory." (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>15</sup> The cultural memory has shaped by cultural formation and institutional communication creating figures of memory. According to Assmann, there are three essential characteristics of

<sup>9</sup> cla.purdue.edu. (2018). *Marxism Terms*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/marxism/terms/termsmainframe.html> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

<sup>10</sup> Assman, J. (2000). "Kültürel Bellek". İstanbul, Turkey: Ayrıntı Yayınları, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Assmann, J. and Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.126.

<sup>12</sup> Assmann, J. and Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.126.

<sup>13</sup> Assmann, J. and Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.130.

<sup>14</sup> Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at: <http://Plate>, L 2013, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

<sup>15</sup> Assmann, J. and Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.130.

cultural memory. Primarily, is the concretion of identity which means the memory's relation with a group. Second is its capacity to reconstruct. As Assmann argues, "Cultural memory works by reconstructing, is, it always relates that its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation." (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>16</sup> Followingly she adds as "Cultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objective meaning into its perspective, giving it its relevance." (Czaplicka, Huyssen and Rabinbach, 1995)<sup>17</sup> The third is the formation, the memory in which form memory crystallizes. Fourth is the organization, and the last is an obligation. For this article, the focus will be on the capacity of reconstructing Assmann's terms; as cultural memory works by reconstructing, in the period of digital age, there is a growing need to concentrate on social media mediums in where the performative function of the memory used. It is used by by reconstruction of famous people in popular gazettes in addition with the personal statement, and representation of the self comes to prominence. Moreover, there is a cultural dimension of the mind. What and how a given culture remembers set the cultural aspect of the cultural memory. Memory is social and cultural while providing the tools on how the "past present" to be analyzed.

## 2. The methodology: Digital Ethnography

In a given society, people acquire their memories not only by themselves but also from the popular culture surrounding them. As social media is widespread throughout the mobile devices, there is a rising necessity to study on what and how the popular culture nests within social media mediums. In recent years, digital ethnography comes into prominence since ethnography is a way of practicing research, digital ethnography is "iterative – inductive research ... That acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researcher's own role and that, views humans as part object/part subject."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, digital media has a multiplicity character beneath its fragmented appearances with various social media tools. One medium can have use different social media tools at the same time which can be a Facebook page, an Instagram page or a Twitter account. Therefore, "Digital technologies and media (and the things that people can do with them) are interdependent with the infrastructures of everyday life... Digital media need to be powered by a reliable energy source."<sup>19</sup> People recall, recognize and localize their memories also in social media. The mnemo technique refers as the selection of imaginative places has importance on the order of the events and description of the self with their images ; since the past come into life with the life and rests in the conciousness, social media is a tool being reproductive and turning remembrance into a performative one, which in turn leading performative projection of the self. In this article, the Instagram page of Kafa Gazette is chosen as a tool in analyzing the performative function of the memory. As far we know that memory is social and cultural; how the memory is staged and performed through the use of a social media tool, naming, Instagram will be examined.

---

<sup>16</sup> Assmann, J.and Czaplicka, J.(1995).Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65,Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.129.

<sup>17</sup> Assmann, J.and Czaplicka, J.(1995).Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65,Cultural History/Cultural Studies, pp.130.

<sup>18</sup> Győr, A. (2017). Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice - Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, Jo Tacchi. 2015, London, Sage Publications. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.

<sup>19</sup> Győr, A. (2017). Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice - Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, Jo Tacchi. 2015, London, Sage Publications. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.pp.123.

### 3. Popular Gazettes: Kafa Dergisi as a case study



Figure 1. The repost of a reader by Instagram account of Kafa Dergisi, with famous Turkish pop singer Sezen Aksu cover and a youtube video one of her song on phone.



Figure 2. The instagram repost of famous Turkish journalist Ayşe Arman mentioning "she loves the Kafa Gazette"

Since the beginning of the Turkish Republic, the caricature gazettes had a wider audience and their different stances in the press history. Changing to offset printing technology in the 1970s, the satirical gazettes naming as Girgır, Leman, and Öküz were coming into prominence. For instance, Öküz was one of the prominent popular gazettes that have created an underground literature branch, a gazette with a combination of caricatures and articles diverting from mainstream media. Leman was turned into being a trademark while opened several coffee shops while using the caricatures as tablecloths and wallpapers. While Penguen was closed down in

In the 2017 spring, one of the Uykusuz' caricaturist Yılmaz Aslantürk in an interview argues that the reason beneath is the popularity of evaluative humor in social mediums instead of illustrations and caricatures.<sup>20</sup> In the last three years [2014-2017] since blogs and microblogs like Facebook and Twitter gained prominence as a communication practice in everyday life, in Turkish printed press, a new branch of gazettes have come to life; this trend followed one gazette by another. Naming from Kafa, Ot, Bavul, KafkaOkur as they reached high circulation numbers compared to caricature gazettes as Penguen or Uykusuz. All the vocables of these gazettes have specific meanings. The vocable "Kafa" means both the body part as head and the mood of a given time in slang.

<sup>20</sup> Anon, (2018). [online] Available at: <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/otisabi-nin-yaraticisi-yilmaz-aslanturk-muhalefet-etmek-isteyen-bir-yolunu-bulur-yeter-ki-niyet-olsun-158435.html> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].



The founder of Kafa Gazette, Candaş Tolga Işık in one of his interviews' of how he decided to publish the Gazette, mentions that they decide to form a new Gazette, there's a problem with circulation number on periodicals which follows with the assumption that people were not reading anymore. Because of that, they choose to change the traditional literature press to an unconventional one: combining journalism aspect with literature which refers to him meanings on life, love, poetry, and breakups.<sup>21</sup> This unique literature aspect received popularity in social media since it opens up the meanings and metaphors of ordinary life; being loved, to be abandoned and have corresponded on daily communication life of oneself. They use cultural memory, both by reconstructing it, in Assmann's terms and they use "figures of memory." Memory is even an act of identity formation that serves to narrate and produce the self. These new format of gazettes on narratives are forming the narrative and appearance of the self with the use of social mediums.



Their broadcasting policy follows the similar logic: Their covers mainly are focusing on an illustration of a famous persona whether dead or alive. They also have a narrative –articles and poems- surrounding the chosen figure. Their cover can be a character of an actor has already played an old famous pop singer, an arabesque singer or a famous songwriter. They commonly are using the character's chosen words about life, love or sometimes poetry.

Figures 3 & 4. The Instagram posts of readers which are reposted by the Kafa. Representation of the "self" through Kafa Gazette.

<sup>21</sup> YouTube. (2018). Candaş Tolga Işık | Kafa Dergisinin Doğuşu. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFFdSHTqrWc> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

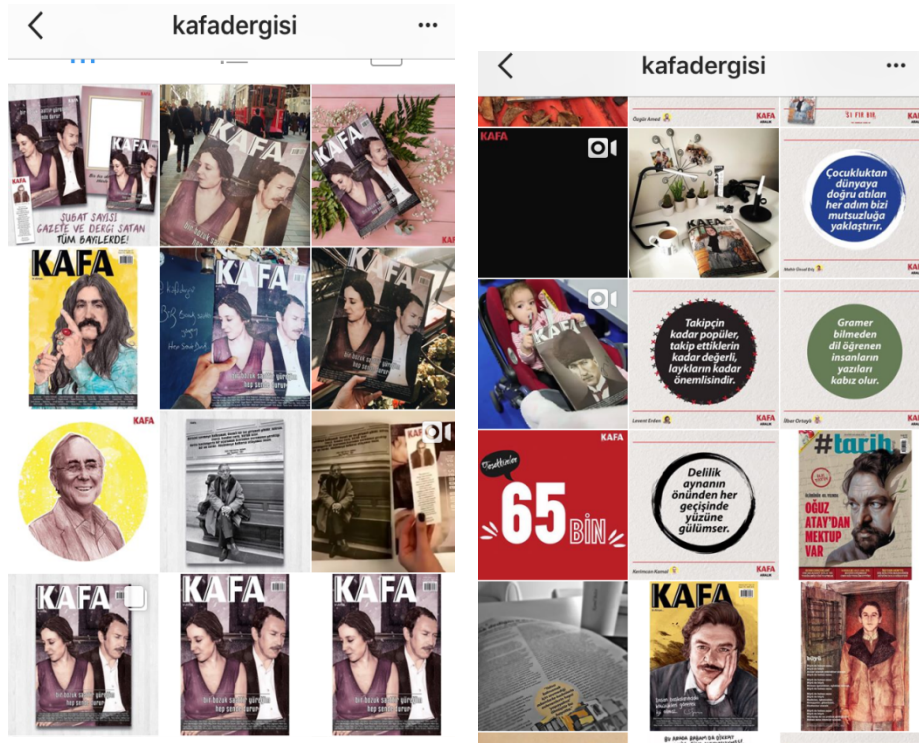


Figure 5 & 6. The Instagram page of Kafa using the quotations and illustrations in their posts.

### 3.1. The commodification of “figures of memory.”

The popularity of these periodicals depends on several reasons. First, they use the memory of having a performative function; they construct the social memory while combining personal elements behind them. Secondly, since social media is one of the major outlets of the daily life of ordinary people, with the use of social media posts power typing became a primary tool for people to recall and recollect their memories. Thirdly, since the last three years, while Twitter becoming a more critical micro-blog; statements of ordinary people through the social media likewise gained popularity. Therefore, these periodicals reached higher circulation numbers up to 40 thousand issues per month.<sup>22</sup> Using the illustrations of famous persona is followed by opening cafes and selling the covers as a commodification object. These objects vary from bags to bookmarks and bags. These figures are a commodification of “figures of memory” while using famous personas as their broadcasting strategy.

<sup>22</sup> www.gazeteciler.com (2016). Kafa Dergisi Zirvedeki Yerini Koruyor. [online] p.1. Available at: <http://www.gazeteciler.com/haber/kafa-dergisi-zirvedeki-yerini-koruyor/251748> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

The screenshot shows the Kafa website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Kafa logo and a search bar. Below the search bar, there is a promotional banner for 'Bez çantalar' (cups) with the text 'Müjde! Bez çantalar satışa çıktı. Sipariş verin adresinize gelsin!' and a grid of product images. Below the banner, there is a section for 'Yeni Ürünler' (New Products) with a list of products. The products are:

Product Name	Price	Additional Info
MFÖ Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün
Müzeyyen Senar Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün
Sait Faik Abasıyanık Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün
Tarık Akan Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün
Turgut Uyar Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün
Frida Kahlo Bez Çanta	10,00 TL	9,26 TL + KDV Yeni Ürün

Below the 'Yeni Ürünler' section, there is a product titled '5'li Miknatıslı Ayraç' (5-piece magnetic separator) with a price of 9,99 TL and 8,47 TL + KDV, also marked as a 'Yeni Ürün'.

Figures 7 & 8. The shopping site of Kafa on bags, bookmarks and cups. They mainly use the illustrations of their covers, also some poems or quotations linking the memory of the given famous people ranging from artist Frida Kahlo to actor Tarık Akan.

## CONCLUSION

The cultural dimension of the memory focuses on what and how the culture remembers. Popular culture, while using the mere representations of a past; “the figures of memory” changes the cultural memory into a performative one. The Kafa gazette and the similar gazettes resting on the cultural memory in a given society are altering the cultural memory while clinging the cultural memory to individual meanings. Since individual meanings are crucial in daily communication, one can assume that these gazettes are reconstructing the cultural memory setting it apart from the original meaning attached to it. While doing so, they are adding a commodification value of the cultural memory while using the performative function as a meta-commodification tool.



## Bibliography

Anon, (2018). [ebook] Available at [http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. \[Accessed 2 Feb. 2018\].](http://Plate, L 2013, Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, Routledge, Available from: Bookshelf Online. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].)

Anon, (2018). [online] Available at: <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/otisabi-nin-yaraticisi-yilmaz-aslanturk-muhalefet-etmek-isteyen-bir-yolunu-bulur-yeter-ki-niyet-olsun-158435.html> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

Assman, J. (2000). *“Kültürel Bellek”*. İstanbul, Turkey: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Assmann, J. and Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies.

cla.purdue.edu. (2018). Marxism Terms. [online] Available at: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/marxism/terms/termsmainframe.html> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

Czaplicka, J., Huyssen, A. and Rabinbach, A. (1995). Introduction: Cultural History and Cultural Studies: Reflections on a Symposium. *New German Critique*, (65).

Győr, A. (2017). *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice* - Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, Jo Tacchi. 2015, London, Sage Publications. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.

www.gazeteciler.com (2016). Kafa Dergisi Zirvedeki Yerini Koruyor. [online] p.1. Available at: <http://www.gazeteciler.com/haber/kafa-dergisi-zirvedeki-yerini-koruyor/251748> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].

YouTube. (2018). Candaş Tolga Işık | Kafa Dergisinin Doğuşu. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFFdSHTqrWc> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2018].