



Marc Gallicchio, ed. *The Unpredictability of the Past: Memories of the Asia-Pacific War in U.S.-East Asian Relations*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 337 pp. \$23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-3945-8.

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## Reconstructing History through Memory

In the last decade and a half, memory has become one of the most written and discussed topics in various academic disciplines, resulting in a number of publications that cover an array of issues from diverse geographical areas. Pierre Nora, in the introduction to his seminal three-volume work published in English in 1996, attributed the preoccupation with memory to modernization and the resulting “acceleration of history.”[1] But as many scholars have noted, interest in memory is also intricately linked to trauma, particularly those related to war and other armed conflicts.[2] Certainly, there has never been a lack of opportunities during the decade and a half. From the early 1990s in the United States, Western Europe, and Asia, the fiftieth anniversary of landmark events of World War II have sparked debates, set off controversies, and inspired cultural productions. Particularly in Europe, scholars of Holocaust studies led the way in memory studies. In the same decade, historians and anthropologists began re-examining the still-recent conflicts in Eastern Europe that resulted from the bloody disintegration of former Yugoslavia. The American tragedy that marked the beginning of the twenty-first century—the 9/11 attacks on the East Coast—produced yet another set of publications on trauma-related memory: that of cities in catastrophe.

Memories of the Asia-Pacific War also remain a volatile issue in Asia and, to some extent, in the United States. A number of publications have appeared in recent years that cover traumatic memories and resulting domestic and international controversies, including the disagreements over Japanese middle school textbooks, Japan’s lack of acknowledgement for its wartime criminal activities, and prime ministers’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine. *The Unpredictability of the Past: Memories of the Asia-Pacific War in U.S.-East Asian Relations* is one such collection. According to editor Marc Gallicchio, this volume is distinguished from other collections of such memories by its focus on three kinds of national memories:

American, Chinese, and Japanese. This focus—in contrast to a single-themed publication or one that attempts to highlight often neglected memories—is meant to “provide the reader with a solid foundation for future inquiry” (p. 7). The choice of the three countries seems self-explanatory: they were the major actors that were engaged in the actual military conflict. But as I will explain below, the different ways that the essays engage with memories in these three countries may have yielded a result that is not as coherent as expected.

The book’s premise “that memory is a reconstruction of the past, not a reproduction” (p. 5), is a generally accepted one. The strength of the collection, rather, is its focus on international relations: how it attempts to evaluate “the role that memories of the war have played in the development of transpacific relations since 1945” (p. 5). Another, and related, quality of the essays (with the exception of those in part 3), is their focus on process rather than outcome. Instead of engaging directly with the concept of memory, most essays deal instead with what may be described as “pre-memory”: the process of creating memories during which past events are reshaped, revised and sometimes erased under the influence of political, cultural, social, and even personal circumstances.

The sole essay in the book’s first part “Memory’s Many Forms” is entitled “Remembering Pearl harbor before September 11, 2001.” The essay is meant to serve as the introduction to the volume. In it, Emily S. Rosenberg uses the Pearl-Harbor-Nine-Eleven analogy as a point of departure to examine shifting American memories of the December 1941 Pearl Harbor attack. While most of us, post-September 11th, immediately link our renewed memory of Pearl Harbor to its evocation in association with the attacks, Rosenberg reveals that in the preceding decade, Americans had already been immersed with Pearl Harbor images due to strained Japan-U.S. relations, the resurgence of American interest in World War II that resulted in efforts to demonstrate renewed appreciation

for surviving and deceased veterans, and through popular culture. The dissection of events, still fresh in our minds, is a convincing account of the ways that memories can be shaped and reshaped over time. It also reminds us that memory is closely intertwined with forgetting. By creating a seamless connection between 1941 (which pulled America into what is often considered as their last “good war”) and 2001, the Bush administration attempted to erase from public memory the problematic military conflicts that the United States had engaged in between the two, in order to shape public opinion on “war on terror” positively.

Although Gallicchio points out that contribution to the volume employs a wide variety of sources in addition to “the archival records traditionally used by historians” (p. 6), the essays that distinguish this particular collection from others are those that do rely heavily on archival sources. The three essays in Part II, entitled “Policymakers and the Uses of Historical Memory” utilize correspondence, diary entries, interview transcripts and policy reports to vividly describe the ways that policymaking on the political level can directly affect popular memory. Haruo Iguchi’s “The First Revisionists: Bonner Fellers, Herbert Hoover, and Japan’s Decision to Surrender,” provides an added context to the *Enola Gay* controversy discussed in a later chapter. Iguchi explores how American party politics effected the postwar official interpretation of the decision and need to drop the bombs through a careful analysis of the making of “Hirohito’s Struggle to Surrender.” Fellers’s article published in *Reader’s Digest* (July 1947) as a rebuttal to a better known article by Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,” that appeared in *Harper’s* magazine six months earlier.

If Iguchi’s essay portrays the process through which history is reinterpreted for political means, the following two essays, “History and Memory in Postwar U.S.-Japanese Relations” by Frank Ninkovich and “Cold War Diplomacy and Memories of the Pacific War: A Comparison of the American and Japanese Cases,” by Takuya Sasaki analyze how American and Japanese officials “have used the lessons of the past to guide them in foreign policy decisions” (p. 8). As historian John Dower has convincingly argued, racism played a major role in the war between Japan and the United States.[3] Ninkovich follows the postwar American process of deconstructing or reversing of racial stereotypes established during the war, which assisted U.S. policymakers facilitate public acceptance of their international relations strategies with Japan. As Ninkovich himself notes in the concluding paragraphs of his essay, his illustration is only of the

American, or the winner’s side, which might have undergone a more straightforward process than the undoing of racial prejudices in Japan. Sasaki’s study of Asia-Pacific War memories covers both American and Japanese sides. In his essay, Sasaki attempts to examine not only the kinds of memories developed and maintained in the two nations, but also how they have “been transformed into legacies and lessons,” and their effects on foreign policies during the cold war (p. 121). In a manner similar to Iguchi, Sasaki does not tackle with the issue of memory directly; rather, the detailing of the changing opinions of the policy makers gives us a clear idea of how ideas are shaped and transformed on that level based on social, political, and economic circumstances, and on how the past needs to be justified.

The essays in part 3, “Making Memory Concrete: Museums, Monuments, and Memorials,” deal with museum exhibits and war memorials in China, America, and Japan. “Constructing a National memory of War: War Museums in China, Japan, and the United States” is Xiaohua Ma’s ambitious attempt to review in a single essay multiple museums and monuments in the three countries, while addressing the theme of the volume. Waldo Heinrich’s “The *Enola Gay* and Contested Public Memory” adds yet another layer to the much discussed Smithsonian controversy by drawing upon previously unused records of the Air Force Association. Yujin Yaguchi’s “War Memories across the Pacific: Japanese Visitors at the *Arizona* Memorial” is a fascinating account of visitors’ reactions at the Pearl Harbor memorial, which highlights the different ways Japanese and Americans respond to the same event. The same memorial that evokes mourning and remembrance for the Americans represents peace for the Japanese.

The essays in this part reveal the difficulties in creating an edited volume, even on a single theme, that is both interdisciplinary and interregional. The focus of Ma’s essay, which covers a number of case studies, seems to shift from one case study to another: from the intention/objectives behind the establishment of the genre war museum in China, to a close examination of the displays themselves in Japan. Because of the nature of the records used, Heinrich’s contribution is more about the shaping, shifting and politicizing of American memories with little correlation to international relations between the two countries in question. In Yaguchi’s case, the reason for the Japanese reaction is assumed (though correctly so). An exploration of why the Japanese read the *Arizona* memorial as peace would have further contributed to the goal of this volume. Examination of cultural institutions such as museums and war memorials in the same manner

that state policies and international relation strategies are analyzed might require a venue that allows for a longer text than a chapter in a edited volume.

The final part "Transpacific Memories" examines "the role of racial and ethnic identity in the formation of transnational memories" (p. 10). Race being a huge motivating factor between the war between Japan and the U.S., it is surprising that little discussion exists on memories of African Americans in the conflict. In "Memory and the Lost Found In "Memory and the Lost Found Relationship between Black Americans and Japan," Gallicchio locates the origin of African American partiality for the Japanese in Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 (start of Japan's image as the crusader against racial inequality) and traces the transformation of the African American view of the Japanese through the Asia-Pacific War and beyond. Racial and ethnic identity has a somewhat different presence in the final essay, "Entangled Memories: China in American and Japanese Remembrance of World War II," in which Daqing Yang surveys the under-examined memories of the war in China among the three countries. In addition to the construction of memory in the past that has been demonstrated in all the essays, Yang speculates into the future, further complicating the relationship between memory and history.

As Yang notes, it is true that "an often-overlooked area in the current English-language scholarship is the Sino-Japanese conflict before it became part of the global war in 1941" (p. 287). Compared to issues associated with Japan's war crimes in Korea, however, those committed in China during the war (representative of which is the Nanjing Massacre), as well as the controversies resulting from Japanese conservatives' denials, have been better highlighted in the United States in recent years precisely because of the efforts by Chinese Americans that Yang describes. As Gallicchio and Ma note, Korea also has a crucial place in East Asian memories of the Asia-Pacific War today (pp. 1-2, 156-157). An edited volume with a tighter focus that includes Korea might be a welcoming addition to the field.

*The Unpredictability of the Past* is a valuable text not only for scholars of East Asia or United States, but also for the general audience interested in memory studies. Most of the essays include at least one endnote entry with a comprehensive list of memory-related sources that have informed the author. It also pushes the field of memory studies by incorporating the international relations dimension: an attempt to apply the issues that have been

discussed on the personal and collective levels to the official, state level. Thus, it questions the role of memory in the construction of history. In his essay, editor Gallicchio warns the reader on the treatment of oral history narratives. Using a memoir of an American infantryman as an example, Gallicchio questions: "How much of his interview and memoir is remembered, and how much is filtered through other experiences?" (p. 274) Dominick LaCapra agrees that no memory can be purely primary, since "it has always already been affected by elements not deriving from the experience itself." [4] Memory of trauma is even further removed from actual experience since "what occurs is not integrated into experience or directly remembered, and the event must be reconstructed from its effects and traces." [5] The set of essays in this volume demonstrate together that all memories undergo similar transformation. Just as personal memory is filtered through other experiences, "official" or sanctioned, state memories also alter based on changes in political regime, natural or human catastrophe, or even smaller matters? " as the examples included have shown. In his writings on collective memory that many of the contributors drew upon, Maurice Halbwachs has shown that memory is subject to social context. [6] The essays in this book, together, show that similar vulnerabilities exist in the life of memories on the state level.

#### Notes

[1] Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *The Realms of Memory*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol.1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1-20, Quotation is on p. 1.

[2] For example, Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), in particular, chapter 1 "The Setting: The Great War in the Memory Boom of the Twentieth Century," 17-51.

[3] John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

[4] Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 21.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

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