

# History & Memory

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Traveling War

*Edited by*

Geoffrey M. White and  
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# History & Memory

*Studies in Representation of the Past*

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# Introduction

## *Traveling War: Memory Practices in Motion*

GEOFFREY M. WHITE AND EVELINE BUCHHEIM

While we were writing this introduction an article appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* recounting a set of encounters and exchanges that had led the granddaughter of a Japanese combatant killed in the battle of Pelilieu in the Western Pacific to return to that island in search of his remains or at least knowledge of the place where he had perished.<sup>1</sup> The sheer fact of a descendant returning to a battleground is not in itself a particularly new or newsworthy event. The storyline for this article focused as much on the chain of events that enabled the granddaughter's return as on the act of traveling itself—specifically on the discovery of a map at the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion Museum in Port Hueneme, California, that identified the location of a cemetery for Japanese remains. In similar ways, the war experiences recalled in this volume also travel across generations and oceans, enabled by the memory work of institutions such as museums, archives and local heritage projects.

In the articles presented here memory is not so much sited as transited, emerging as people move through multi-sited itineraries, more in the spirit of discovery than recovery, actively constructing their understandings of the past through encounters with people, artifacts and landscapes. While the spatial and architectural fixities of war memory have long attracted scholarly attention in research on memorials, monuments, battlegrounds and their commemorative practices, memory studies increasingly turn their attention to the social and performative practices that make past experiences “real” or relevant in the present.<sup>2</sup> Historians who focus on the constructions of history emerging in and around memorial sites now reject models that assume singular or fixed significance for those sites, choosing rather

to see them as sites of dialogue or performative enactments of history.<sup>3</sup> As Jay Winter has noted with reference to studies of war memory, “the performative turn is built into the shifts in identity attendant upon massive trans-national and trans-Continental migration. It is therefore inevitable that historians and other scholars will pay increasing attention to the ways in which people construct their sense of history by performing the past.”<sup>4</sup>

To the extent that there has been a performative turn in memory studies, it suggests a certain degree of convergence in the work of historians and anthropologists. To study the history of memory is to study acts of representation and remembrance that are always embedded in social relations and activities, activities of people constructing meaning in the present, using the tools of history to fashion desired futures. It is in this context that the authors collected here trace the paths of people moving through spaces of remembrance, crossing border zones where relevant identities gain heightened significance. In doing so these studies bring an ethnographic sensibility to examine what happens as memory emerges in the activities of people “on the move” in the transcultural and transnational circuits of travel and remembrance.

Turning analytic attention to movement, flux and flow has methodological implications. In introducing a collection of essays on “travelling memory,” Astrid Erll noted that “Mnemonic constellations may look static and bounded when scholars select for their research, as they tend to do, manageable sections of reality (temporal, spatial, or social ones), but they become fuzzy as soon as the perspective is widened.”<sup>5</sup> In this respect work in and on the transit areas of memory builds upon decades-long efforts in anthropology to deterritorialize the concept of “culture” while also shifting methodological approaches to more multi-sited research capable of tracing transcultural and transnational connections.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with the arguments of a number of influential studies of war memory in transnational perspective, the studies here find that transnational methodologies and perspectives are crucial to the analysis of cultural forces at work in the production of national histories, even when projected as tightly bounded within the commemorative traditions of single nation-states.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, cross-cultural, cross-national itineraries traveled in the course of remembering turn out to be a critical element for the vitality and relevance of national imaginaries.

## MEMORY AND (E)MOTION

When scholars do widen the lens to include connections across multiple spaces of remembrance, they often raise questions about the articulation of personal and public memory as well. For war memory, those articulations frequently occur in contexts that conjoin personal and family stories with dominant national narratives. The “edges” of these various domains of individual/familial/national remembrance offer a strategic vantage point from which to understand the affective politics of war memory in so far as it moves in the interstices of the private/public or individual/collective where memory can find validation and recuperation or, conversely, silence and marginality.<sup>8</sup>

In the domain of war memory, where the presence of the dead in cemeteries, memorials and commemorative practices adds an element of the sacred to the activities that take place there, one finds spatial and temporal dynamics much like that for pilgrimage described by Paul Conneron.<sup>9</sup> Noting the “sacred” quality typical of spaces of war remembrance immediately raises the question of how such qualities are maintained or recognized in the actions of people who traverse them. On the one hand, tourism studies have long compared tourism to a “sacred journey.”<sup>10</sup> And yet tourism itself is regarded as the epitome of the secular—superficial pleasures, entertainment, commodification—practices that would seem to contravene the very idea of the sacred. In accordance with recent moves in tourism studies to look more closely at the emotions that mark tourism travel, we argue that it is, in particular, the activities that bring agents of remembering into and through the spaces of remembrance that shape the emotional meanings of memory.<sup>11</sup>

If one could produce a map of war memory in populations affected by war, an aerial view of its spatial locations, we might see a vast dispersal of nodes of recollection or potential recollection in the domestic spaces where individuals tell stories (or choose not to tell them) in the intimacies of families and communities who share some knowledge of each other’s life experiences. Such a map would show dense clustering in the cities and towns caught up in the violence of war but would also spread out endlessly in the home areas of those displaced by violence or of the combatants who fought in distant battlegrounds. Of course such a map would not be static, it would have to have a temporal dimension capable of plotting memory

in motion as those who narrate past violence themselves move, carrying threads of connection to past events that may or may not diminish with time. Added to this intimate cartography would be those sites of public memory such as museums, memorials, cemeteries, battlegrounds, and so forth, that function as locations for collective remembrance, whether commemorative practices or more personal evocations, creating larger nodes dedicated to the cultivation of memory that now, in time, becomes an object of history and heritage. From this perspective, we can more easily see heritage as a multi-layered and active process, what Sharon Macdonald calls “heritagisation.”<sup>12</sup>

Imagine now that this fanciful geography of the remembered past could also represent the emotionality of war memory, capturing gradations of intensity and relevance in contemporary life—perhaps even by means of color coding, with degrees of saturation reflecting that intensity as it rises and falls through time and across space.<sup>13</sup> Such an affective coding might well show us the significance of flow, of motion and travel in the reproduction of memory as it (re)locates itself through time in strategic points of connection and reconnection between the intimate/personal and the formal/public. Like this imagined mapping, the articles here are also engaged in what one could call an affective cartography. Using ethnographic methods to examine (inter)personal transactions in public remembrance each author considers, to varying degrees, the “emotion work” entailed as actors negotiate the complicated interface of personal stories and larger histories.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the studies included here trace the itineraries of projects of remembrance that, all along the way, are marked by uncertainties, multiplicities and ambiguities. The Paris tours discussed by Geoffrey White yield moments of connection to descendants of World War II veterans and survivors, as well as vast stretches of normative tourism “taking in the sights.” Eveline Buchheim describes organized trips for Japanese-Dutch descendants born in colonial Indonesia that for some of the sponsors are a kind of diplomatic educational experience but for others a quest for recovery of lost ancestry. Carol Kidron’s account of a sponsored return to Auschwitz is at once an educational project and a journey of recovery of (family/state) memory. By no means a classic pilgrimage story involving healing or redemption through Jewish return to sites of suffering, it



is a process of progressive co-construction through multiple phases and encounters.

A major theme in all the contributions to this volume is the next generation's experience of war through images and narratives now co-constructed in a variety of contexts. These questions have been explored especially by children of Holocaust survivors as diverse as Art Spiegelman and Marianne Hirsch.<sup>15</sup> In this body of writing, identifying entanglements that are in some sense at a distance but, in another, constantly present shows that second-generation co-experiencing of a history of war, disaster, loss and destruction is anything but secondary. It is real and becomes *socially* real in travel and other activities enabling performative and affective engagements that allow the agents of "postmemory" to inhabit war histories in ways not unlike those with lived experience.

As wars recede in time, geographic distance also expands as those involved and their descendants move around. In this respect, geographies and temporalities of memory are interlinked as survivors, veterans, descendants and their relations relocate, whether from the dislocations of war itself or as a simple artifact of the increasing tempos of globalization. With expanding geo-temporal distance, memory practices have to work harder to sustain relevance in the present. To be able to compress time, memory institutions also have to compress space, whether with new technologies of communication or by encouraging and facilitating the movement of people who constitute communities of memory. Judging from the testimonies of those who do travel to and from war sites, the sense of "being there" generated by embodied presence in the places and spaces of wartime events enables, at least potentially, a greater sense of personal significance. But to what end? Other than forgetting, what are the problems that memory institutions address? And what means do they deploy to facilitate remembrance? Answering these questions draws attention to institutional milieus such as cemeteries, memorials, museums, tour programs and commemorative events—places and activities that also become destinations tied up with social, political and emotional projects on varying scales, including those of nation-states.

FIXING MEMORY

The very existence of sites of memory speaks to their success in cultivating a sense of fixity or inevitability in the histories they represent. In looking at the multiple sites implicated in travel as points in itineraries of movement rather than (only) as destinations, these studies work to denaturalize histories that otherwise appear bounded and singular, fixed by powerful means of representation. Here we follow the call in cultural studies to attend to borders and movement to understand centers and fixity.<sup>16</sup> This call has special resonance in the places that in fact are in the business of “preserving” memory—battlefields, cemeteries, museums, textbooks, and so forth. Such places draw us in, fix our gaze, including that of scholars. In doing so they are also attempting to “fix” problems of forgetting, revisionary thinking, meaninglessness, and other anxieties that surround spaces of remembrance.

Of course, it is most often states, especially nation-states, that are in the business of erecting memorials, curating museums and tending war cemeteries. As the preponderant weight of memory studies has made clear, they do so to create architectures of memory in the service of an authorized collective imagination, infusing the national subject with moral and personal significance by narrating historical events with stories about the actions of fellow citizens.<sup>17</sup> While it might seem that traveling to distant locations, especially internationally, might weaken connections between travelers and the events represented at such sites, in fact just the opposite often happens. Macdonald, discussing Jackie Feldman’s research on Israeli student trips to Poland’s World War II death camps, argues that “the proliferation of mediated forms of memory and the increased international traffic of people can support rather than diminish nationalism.”<sup>18</sup>

How is this so? What are sites of memory doing that support or strengthen national subjectivity? As work on transnational memory has discussed, and as we argue in these essays, narratives that emerge in the course of activities that transport people into the scenes and situations of war memory have a way of affecting actors who may, in some circumstances, inhabit and perform historical narrative. In this volume we have walking tours, school visits, heritage trips, memorial projects, exchange programs and other memory projects that are structured around movement—small and often informal “rites of passage” into and out of spaces

of remembrance. As people move they may also engage in a kind of ritual process—if not exactly a “sacred” journey, then still a journey that uses spatial movement to enable moral encounters and, potentially, personal transformation.

While this type of moral “fixing” may be a stated purpose of memory institutions intent on keeping memory “alive,” such experiences exist alongside the constantly expanding market for producing and consuming war as an object of global tourism. Hence the insight, underscored in these essays, that meaning and emotion do not inhere in the sites of memory, but rather reside in moments of encounter, embedded in itineraries of movement, whether returning East German veterans finding nostalgia in Vietnam housing projects or Americans on tour in Paris (re)discovering the “Good War” in narratives of liberation.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, histories produced in the contexts of tourism are often underwritten by popular cultural narratives produced in film, television histories and popular literature.<sup>20</sup> These sorts of intertextual resonance support and affirm dominant histories, bringing them into the present, just as the “Good War” narrative forged in the years of the Cold War could be redeployed in the Middle East wars of the twenty-first century.

With four of these five essays focused on World War II memory—the war that will soon have no embodied voices of experience—they ask, inevitably, about practices of “secondary” remembrance and feeling, of remembrance that is not grounded in personal experience and hence is somehow indirect, diluted or touristic. They reject that characterization, resisting any dichotomization of an original “authentic” experience of war and other experiences regarded as somehow derivative. Turning an ethnographic lens onto these memory practices reveals more complex “second” lives and connections to wartime experience. While tours and museums may be expanding as the new authorities on a past that now lacks survivors and veterans, we now have sons and daughters, veterans of other wars, or tour guides who become involved and moved as they reconstruct other people’s wartime experience. Disclosing and understanding this type of “postmemory” requires going beyond binaries such as commodification and commemoration.

Questions about the “authentic” or “deeper” meanings of sites of war memory often come back to questions of “Who is connected to the dead?” Whose connections authorize them to speak and feel in ways that

become emblematic of national subjectivity? Eveline Buchheim's study of the multiracial Dutch nationals born out of the history of colonial intimacy between the Dutch-*Indisch* women and Japanese men, and their visits to Japan organized since the 1990s, is another example of a quest for personal and familial validation through engagement with a larger national story of war. In this case, however, the validation derives not so much from major iconic sites but by virtue of the cross-hemispheric travel. Buchheim shows us how these tours of individuals, though they may be demographically insignificant to the nation, are integral to the Dutch transnational imaginary as they are generated out of complex, intersecting histories of colonialism, war and racialized postcolonial nationhood.<sup>21</sup>

As these studies demonstrate, using a transnational approach emphasizing movement and performance does more than simply take account of the geographies of travel. The concept of transnationality that emerges in these studies opens up a perspective for critically examining broader discourses of war that connect the problem of war memory to such topics as colonial history and/or the tangled relations between multiple identities marked by differences of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and so forth. It is an analytic that helps expose contradictory and sometimes even disruptive affects and epistemologies that are suppressed or elided in nationalized discourse.<sup>22</sup> It is these discourses that shape what can be said, remembered, known or felt about the past.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The five contributions in this volume focus on diverse types of transnational memory-making: East German veterans of the Vietnam War returning to places of their involvement (Christina Schwenkel); Holocaust families participating in several varieties of institutionalized remembrance (Carol Kidron); Americans touring World War II battlegrounds in France (Geoffrey White); offspring of wartime liaisons between Japanese men and Dutch women visiting Japan (Eveline Buchheim); and Okinawans returning to their former places of residence in Micronesia (Shingo Iitaka). Approaching these subjects with ethnographic methods and archival research, these studies pursue multi-sited research to reveal the complex and layered nature of memory formation among and between multiple agencies.

In “The Other Veterans: Socialist Humanitarians Return to Vietnam” Schwenkel follows a group of East German men to Vietnam who as “other” veterans, helped to reconstruct cities after the air-raids had ceased in the early 1970s. She studies the intention of the return journeys of these lesser-known war tourists. In doing so she purposely expands the military meaning of the word veteran by including noncombatant participants in the war. For these Vietnam veterans their trip is not primarily about healing or reconciliation. Instead they want to reinscribe their status and attribute meaning to their former expert work—work that has had much less value in post–Cold War reunified Germany. In these journeys the returning veterans visit places they had helped to rebuild during their time in Vietnam, often off the beaten track, where they again meet with the local people. Schwenkel calls these sites places of sensorial or affective memory and observes how these encounters leave the visitors amazed at the country’s recovery since they last saw it.

The Vietnamese officials who invited the veterans back often have very different intentions from those of the East German travelers. For them the importance of the trip is more related to the present than to the past; the officials are primarily interested in contemporary economic opportunities. As it turned out, however, most of the former experts were in no position to provide either investments or aid. As Schwenkel makes clear, in the end, for them the return trips were more about coming to terms with former German Democratic Republic memories in present-day unified Germany than about memories of the German Democratic Republic in Vietnam.

Schwenkel’s account of the returning East German veterans presents a heartwarming story about human values and solidarity. But the fact that this return narrative ends with little concrete outcome or future seems to leave only nostalgia—feeling for a valued but lost past. These visits evoke cooperation and gratitude along with recognition of the value of the human relations that were made possible by that lost work. In this respect, this memory project is utopian, thinking beyond the present, beyond the totalities of capitalism, but with little effect. The socialist heart finds, instead, condominiums. The object of nostalgia is even more lost than in Jewish Poland. Here there is no diasporic population to memorialize the lost world. The GDR museum, instead, becomes a place of tourist kitsch.<sup>23</sup>

With a wide range of empirical data, Kidron's "Survivor-Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance: Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?" offers insight into the practice of memory making as a cooperative process among multiple parties over time. The article discusses cases of Holocaust memory that travel across a range of private and public realms, with attention to the construction of memories that evoke and strengthen personal memories, even when guided by master narratives. Kidron shows how the family is not only a crucial co-producer of national memories, but also the place where these national memories dwell in everyday life. Peeling off more and more layers behind the reasons for certain behavior of her interviewees Kidron cautions against straightforward explanations of conduct. In her vignettes we see how descendants of Holocaust survivors act as memory brokers and how next generations are constituted as carriers of memories, but we also see the influential roles played by institutions. Kidron illustrates her analysis with observations that make it clear why ethnographic descriptions are indispensable for understanding the role of lost or silenced memories.

In his article "Is Paris Burning? Touring America's 'Good War' in France," White shows how a guided stroll through the streets of the city could become a vehicle for participants to co-construct America's "Good War" by narrating the liberation of Paris in 1944. In the process he discovers the extent to which popular cultural representations of World War II frame the tour's production of history. Noting the basis for the walking tour in the novel (and film) *Is Paris Burning?*, White's study examines the indirect and often invisible means through which reigning national narratives are validated (and at time destabilized) in international and cosmopolitan contexts. By providing a thick description of the tours, including the important role played by guides, the ethnography demonstrates the manner in which dominant narratives are reproduced but also modified and even subverted through encounters with alter-histories—histories more thickly produced in European contexts where civilian centers became sites of suffering mostly unknown in urban America.

In "Enabling Remembrance: Japanese-*Indisch* Descendants Visit Japan," Buchheim analyzes reconciliation trips to Japan against the backdrop of complex relations between Japanese and Dutch nationals resulting from different World War II experiences and divergent postwar views of that conflict. The idea for reconciliation trips, sponsored by the Japanese

government, developed in the wake of two groups who urged the Japanese government to provide compensation and appeasement. One of these lobby groups primarily stressed the moral obligation Japan has towards former Dutch inhabitants of Indonesia while the other group wanted to improve relations with the Japanese people after all these years. The trips to Japan made by descendants of Japanese fathers and Dutch women during the Japanese occupation of colonial Indonesia are prepared with utmost caution and reveal different kinds of tensions. Similar to the differences that Schwenkel describes between (East) German veterans traveling to Vietnam and their Vietnamese sponsors, the Japanese officials who sponsor the trips often have very different intentions from those of the Japanese-*Indisch* descendants. The way the trips are organized shows how Japan invests in presenting itself as a peaceful society. Although there is more public interest in Japan now in the descendants of Japanese military during World War II, the topic is still controversial. Also in the Netherlands the “children of the enemy” remain a contested group, especially among former inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies where sympathy for the Japanese occupier of the former colony is still often lacking. The trips are frequently very emotional for these half-Japanese descendants who express difficulty in making sense of all the confusing feelings and experiences in an unknown fatherland.

In “Remembering *Nan'yo* from Okinawa: Deconstructing the Former Empire of Japan through Memorial Practices,” Iitaka takes us to the Northern Marianas and Palau, which had constituted part of the Japanese empire in the Western Pacific Ocean. He describes spirit-consoling services performed by former Okinawan residents of these islands during their return visits. The transnational context here is complicated by Okinawans’ own complex and colonial relationship with Japan. Thus, as a result of their double marginalization, both at home and as laborers living under the Japanese administration of the islands in the first half of the twentieth century, the return journeys become an occasion for reflecting and refiguring multiple relations between and among Okinawans, Japanese and native islanders.

Iitaka’s fieldwork shows how the Okinawans’ personal memories of loss clash with the standard Japanese patriotic narratives of the Pacific War. He even points to the possible danger of reducing their memories to nostalgic recollections of the Japanese colonial period. The Okinawans’ visits also impact their relations with the local inhabitants of the islands,

raising complex issues as a result of their common history. Analyzing the memorial services conducted on site, Iitaka reveals the implications of these practices for multiple communities. He shows how practices inspired by the Japanese Buddhist tradition of consoling the spirits of the dead also reveal the entanglement of memories of the Pacific War and of the Japanese colonial period.

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Looking closely at the variety of forms of travel taken up in these essays, from global tourism to voyages of personal discovery, shows the uncertain and often ambiguous ways in which acts of remembrance may “fix” memory, whether to freeze a desired narrative or repair a problematic one. Our use of travel as a strategy comes with an argument about the importance of ethnographic approaches in understanding moments of remembrance in which the agents of memory move through multiple sites of memory making, especially those that connect the personal-intimate with the public-official.

Taking into account the powerful transnational forces that underwrite war tourism may lead to a somewhat pessimistic view of the possibilities for critical historical awareness given the relentless commodification of the past and the dominant influence of state-centered histories. But such pessimism only affirms the urgency of cultural critique capable of critically examining the production and circulation of cultural representations of war in popular and official culture.

## NOTES

We are indebted to all of the authors in this special issue as well as colleagues who participated in the several panels and symposia that preceded it, beginning with the 2011 workshop on “Travelling Heritages: Return-Tourism of WWII-Veterans, Survivors and Relatives to and from Indonesia and Japan,” convened by Esther Captain and Eveline Buchheim at the NIOD, Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, followed by the panel on “Traveling War” organized by Geoffrey White at the 2012 meetings of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, and finally the panel on “World War II at the Crossroads of Memory” at the 2012 meeting of the Association for Cultural



Studies in Paris. Of these, we especially want to acknowledge the work of Esther Captain, Joon Choi and Mariko Iijima, whose work contributed to the development of the present set of articles. In writing this introduction we have benefited especially from the insightful commentary of two outstanding discussants: James Clifford for the “Traveling War” panel and Lisa Yoneyama for “World War II at the Crossroads of Memory.”

1. David S. Cloud, “Map May Hold Key to Lost World War II Bones at Pacific Battle Site,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-wwii-peleliu-20150503-story.html#page=1> (accessed May 4, 2015).

2. Susannah Radstone, “What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 109–23.

3. Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél’ d’Hiv’ in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

4. Jay Winter, “The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity,” in Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter, eds., *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 21.

5. Astrid Erll, “Travelling Memory,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 14.

6. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); George E. Marcus, “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95–117.

7. See, for example, Lisa Yoneyama, “For Transformative Knowledge and Post-nationalist Public Spheres: The Smithsonian Enola Gay Controversy,” in T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation, Tracking Globalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Geoffrey M. White, “Remembering Guadalcanal: National Identity and Transnational Memory-Making,” *Public Culture* 7, no. 3 (1995): 529–55.

8. Compare Winter’s assertion that “remembrance is an activity of agents who congregate on the borderline between the private and the public, between families, civil society, and the state.” Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between*

*Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 150.

9. Paul Connerton writes that a frequent feature of the pilgrimage journey is a kind of “sacred centre of gravity” for which the pilgrimage route becomes “ever more sacralised as the pilgrim moves towards the central shrine.” Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17.

10. Nelson H. H. Graburn, “Tourism: The Sacred Journey,” in Valene L. Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 21–36.

11. David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds., *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

12. Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London: Routledge, 2013), 191.

13. Here we cannot help but note the connection between coloring emotion and the literature on “dark tourism” that led, inevitably, to calls to complicate the dichotomy of “light/dark” affect into shades of gray. See John Lennon and Malcom Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (London: Cengage Learning, 2000); Philip R. Stone, “A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Towards a Typology of Death and Macabre Related Tourist Sites, Attractions and Exhibitions,” *Tourism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 54, no. 2 (2006): 145–60. In the realm of emotion, however, even the full color spectrum suggested here can only be a pale metaphor for the representation of affect.

14. For a perspective on the “emotion work” of cultural institutions, see Geoffrey M. White, “Emotive Institutions,” in Conerly Casey and Rober B. Edgerton, eds., *A Companion to Psychological Anthropology: Modernity and Psychocultural Change* (London: Blackwell, 2004), 241–54.

15. Art Spiegelman, *Metamaus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

16. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*; Clifford, *Routes*. For this strategy applied specifically to the interpretation of war memory, see Fujitani, White and Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories*.

17. As in Benedict Anderson’s famous example of the tomb of the unknown soldier with which he begins his much-cited work on nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. and extended 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

18. Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 203. As Feldman discusses for state-sponsored school “voyages” for Israeli students to the death camps of Poland, “The permeability of national boundaries, the ease and relative affordability of travel, and the ability to diffuse knowledge of the voyages through mass media all enable the

State to promote voyages to the dead.” Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, beneath the Flag*, 260, cited in *ibid.*, 203.

19. See also Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

20. Lisa Yoneyama, “Commentary for Session on ‘War Tourism: World War II at the Crossroads of Memory,’” at the Association for Cultural Studies 9th International Conference, “Crossroads in Cultural Studies,” Paris, 2012.

21. As Lisa Yoneyama pointed out in her remarks on Buchheim’s paper when presented in 2012, the intense significance of wartime experience for race and nation leads one to question how the period of Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies could be so invisible in Anne Stoler’s work on colonial intimacy. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Yoneyama wondered if this absence might have to do with the force of the dominant American narrative of World War II as a war fought between the free world and the fascists. As many have shown, World War II in fact occasioned a plethora of local and regional conflicts, many of them related to anti-colonial struggles in which that war was only a brief episode for many. Hence “fixing” memory for the national imagination may involve strategies of rhetorical incorporation or reintegration. See Fujitani, White and Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories*; Francesca Cappelletto, *Memory and World War II: An Ethnographic Approach* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

22. Yoneyama, “Commentary for Session on ‘War Tourism.’”

23. We are grateful to James Clifford for many of these insights, which he presented in his comments on Schwenkel’s paper in the panel “Traveling War” at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 2012. See also Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

# The Other Veterans

## *Socialist Humanitarians Return to Vietnam*

CHRISTINA SCHWENKEL

This essay examines alternative circuits of memory of the “American War” and the return of other “veterans” to postwar Vietnam; namely, socialist experts from East Germany who contributed to war efforts and urban reconstruction in the 1970s. It follows a delegation of experts who returned in 2007 to the devastated city of Vinh, which they had helped to rebuild. The motivations and itineraries of these returnees diverged from the typical agendas of “war tourists,” including the return journeys of U.S. veterans. For the socialist humanitarians, returning to Vietnam offered an opportunity for important memory work within and across former Cold War divisions.

On a windy fall afternoon in Hanoi in 1999, in the early months of field-work,<sup>1</sup> I came upon a crowd of people gathering at the northern end of Hoàn Kiếm Lake, where the broad, French-built avenues of the city center yield to the narrow, congested streets of the Old City. As I approached on my bike, I saw an open-air exhibition with enlarged black-and-white photographs from the war hung on a bamboo frame, encircling a fountain in the middle of a traffic roundabout. There were intimate images of children peering out from a tunnel, where they had lived during air raids; a weary female combatant smiling as she rested; a contemplative war invalid gazing across the city’s central lake; male soldiers walking hand in hand, rifles slung over their shoulders; and other provocative portraits. A palpable sense of excitement filled the air as traffic came to a halt and spectators dismounted from their motorbikes, pointing to particular images, sometimes recognizing family, friends or neighbors. Word of the exhibi-

tion quickly traveled and, within a remarkably short period of time, some of the men and women in the photographs began to arrive on the scene.

I located the photographer, Thomas Billhardt—a celebrated photojournalist from former East Germany (GDR)—who had set up the unofficial exhibit in the hope of locating his photographic subjects from thirty years prior. “This is so exciting!” Billhardt repeated breathlessly as he ran around greeting new arrivals, including the father of a lifeless child represented tenderly in one of his photographs. His joyful reunion with a woman he had photographed as a young militia member, as she took an American soldier prisoner, subsequently became the focus of the documentary *Eislimonade für Hong Li*.<sup>2</sup> The film documented Billhardt’s return to Vietnam and his search for the people in his images, with whom he had shared both intimate and violent moments during the war.

My serendipitous meeting with Billhardt offered the first of many unexpected acquaintances I would make with other wartime “veterans.” Their civil (and, for some, military) service in northern Vietnam during and after the war with the United States forged a lesser-known transnational history—and a collective socialist memory of the “other side” of war. In this essay, I address this alternative memoryscape, constituted by the diverse experiences of socialist-allied people who traveled, at times clandestinely, across borders within the former communist bloc. Xiaobing Li’s notable work on the covert support operations of Russian and Chinese forces—including logistics officers, training instructors, anti-aircraft battalions and military engineers—offers key insights into the machinations behind communist Vietnam’s hard-fought victory.<sup>3</sup> Here, I apply a broader usage of the term *veteran* to include noncombat participants in the war, who were considered other, international “soldiers” of the revolution, including cultural producers and technical advisors from supporting socialist countries who engaged in nonmilitary labor.<sup>4</sup> Today, these veterans have no official status and enjoy no special state-conferred rights or privileges (indeed, many veterans of the armed conflict are not recognized).<sup>5</sup> Rather, I apply the term *veteran* to this group to denote an embodied subjectivity and affective positioning in relation to the wartime past.

As Meredith Lair has argued in her research on U.S. logistics personnel during the Vietnam War, the words “veteran” and “soldier” typically conjure images of harrowing and relentless frontline battles with the enemy Other. Yet more than 75 percent of American troops in Vietnam served in

noncombat positions, and still more never witnessed battle.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, on the side of the revolution, war stories and war memory most often center on combat, thus overlooking the myriad supporting roles, both military and civilian, that thousands of international experts and workers played to sustain the war effort and then rebuild Vietnam.<sup>7</sup> Their endeavors were part of wider military and humanitarian policies of socialist internationalism in the 1960s and 1970s, which provided mutual aid and “solidarity assistance” to fraternal countries. “We are the other veterans,” a chief urban planner and architect from the GDR who worked in Vietnam from 1973 to 1975 proudly declared to me. He pointed to those who, like himself, were politically motivated by moral and humanistic concerns about an unjust war to rebuild that which the United States had destroyed.

This essay examines the return journeys of a group of these nonmilitary veterans to Vietnam, namely, East German experts who helped redesign and rebuild a bombed and devastated city as part of a seven-year project undertaken after the cessation of air raids in 1973. For these “socialist humanitarians”—a term that acknowledges their humanist ethics and their role as socialist specialists, who promoted both disaster relief and social reform—the war was a profoundly formative period of their lives. Their experiences continue to shape their sense of personhood today, in a post-Cold War world where their achievements have been grossly devalued. The deep affective attachments they formed during and after the war, as East German and Vietnamese citizens worked collectively toward national recovery, motivated their return visits and enduring sense of camaraderie. As such, their travel itineraries differed significantly from the typical war tourist agenda, in which destruction and ruination are transformed into multisensory spectacles that beckon the visitor to imagine, if not experience, the apocalyptic trauma of war.<sup>8</sup>

Because other kinds of war memory—beyond Hollywood films and imaginaries of VC insurgency—informed their desire to return to Vietnam, the East German returnees displayed a marked absence of what Svetlana Boym has termed “ruinophilia,” or ruin-gazing.<sup>9</sup> Their memory trips were consequently less about temporally and spatially preserved historical memory than about generative and forward-looking acts of remembrance.<sup>10</sup> By rekindling former relations and identities, these visits gave new vitality and affect to still vivid pasts. Moreover, their travels differed from those of returning U.S. veterans, which are bound up with

desires for healing and reconciliation—journeys that are more backward looking than future oriented.<sup>11</sup> For the socialist humanitarians, returning to Vietnam not only evoked shared memories and sentiments of solidarity—such as the collective celebration of victory on April 30, 1975—but reinscribed status and significance to their technical work. Though it has been forgotten in reunified Germany, this work is still fondly remembered in Vietnam today. Vietnamese hosts likewise invoked past discourses of humanitarian and political solidarity, though to a different—albeit still future-focused—end: to elicit new forms of capitalist aid and investment from their old socialist friends.

“SOLIDARITÄTSAKTIONEN”: SOCIALIST HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE  
TO VIETNAM

Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of academic interest in humanitarianism and its attendant forms of governmentality. The emergence of a “humanitarian sensibility,” which aspires to end human suffering and recognize the equality of all human beings, is often traced back to the abolition movement and the growth of industrial capitalism.<sup>12</sup> Much scholarship on the topic has subsequently privileged the role of Western actors undertaking humanitarian projects, usually in the Global South. More recently, Didier Fassin has made the important observation that humanitarian action, once considered “an exclusive prerogative of Western institutions and nations,” is now increasingly claimed by non-Western (for example, Islamic) organizations and states.<sup>13</sup>

However, these formulations overlook another critical lineage of humanitarianism: that of socialist states before the Soviet Union’s collapse. Though their techniques and ideologies of humanitarian assistance differed considerably from those of the West (indeed, they rejected the term “aid” because of its association with capitalist programs),<sup>14</sup> the humanist goal was similar: to alleviate suffering and provide relief from natural disaster, poverty, and war. The socialist states, however, understood the causes of and solutions to human suffering very differently, shifting the focus away from the liberal, rights-bearing individual to broader social and economic reforms to emancipate humanity. As Peter Redfield and Erica Bornstein remind us, humanitarianism can manifest itself as “several

things at once: a structure of feeling, a cluster of moral principles, a basis for ethical claims and political strategies, and a call for action.”<sup>15</sup> Thinking about humanitarianisms in the plural, rather than as a universal regime, allows a deeper understanding of the motivations of East German experts to provide assistance to Vietnam, which were also driven by the desire to improve conditions for those who had been unjustly targeted by U.S. military aggression.

During the Cold War, all sides (including the nonaligned) used “development” as an ideological tool to maintain strategic political alliances and wield international influence; U.S. postwar recovery programs, such as the Marshall Plan, are well-known historical examples of such work. Lesser known are the development projects that socialist states engaged in with “kindred” nations. The frequent deployment of kinship metaphors forged empathetic bonds between socialist allies, which ostensibly transcended racial and national difference (social ills identified with the capitalist West), and lent a moral urgency to the collective struggle against violence and imperialist exploitation. The emphasis on non-hierarchical communities of common interest was key to the principle of solidarity that underpinned socialist humanitarianism,<sup>16</sup> as was its rejection of charity as a bourgeois and paternalistic institution that sustained (rather than dismantled) inequality. The East German slogan, *Sozialismus ist Menschlichkeit* (Socialism is Humanity), embodied this ideological spirit. While not everyone embraced it, the slogan aimed to remind citizens of their responsibility to act globally in the name of humanity, and in fraternal solidarity with colonized peoples in the Third World.

Both state and non-state actors took up the notion of solidarity with liberation movements and postcolonial governments. Following the defeat of the French in 1954, for example, the GDR provided the newly independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, North Vietnam) with military aid: weapons, training and equipment; this support continued during the war with the United States. Under the banner of *Solidarität hilft siegen* (Solidarity brings victory), East Germans vehemently opposed the war. Citizens of all ages were encouraged to express their support for the “heroic Vietnamese” in their “struggle against American imperialism.” Citizen-initiated and government-supported *Solidaritätsaktionen* (solidarity actions) included children’s protest letters addressed to Washington, DC; anti-war demonstrations; food banks; blood drives; information sessions;



bazaars; and events to raise donations for the “solidarity fund.”<sup>17</sup> The press covered such activities extensively. And while some citizens felt such actions to be socially compulsory (such as contributing to fund drives at state enterprises or schools), others felt passionate about creating a *sozialistisches Bruderland*—a socialist brotherland in Vietnam.

In January 1973, after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, the GDR shifted its focus to national reconstruction at the request of Hanoi. It was not the only country to do so. Much of the communist world pledged recovery assistance to the Vietnamese government, whose infrastructure was in ruins after a decade of fierce bombing. This new stage widened cooperation between socialist countries and across a range of infrastructure sectors. In the GDR, postwar aid led to a number of bilateral agreements between Berlin and Hanoi that outlined plans for mutual assistance (such as medical equipment in exchange for agricultural exports); “solidarity donations” to humanitarian projects; and—most ambitiously—the design and reconstruction of the city of Vinh, capital of Nghệ An province.

A strategic port and industrial center in north-central Vietnam, Vinh had been the target of recurrent aerial attacks by the United States, which dropped more than two hundred fifty thousand tons of ordnance on the city between August 1964 and January 1973.<sup>18</sup> Residents, and especially children, were ordered to evacuate to the surrounding mountainous regions. By the end of the air war, the city lay in ruins; according to official statistics, an estimated 8,851 structures had been demolished.<sup>19</sup> Upon arriving in the leveled city, one GDR expert recalled thinking that “Vinh was fully destroyed, but not yet dead.” Consequently, from 1974 to 1980, a massive reconstruction project—financed and executed by the GDR in cooperation with Vietnam—brought the city “back to life.” Reconstruction transformed the devastated landscape into a modern industrial center with an advanced material and technological infrastructure, including new and rebuilt factories, electric lines, sewer systems, schools, parks, a stadium and central market. Construction of the *Wohnkomplex*, or micro-district of Quang Trung, was the largest and most challenging undertaking; the complex went on to house approximately eight thousand residents in 22 five-story apartment blocks—close to 15 percent of the city’s population, who had been left homeless by the air war.<sup>20</sup>

By the close of the project, more than two hundred GDR specialists had worked in some capacity on Vinh’s reconstruction. They were mostly

men, although a handful of their wives served in nontechnical, clerical roles like kitchen managers and receptionists. Though chief architects and planners were recruited, lower-level experts applied for positions advertised at their state enterprises in the GDR. The selected specialists represented a broad range of expertise, from city planning to carpentry to mechanics. They traveled to Vietnam on two-year, renewable contracts, in cohorts of up to forty. Some stayed for more than one term, attracted by the task at hand and the money they earned (a *Zuschlag* in addition to their standard salary). Although they lived and ate separately (dining on imported German food), GDR experts worked closely with Vietnamese specialists and brigades of skilled workers. Their goal was not only to rebuild Vinh's urban infrastructure but to engineer a new and prosperous socialist society.

#### RETURN TO VIETNAM

Since the normalization of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United States in 1995, postwar return journeys to Vietnam have become increasingly common for those Americans whose histories are intricately woven with the war. Memoirs by overseas Vietnamese, former war correspondents and Vietnam veterans explore the complex emotional experiences of returning to a place of tremendous loss—of homeland, life, youth, property, family, innocence and identity.<sup>21</sup> Frequently, these memory trips are restorative healing journeys, motivated by the desire for renewal and reconciliation, atonement and understanding.<sup>22</sup> Underlying the narrative voice in these memoirs is often a passionate longing to witness peacetime, settle past injustices, and resolve the trauma and grief that persist across time and space.

On the other hand, for GDR experts on the “winning side,” the war was as conceivably productive as it was forcefully destructive. Vietnam provided a canvas for urban experimentation, and for building a socialist utopian future upon the ruins of an apocalyptic past. Although their lives were also marked by grueling hardships (traveling from Hanoi to Vinh across rivers without bridges), dangers (unexploded ordnance), shortages (especially of certain foods) and loss (including one colleague who died by electrocution), the GDR experts were motivated by the gratification of working *against*, rather than *within*, the machinations of U.S. imperialism.

Remorse and animosity were thus absent, contrary to the sentiments of many American returnees. There is, however, one important intersection: returning GDR experts were similarly clouded by apprehension and driven by analogous questions of what had become of war-torn Vietnam—in particular, of the city of Vinh.

I first met with a group of GDR experts in the summer of 2006, in a café along the Spree River in Berlin. During this meeting, I learned of a planned return trip—a *Vietnam-Reise*. At this initial meeting, my research intrigued the aging men, though they were somewhat wary of my intentions: Why would an American ethnographer (from a capitalist country, one pointed out) be interested in their disregarded (socialist) story? Their reaction was prompted by the tense politics of memory in unified Germany, which tended to treat their work dismissively (for example, by representing the housing estate as a “failed experiment”). However, my long-term fieldwork in Vietnam and familiarity with Nghệ An eventually won me acceptance among these new research respondents, who came to see that I was genuinely interested in their lives and work experiences abroad. Even more importantly, they learned that we shared common interests and acquaintances in Vinh.<sup>23</sup>

As planned, one year later, in November 2007, a delegation of former GDR experts returned to Vietnam, to the decimated city they had helped to rebuild. This official visit happened at the invitation of the provincial People’s Committee of Nghệ An, in cooperation with the German-Vietnamese Association in Berlin. Ten experts born between 1929 and 1943 made the two-week journey. While returnees covered their own airfare, the province paid for accommodation, local travel, and meals. “We were guests of the provincial government,” one participant explained. Although the official reason for the visit, as outlined in the letter sent to the ten invitees from Vinh, was to thank the experts for their years of support (“ein Dank für die Unterstützung”), the government officials, as I demonstrate below, had more complex intentions.

Also complex were the tensions that developed between those who were selected to make the trip and those who were not.<sup>24</sup> The chairman of the German-Vietnamese Association in Berlin carried out the selection process, with the goal of choosing a diverse group of specialists. The experts included architects and urban planners, construction engineers, a port and shipping expert, a carpenter, a teacher and school curriculum

planner, a machinery technician, quarry and cement factory supervisors, and a cook (wife of one of the engineers). Experts represented various cohorts spanning the seven-year reconstruction project—including from the earliest and last groups sent to Vinh. The length of their assignments had varied between one and five years, with a two-year average. One returnee explained how the hierarchy of experts reflected the choice of invitees: the master planners had held high positions in the government (i.e., in ministries), while the lower-level experts who had stayed on in Vinh for much longer had not. It was the latter group who had forged close relationships with the residents of Vinh, and thus they were invited back.<sup>25</sup> A few had already traveled to Vietnam as tourists in the early 2000s;<sup>26</sup> others had never returned.

In what follows, I analyze the embodied meanings and sentiments attached to this post–Cold War visit for both Germans and Vietnamese, the first official reunion after the dissolution of the GDR and implementation of Vietnamese economic reforms. I argue that the emotional intensities returnees expressed cannot be disconnected from their affective experience of place and their sense of reemplacement during visits to former work sites. Grappling with a bygone era of “belonging” and their own post-unification dislocation, these humanitarians became “place-makers,” in Keith Basso’s sense of the term:<sup>27</sup> remembering and reinvesting emotional energy into historical landscapes associated with a particular temporality of objects, ideals, attachments, socialities and identities from the past. While I was not able to join the delegation on their journey, I did conduct interviews with them in Germany afterwards. An architect also presented me with his detailed daily travelogue (see below). Additionally, during my fieldwork in Vinh in 2010–11, I interviewed officials and residents connected to the delegation’s visit. As I demonstrate below, the postsocialist setting for the reunion prompted the GDR experts to reevaluate the past and its attendant urban forms. It moreover repositioned their subjectivity, which was shaped by former socialist and emerging capitalist relationships (often in tension) with both Vietnam and Germany.

## POSTSOCIALIST RECONNECTIONS: THE TOUR

The delegation's itinerary focused on reconnecting the experts with the places they had helped to rebuild during their assignment in Vietnam, as well as with the people who inhabit(ed) those spaces. As such, their agenda took them to largely non-touristic locations that were off the beaten memory path for international visitors. American veterans also commonly return to places of deeply sensorial or affective memory—including former military bases and battle sites—where sights, sounds and smells revive past sentiments.<sup>28</sup> However, many of these destinations have been incorporated into the larger repertoire of war tourist attractions, such as Khe Sanh Combat Base, one of the highlights of the “DMZ Tour” in the province of Quảng Trị.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the GDR delegation's visits to banal, everyday sites of work and dwelling forged distinct “place-worlds,” which revived (and “brought into being”) particular versions of the past in a post-Cold War present, through recounted and reencountered stories and memories.<sup>30</sup> As an engaged act of place making, the 2007 tour—outlined below—became a “venerable means of *doing* human history,” through the reembodyment and performance of lost or fragmented subjectivities.<sup>31</sup>

- November 1–2 Flight from Frankfurt to Ho Chi Minh City; transfer to flight to Hanoi
- November 3 Travel by road to Vinh, late arrival at 4 pm; welcome dinner; walking tour of Quang Trung block housing
- November 4 Morning travel to Kim Liên, birthplace of Hồ Chí Minh; afternoon visit to former stone quarry, brick and cement factories (now privatized), new bridge over Blue River, Nguyễn Du's house (the “Goethe” of Vietnam), and Quyết Mountain viewing station overlooking the city
- November 5 Morning visit to the pioneer club for children's cultural performance; afternoon trip to the Vietnam-Germany vocational school; return to Quang Trung housing with stopover at Tecco tower eighteenth floor café [site of former housing Block C1]; sumptuous dinner with officials in a new hotel

- November 6 Morning trip to cotton mill (now privatized), machine repair plant, and private visit with former chief translator; afternoon trip to Cửa Lò beach followed by dinner with Cửa Lò district authorities
- November 7 Visit to local cemetery to lay wreath at grave of former colleague (the District Director of Construction) and to participate with family members in the ritual disinterment of his remains;<sup>32</sup> dinner with former colleagues; visit to electronics market and to former guesthouse inhabited during assignment
- November 8 Morning visit to the Urban Planning Institute followed by appointment with City Council to discuss infrastructure development; tour of new industrial area and new Western-standard resort on the coast; authentic Vietnamese dinner
- November 9 Field trip: early departure for Lao border, travel through the jungle and small ethnic minority villages to the former Hồ Chí Minh trail—now a highway; tour of National Park established with support of the European Commission; boat ride along the border
- November 10 Morning photo tour of Vinh to former and new construction sites; visit to water sanitation plant; afternoon: official meeting with provincial authorities to discuss German investment and support for developing city
- November 11 Departure from Vinh at 8am; travel by road to Hạ Long Bay, arrival 6 pm
- November 12 Hạ Long Bay
- November 13 Afternoon return to Hanoi with brief stop at martyr's temple along the way; evening stroll around Hanoi's central lake
- November 14 Morning trip to Tam Đảo National Park in the mountains (former French colonial resort); stop at local pagoda; afternoon meeting with Deputy at

- the Ministry of Construction, a former colleague from Vinh
- November 15 Visit with German credit organization; afternoon shopping and visit to Art Museum; late evening flight back to Frankfurt
- November 16 6 am arrival in Frankfurt

Though many of these veterans had maintained their engagement with Vietnamese culture over the years, by going out for the occasional bowl of *phở* noodles or attending cultural events at the “Viet Haus” in Berlin,<sup>33</sup> for the majority of participants, the 2007 trip offered the first opportunity to return to Vietnam. Most of the experts had known the country as desperately poor and war-ravaged, a nation whose people were high in spirit but great in need. They had been young when they had arrived in Vinh in the 1970s, mostly in their mid-thirties, and they had gone for a variety of reasons—adventure, money, or the opportunity to travel. Yet their political and humanitarian motivations had also bound them together. They had seen their work as serving a just cause in an unjust war, and had been enthusiastic about applying their skills in the service of anti-imperialism. They had returned to East Germany with deep feelings of empathy and connection with the people of Vietnam (and with one another),<sup>34</sup> having experienced extraordinary moments together during the war (for the early cohorts) and having worked collaboratively to rebuild the city.<sup>35</sup>

Because experts were usually on rotating two-year contracts, many had left Vinh before the reconstruction project was completed. The official visit thus gave them their first opportunity to see their work in its finished state. Upon their return, they viewed firsthand the legacies of GDR assistance in Vinh, from German-speaking residents (former graduate students or contract workers) to the urban infrastructure they had helped to rebuild, including the housing estate where more than half the original residents still reside. However, privatization (of factories, for example), as noted in the travelogue, and a new service infrastructure catering to an emerging consumer class (thus the “opulent dinner” with officials) threatened to remove these material reminders of past “socialist friendships” from the urban landscape.<sup>36</sup>

The delegates also observed how Vietnam had changed since reunification. Not unlike U.S. veterans, whose healing journeys have been closely tied to witnessing peace and landscape regeneration,<sup>37</sup> the German experts expressed astonishment and relief at the extent of the country's recovery. "It's amazing that Vietnam is now an international tourist destination!" one delegation member declared, reacting to the nonstop flight between Frankfurt and Ho Chi Minh City with Vietnam Airlines. That flight made a stark contrast to travel on Interflug in the 1970s, from Berlin to Hanoi via Moscow and Karachi: a trip that had once taken two days was now a mere ten hours. Contrasts between "then" and "now" peppered the experts' observations of post-reform Vietnam.<sup>38</sup> In the words of one man: "I first returned to Vinh in 1992, and at that time Vinh was still war-ravaged and practically unchanged.<sup>39</sup> [But now] the city is full of new buildings, and old wounds, like bomb craters, are no longer visible." Bodies appeared healthier, and people happier. Women, in particular, seemed to pay more attention to beauty and fashion trends: "Tight jeans are in, loose pantaloons out!" a returnee laughed, referring to the standard and simple Vietnamese dress of the 1970s. Others observed cultural continuities in the face of rapid urban change: "Motorbikes and cars have replaced bicycles as the primary mode of transportation, but traffic is just as disorderly as ever!" Such comments suggested that capitalism (or "market socialism," as it is referred to in Vietnam) and cosmopolitan urbanization had significantly changed the sociocultural and built landscape of the city.

Reflections on the bonds of friendship dominated the experts' accounts of their return journeys. They were excited to reunite with old friends, both German and Vietnamese, many of whom they had not seen in more than thirty years. "What a great joy to see them again! [*große Wiedersehensfreude!*]" the architect wrote in his travelogue, upon meeting fellow delegates on the train to Frankfurt, whom he had not seen since before the dissolution of the GDR. Several of the experts brought their wives on the trip to introduce them to the city that had profoundly shaped their personal and professional lives.<sup>40</sup>

Also meaningful was the weeklong tour that officials organized for the experts, which conjoined visits to locally important tourist sites (such as Hồ Chí Minh's birth village of Kim Liên) with those to industrial and cultural infrastructure sites that signified the main achievements of the GDR's urban recovery work. At the stone quarry, brick factory, cement



plant, vocational school, youth house, seaport and public housing estate, the German experts were welcomed warmly and treated like celebrities, as they met with old and new colleagues, workers and residents. Upon their return to Germany, the men reflected on the unexpected *tiefe Dankbarkeit* (deep gratitude) they encountered as they toured Vinh. For the construction engineer who had been responsible for the housing blocks, this reaction was transformative. During a group interview, his voice wavered with emotion: “I never imagined our work had such an effect on the population. It was incredible; they thanked us everywhere we went.” He then turned to his former superior, who had not been invited to join the delegation. “Dr. G., you really should go back if you can afford to. It will change your life. It was so meaningful to see the city again and to hear people express their gratitude. I had no idea our work was so appreciated.”

For returnees, place-making thus involved mutually generative acts of remembrance with the residents of Vinh, of “making present the past”<sup>41</sup> to re-confer status and meaning on the built environment, the product of their labor. Seeing the Vietnamese “extremely proud of [their] rebuilt city,” as one Vinh resident declared, drawing on her own affective memory of working with GDR experts, served to renew relationships and revive past (pre-unification) subjectivities. As the experts were pleasantly surprised to learn during their visit, GDR technical and humanitarian assistance remained valued and recognized across Vinh.

#### THE VERSATILITY OF MEMORY: FROM “THĂM” TO “LÀM”

On November 14, 2007, the local press in Vietnam reported on the successful closing of the “visit” (*chuyến thăm*) and “work” (*làm việc*) of the delegation of German experts in Nghệ An province.<sup>42</sup> This distinction between a sentiment-laden “visit” (East German experts returning to visit old friends) and an official “work trip” involving important business (in this case, with government representatives) reveals a dynamic spectrum of meaning and intent attached to the historical memory of Vinh’s reconstruction, as shaped and interpreted by differently positioned actors. For Germans, their “Vietnam-Reise”—the term used in interviews and travel documents, with *Reise* alluding to leisure and personal travel—was foremost an affective journey. The group understood the trip as a tourist expedition

that mixed sightseeing with emotion-laden visits with old colleagues at former work sites, and at no point inferred a *Dienstreise* (business trip). That provincial coffers generously covered travel costs was understood as a delayed act of gratitude—a gift made possible by the city’s slow but steady economic growth over recent years of market reform. While the work meeting with party officials did surface in post-visit discussions—which I address below—on the whole, it was almost an afterthought in delegation members’ recollections, and second to the pleasure of reconnecting with the city and its residents.

Vietnamese residents in Vinh reacted similarly. Working together in a high-risk construction zone, scattered with unexploded ordnance, the East Germans and Vietnamese had developed a strong camaraderie. The delegation’s visit thus marked a sentimental occasion for the latter, and particularly for older generations who had suffered through years of aerial bombing and then arduous reconstruction. Female bricklayers fondly recollected the *người nước ngoài* (foreigners) bicycling around the city in shorts, a sight they found both amusing and embarrassing. Translators recalled the cigarettes that GDR experts had slipped them on the sly. Adults remembered receiving candy as children.

The local press treated the delegation like returning heroes. They greeted the group upon arrival, then followed them around with cameras, featuring their visits to urban landmarks on TV. A retired architect, who had trained in the GDR and served as a chief Vietnamese expert during reconstruction, explained why this was the case (moving effortlessly between Vietnamese and German):<sup>43</sup>

*Architect:* Meeting the German experts again was very moving [*cảm động*] for us. It was such a joyful reunion! After thirty years a special relationship remains. The Germans saw firsthand the hardships [*Schwierigkeiten*] that residents of Vinh endured. Our friendship [*Freundschaft*] continues to this day. We will never forget [*không thể quên được*] the huge contribution they made to our city.

*Author:* Why was the delegation invited to return to Vinh?

*Architect:* Because of the memories [*kỷ niệm xưa*] we share. *Man vergisst nicht die Mühe und Arbeit der Zusammenarbeit* [One can never forget the effort and labor of our collaboration]. We also wanted the experts to see how our city has grown. So we took them to the top

of a high-rise tower.<sup>44</sup> They were so impressed [*sehr beeindruckt*] with the new landscape! The last time they were in Vinh there was nothing to see. It was quite stirring for them; they were just astonished at how things had changed.

For both sides, the reunion triggered nostalgic memories of affective solidarities, even as they recalibrated the past—forgetting, for example, the intermittent tensions that had surfaced during the process of urban planning.<sup>45</sup>

And yet many party officials, particularly those from other provinces or rural areas, did not have the same connection to the socialist internationalism that had laid the material foundation of postwar Vinh. For these contemporary state actors, the city's invitation was less a *gratitude* reunion tour (a “visit”) than a speculative business opportunity. Officials were frank that their motives were more economic than sentimental, and that their primary concern was to attract foreign investment to spur urban development—thus the visit to the high-rise café to showcase post-reform growth. The German experts, with their attachments to Vinh and historical commitment to “gifting” aid, were logical candidates for securing additional investment. In an interview, a high-ranking municipal official insisted that the decision to invite the delegation had been made on practical grounds: who else could the city call upon to help revitalize Vinh?

In his seminal work, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Andreas Huyssen calls for a comprehensive approach to the study of memory.<sup>46</sup> He asks that such studies move beyond conventional analyses of representations of the past, to think critically about memory's role in shaping and expressing future aspirations. In Vinh, utopian memory guided state actors in their present actions, which were likewise informed by utilitarian visions of urban futurity. That officials drew upon the province's unique global socialist history in their efforts to (re)build a modern and prosperous city attests to the versatility of memory—in this case, of Vinh's destruction and collective rebuilding.

Yet this new urban imaginary, propelled by the desire for rapid urban growth, has deviated significantly from the postwar emphasis on the egalitarian distribution of wealth, infrastructure and services. Vinh's contemporary reputation as an aesthetically unappealing and economically depressed city, compared with booming, affluent urban centers elsewhere

in Vietnam, contrasts sharply with its former position as a “model” for Vietnamese urban planning. With the steady deterioration of its material infrastructure—symbolized by rows of decaying block housing targeted for demolition and redevelopment—the central party has called for a market-oriented modernization of the cityscape. In tandem with neoliberal approaches to urban development that advocate privatization and capital accumulation, authorities revived, somewhat ironically, socialist discourses of “friendship” and “assistance” to solicit support for the 2020 master plan. As newspapers recounted, the delegation’s week of visits and sightseeing concluded with a day of formal work, and a request by provincial authorities for increased collaboration and humanitarian aid. With the help of former comrades, Vinh could now become a prosperous commercial city.<sup>47</sup>

#### AMBIVALENT PARTNERSHIPS

The German experts met with ambivalence these solicitations for private investment in Vinh. Most were not in a position to provide aid or counsel, given their own professional displacements after German reunification, when layoffs or early retirements were commonplace. Officials in Vinh were largely incognizant of the impacts that postsocialist transformation had had on East Germans, including their relative lack of wealth and power in reunified Germany and the general and persistent sense of marginalization. Such experiences contrasted with the officials’ own social and political continuity under Vietnamese market socialism, making it difficult to realize that though the delegates may have desired to help, they were generally not in a financial position to do so.

Moreover, the German experts were largely indifferent about collaborating with the Vietnamese state to further market-oriented planning, when similar changes had also reconfigured the urban landscape of East Germany. One delegate in particular expressed concern over these market developments, during an interview at his office back in Germany:

I’m a socialist at heart and strongly support providing affordable housing for the poor. I agree that the buildings [the block housing] are old and need to be rebuilt, but not with expensive condominiums that will displace the elderly and poor residents from their homes.

Visits to new city landmarks, such as the café on the eighteenth floor of the tallest building in Vinh (at the time), thus provoked ambivalent feelings about progress, despite the spectacular views it afforded. While the modern high-rise and its adjacent twin signified economic growth and material well-being, such urban “development” had forced evictions and relocations three years before the Germans’ visit, with the demolition of housing Block C1. Such acts provoked critical questions among the returnees about the benefits of the urban renewal in which they had been invited to invest.

Decentralized (i.e., non-state) requests for aid, however, engendered a different response. After returning to Germany, one retiree received an email from a former colleague, with whom he had reunited during the trip, requesting support. Although living off a small pension in a three-room apartment, he was enthusiastic to offer assistance, though it remained unclear how much and what type of support (monetary or advisory) was needed at his former work site—a college struggling to achieve economic self-sufficiency with diminishing state subsidies.

“My heart still beats for Vietnam and the city of Vinh,” he pined as we pored over his photographs of the college, while his wife—who was more skeptical about the email—looked on. For this expert, the prospect of providing another cycle of aid gave new affective force to his memories, anchored to a specific time and place, thus making the work of memory a moral imperative rather than a “history without discernible applications.”<sup>48</sup> As such, the tour was not just a means to remembering—that is, it did not simply fulfill a nostalgic desire to see Vietnam and its people one more time. Here, memory was more generative than reflective, and marked the beginning of a postsocialist relationship between individuals (rather than with the state), whose future collaboration drew on the affective socialities and attachments of the past.

#### CONCLUSION: THE AFTERLIFE OF COLD WAR MEMORY

The return of socialist humanitarian allies as tourists to Vietnam raises a number of complex issues about Cold War memory and its role in a new global order. The divisions and reunifications of both Germany (East-West) and Vietnam (North-South) have left traces on the landscape of divided

memories and disparate experiences within and across these countries.<sup>49</sup> It is no coincidence that southern Vietnamese refugees (“boat people”) migrated to West Germany, and (mostly) northern “contract workers” went to East Germany—or that these groups remain largely alienated from one another today, each shaped by their own histories of war and postwar trauma.<sup>50</sup> For the East German experts, embroiled in contested memory politics at home, the journey to Vietnam generated memory work at multiple registers across former Cold War divisions: reviving shared sentiments of solidarity and reattributing status and value to their work. In many ways, returning to Vinh became as much about negotiating GDR memory in reunified Germany as it was about memories of the GDR in Vietnam.

Andreas Huyssen has observed that memory discourse in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, “seemed to be haunted by trauma as the dark underside of neoliberal triumphalism.”<sup>51</sup> As I have demonstrated, the trauma of social, economic, and political displacement after the collapse of socialism made the *Vietnam-Reise* all the more meaningful for the GDR experts. The trip allowed delegates to recuperate the affect of a bygone era—from the deep bonds of collegiality and friendship to a renewed sense of pride in their work. Yet their journey was not driven by a longing to return to the days of the GDR, nor was it a novel form of *Ostalgie*—nostalgia for the East. The experts did not fetishize the West and its material comforts, a position that scholars of *Ostalgie* take as the starting point for GDR aspirations.<sup>52</sup> Rather, their social worlds and global imaginaries went beyond East/West, socialist/capitalist geographies that underlie assumptions about *Ostalgie*. Moreover, the return visit signaled something less material than scholarship on *Ostalgie* permits: the desire to return to *emotional* attachments of the past, to the human relationships, forms of validation, and dignity they once felt.<sup>53</sup> The journey to Vinh was thus a symbolic return to the status of recognized and respected technician, whose specialized skills, knowledge, and commitment to humanitarian assistance had helped heal a decimated cityscape for a displaced people that had returned from evacuation and found only ruins.

## NOTES

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1. Research for this article is based on several years of ethnographic fieldwork in Vietnam, between 1999 and 2012, in Hanoi and Vinh City. Additional interviews and archival research were carried out in Germany in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2012.

2. Dietmar Ratsch and Arek Gielnik, dirs., *Eislimonade für Hong Li* (Filmakademie Ludwigsburg/FilmPOOL, 2000).

3. Li Xiaobing, *Voices from the Vietnam War: Stories from American, Asian and Russian Veterans* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010). Li argues that between 1965 and 1970 more than 320,000 Chinese forces served clandestinely in Vietnam (218). Likewise, though no official records in Russia have been released to date, Li estimates that more than 4,000 Soviet military personnel served during the war (66). On account of their undisclosed status, these men are not officially recognized as “veterans” in the Russian Federation.

4. During the war, photography and documentary film were considered important political weapons in the fight against imperialism. “Cultural soldiers” used images to convey the tremendous scope of the war’s devastation to a wider audience and to articulate their anti-imperialist sentiments of solidarity and sympathy with the Third World. Trần Kim Thành, “Hội thảo Điện ảnh Quốc tế về Chiến tranh—Hoà bình” (International Film Conference on War and Peace), *Nghệ thuật Điện ảnh* (Cinematic Arts) 1, no. 57 (1987): 34; Christina Schwenkel, “‘The Camera Was My Weapon’: News Production and Representation of War in Vietnam,” in S. Elizabeth Bird, ed., *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 93.

5. For example, women who fought on the Hồ Chí Minh trail with the youth brigade or veterans of the armed forces of the defeated Republic of Vietnam who receive no state benefits and whose families have long been subjected to discriminatory policies. See, respectively, Karen Gottschang Turner with Phan Thanh Hao, *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of War from North Vietnam* (New York: Wiley, 1999); Christina Schwenkel, “The Ambivalence of Reconciliation in Contemporary Vietnamese Memoryscapes” in Scott Laderman and Edwin Martini, eds., *Four Decades On: Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies of the Second Indochina War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

6. Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 6.

7. The most well-known Vietnamese memoirs by authors such as Bảo Ninh, Dương Thu Hương, and Đặng Thùy Trâm—all three of which have been translated into English—offer deeply intimate, anti-heroic portrayals of the extreme hardship suffered during years on the battlefield. See Bảo Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*, trans. Phan Thanh Hao (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993); Dương Thu Hương, *Novel without a Name*, trans. Phan Huy Duong and Nina McPherson (New York: Penguin, 1996); and Đặng Thùy Trâm, *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*, trans. Andrew X. Pham (New York: Random House, 2007).

8. Christina Schwenkel, “Recombinant History: Transnational Practices of Memory and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Vietnam” *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (Feb. 2006): 3–30.

9. Svetlana Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern* (New York: Architectural Press, 2008).

10. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, “Introduction: Beyond Methodological Nationalism,” in Cesari and Rigney, eds., *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 8–9.

11. Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 28–31.

12. Thomas L. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility,” pt. 1, *American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (April 1985): 339–61; and pt. 2, *ibid.*, 90, no. 3 (June 1985): 547–66.

13. Didier Fassin, “Inequality of Lives, Hierarchies of Humanity: Moral Commitments and Ethical Dilemmas of Humanitarianism,” in Ilana Feldman and Mariam Ticktin, eds., *In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 239.

14. Jude Howell, “The End of an Era: The Rise and Fall of GDR Aid,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, no. 2 (1994): 305–28.

15. Peter Redfield and Erica Bornstein, “An Introduction to the Anthropology of Humanitarianism,” in Bornstein and Redfield, eds., *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010), 17.

16. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

17. Information on “solidarity actions” was gathered from File 7409, Văn Phòng Chính Phủ 1957–1995, at the Vietnam National Archives III in Hanoi; the Hoover Archives at Stanford University; and File DY24 8760 at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin.



18. Phạm Xuân Cần and Bùi Đình Sâm, *Lịch sử thành phố Vinh, 1945–1975* (History of Vinh City, 1945–1975) (Vinh: Nghệ An, 2003), 217.

19. According to the District People's Committee, this figure included 141 enterprises, 13 schools, 4 hospitals and 8,663 houses and buildings. District People's Committee, *Lịch sử khu Quang Trung, Thành phố Vinh* (History of Quang Trung District, Vinh City) (Vinh: Nghệ An Press, 2007), 89.

20. Christina Schwenkel, "Post/Socialist Affect: Ruination and Reconstruction of the Nation in Urban Vietnam," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (May 2013): 252–77. The original design had called for 36 five-story buildings to house more than 15,000 preferential residents (revolutionary cadres and workers). However, due to GDR material and financial constraints, only half of the plan had been completed by the close of the project in 1980.

21. See, for example, Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage Through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam* (New York: Picador, 2000); David Lamb, *Vietnam, Now: Reporter Returns* (New York: Perseus, 2003); Larry Heinemann, *Black Virgin Mountain: A Return to Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

22. For more on the healing journeys of U.S. veterans who return to Vietnam, see Schwenkel, *The American War*, chap. 1.

23. These common acquaintances in Vinh were also research respondents at my field site. Several of the German experts, I should note, were excited to have someone with whom they could talk about Vietnam and share their memories (which included bringing out old photographs and souvenirs).

24. Tensions surfaced during group interviews, when information about the return trip came out.

25. Clearly there were other, more tacit political concerns guiding the selection process and the exclusion of former high-ranking GDR government employees from the trip, though interviewees were careful about how they inferred this.

26. A group of eleven Germans (former experts and their wives) traveled to Vietnam as tourists in 2005. When Vietnamese colleagues heard they were in the country, they invited the group to spend a few days in Vinh. One expert, who was invited back with the official delegation in 2007, speculated in an interview that this unofficial 2005 visit had spurred the 2007 invitation, after officials realized that the Germans had the desire—and means—to return.

27. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 6.

28. The French psychologist Théodule-Armand Ribot coined the term "affective memory" in 1894 to refer to the *reviviscence*, or revivability, of past affections and emotions of pain, pleasure or ambivalence. Edward Bradford Titchener, "Affective

Memory,” *Philosophical Review* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1895): 65–66. Here, I am interested in the temporality and spatiality of affective memory work.

29. Schwenkel, “The Ambivalence of Reconciliation.”

30. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 6.

31. *Ibid.*, 7. This itinerary is adapted from a travelogue that one of the returnees provided to me. For consistency, I have added diacritics to Vietnamese names and places.

32. This refers to a secondary burial practice, in which bones are exhumed after three or more years, washed, and carefully arranged in a smaller coffin or urn before they are reinterred in a final burial spot. For details on this ritual and its cultural significance, see Shawn Kingsley Malarney, *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 142–44.

33. Several interviews took place at the Viet Haus in Berlin, at the request of experts who wanted to drink “Vietnamese-style coffee” (individually filtered coffee with condensed milk).

34. For example, one cohort continues to hold annual *Vietnamtreffen* reunions in cities across the former GDR.

35. For example, two interviewees recollected the celebrations that erupted on April 30, 1975, as news of the end of the war spread across the city. They traveled with elated crowds to the top of the city’s sacred Quyét mountain to hoist the national flag and to watch the fireworks that took place that evening. This shared experience was important to the sense of solidarity that interviewees expressed.

36. On the demolition of Block C1 in the housing estate and its replacement with two condominium towers, see Christina Schwenkel, “Civilizing the City: Socialist Ruins and Urban Renewal in Central Vietnam,” *positions: asia critique* 20, no. 2 (May 2012): 437–70.

37. Schwenkel, *American War*, 31–33.

38. Economic reforms, called *Đổi mới* in Vietnam, were introduced in 1986. In contrast to rapidly improving conditions in the more prosperous metropolises of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, in smaller and poorer cities like Vinh, living standards did not rise markedly until more than a decade later.

39. To clarify, the specialist is referring to areas of the city, such as the university and its bombed dormitory, that were beyond the reach of the reconstruction project, which focused primarily on material and industrial infrastructure, such as the construction of housing and factories.

40. For example, one participant went on to write his PhD dissertation about Vietnam, while another applied his experience and knowledge of Vinh to teaching courses on construction in tropical, developing countries.

41. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

42. Hải Ninh and Đình Lam, “Đoàn chuyên gia CHLB Đức kết thúc tốt đẹp chuyến thăm và làm việc tại Nghệ An” (German delegation of experts successful wraps up its visit and work in Nghệ An), *Lao Động Nghệ An* (The Nghệ An Worker), November 14, 2007, 2

43. Interview in Vinh City, August 20, 2009.

44. This eighteen-story high-rise, whose top-floor café commands sweeping views of the city, replaced the demolished Building C2 in the housing estate.

45. For example, Vietnamese planners and residents felt that the design of apartments in the housing blocks was at odds with architectural principles of *feng shui* (*phong thủy*), which hinged on proper spatiality for healthy living and harmonious human-environment relations.

46. Huyssen, *Present Pasts*.

47. Hải and Đình, “German delegation”; Trâm Anh, “Lãnh đạo tỉnh làm việc với Đoàn cựu chuyên gia Đức” (Provincial leaders work with the delegation of former experts), *Báo Nghệ An* (Nghệ An News), November 12, 2007, 1.

48. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 33.

49. I am grateful to Geoff White for encouraging me to develop this point.

50. Gertrud Hüwelmeier, “Spirits in the Marketplace: Transnational Networks of Vietnamese Migrants in Berlin,” in Michael Peter Smith and John Eade, eds., *Transnational Ties: Cities, Identities, and Migrations* (Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 131–44.

51. Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 8.

52. See, for example, Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 192–211; Jonathan Bach, “‘The Taste Remains’: Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 545–56; Martin Blum, “Remaking the East German Past: *Ostalgie*, Identity, and Material Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2000): 229–53; Dominic Boyer, “*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 361–81; Milena Veenis, “Consumption in East Germany: The Seduction and Betrayal of Things,” *Journal of Material Culture* 4, no. 1 (March 1999): 79–112.

53. Likewise, Vietnamese tend to reminisce about the past as a time of deeper and more meaningful relationships. After attending an exhibit on the postwar subsidy era at the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi with friends in 2007, one woman commented: “At that time, when the state provided us with everything, we didn’t have to lock our doors or worry about thieves. We were equal in our poverty and had nothing to steal. Now things are different. You cannot trust people like we did then.” When I asked her whether things were better or worse now, she replied, “Better of course! We now have food to eat!” On other analyses

of the exhibit, see Ken MacLean, “The Rehabilitation of an Uncomfortable Past: Everyday Life in Vietnam during the Subsidy Period (1975–86),” *History and Anthropology* 19, no. 3 (Oct. 2008): 281–303; and Margaret Barnhill Bodemer, “Museums, Ethnology and the Politics of Culture in Contemporary Vietnam” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 2010), chap. 7.

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# Survivor Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance

## *Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?*

CAROL A. KIDRON

Contrary to analyses of top-down national intervention in and construction of familial memory, a study of intergenerational memory work at communal sites of Holocaust memory shows the family's enlistment of institutions as resources to salvage lost or silent Holocaust memory. The memory work carried out by families of Holocaust survivors at a number of such sites reveals both the top-down enlistment of familial memory and the bottom-up intergenerational transmission of Holocaust tales within the family. The findings highlight processes of negotiation and cooperation between state-run public institutions and survivor families in the construction of familial Holocaust memory and alternative sites of commemoration.

At the culmination of years of pedagogic preparation, including school assignments to access his Holocaust survivor grandparents' testimonies, Guy, an Israeli high school student, attended a school trip to sites of atrocity in Poland. At the climax of the journey, Guy found himself on the ramp at Auschwitz reading a letter his parents had been asked by his teacher to write and send with him to be opened in the death camp. The letter recounted how Guy's grandmother had been forced to make the impossible decision to give her infant child to her mother so that she herself might survive. For the seventeen-year-old Guy, this was the first time he had heard of the horrific tale—on the very ramp where the fateful choice had been made. That evening the entire group of high school students met to share their impressions of the day. Guy recounts his experience as follows:

I didn't plan to tell them [fellow students] about the letter...but I did. As I told them my grandmother's story I started to cry...it was okay though. They all came up to me afterwards and told me how much it helped them...how much they appreciated hearing my story. I guess I helped those who didn't have their own story, you know a family Holocaust story...like mine that they can relate to... so I guess you could say that I gave them my grandmother's story and they will remember it.

Although Guy told me in the beginning of his interview that at the outset of his trip he had not perceived himself to be a third-generation "carrier" of familial Holocaust memory, he recounted having spontaneously fulfilled the role of witness (twice removed) "giving his story" to those non-descendants who require a more emotive and authentic tale with which to identify with the Holocaust past. By the end of our interview, Guy was referring to himself as a third-generation witness.

During an informal conversation with Guy's parents, they explained that if not for the school-orchestrated trip, and the request for a letter, they would not have told their son the tragic tale. They proudly added that if not for their letter he would not have had the opportunity to provide public testimony to the group. His mother concluded our conversation by sharing the fact that since the trip their family had begun to openly discuss their genocidal legacy.

If we were to have any doubt regarding the agenda of school pedagogic policies, Guy's teacher in charge of trip planning (who recommended I interview Guy) outlined her pre-trip preparation and particularly the letter (a common practice in trips to Poland) as maximizing the pedagogic potential of grandchildren of survivors to impact personal, familial and national memory. She asserted:

The grandchild of survivors can be a mediator who makes it possible for the other students to relate to the story as if it was theirs too. What could be more powerful than hearing one of your friends discover and then share their family legacy, what could be more moving? It's not like hearing a survivor they can't relate to. When the survivor generation of witnesses is disappearing you can't underestimate the importance of promoting this sharing of memory for the future of Holocaust memory in Israel. But an added success is our impact on

the families. After years of silence, the third generation goes home after the trip and triggers the first open dialog about the past in their homes. The letter parents write to their children is a tool—it's just the first step in opening up years of silence. The first step in preserving Holocaust memory.

At first glance, the above tale dramatically illustrates the intervention of the state-funded school system in what would otherwise be the privacy and intimacy of three generations of family relations. Holocaust-related family “secrets” are enlisted and publicly divulged in order to evoke identification of non-descendants with an otherwise emotively inaccessible past. In keeping with Jackie Feldman's pioneering work on the civil-religious agenda of Israeli school trips to Poland, Guy's teacher clearly states that the enlistment of third-generation mediators enables the constitution of a community of vicarious witnesses “preserving” an otherwise precarious national Holocaust memory.<sup>1</sup> The letter, as the first “tool” of intervention, exposes the difficult heritage Guy's grandmother had chosen to keep from her grandson, forcibly suturing the rupture in the chain of intergenerational memory so that family memory could be instrumentally “put to work” in the service of state memory.<sup>2</sup>

Holocaust survivors and their descendants have in fact usually been depicted as targets of hegemonic construction and enlistment.<sup>3</sup> Psychological literature depicts survivor families as pathologized sufferers of post-trauma while Holocaust literary criticism describes enlisted carriers of national memory.<sup>4</sup> The hegemonic gaze of the state and internalized “technologies of self” of the vocal witness in the service of Holocaust memory sustain survivors' commitment to testimony and valorize the intergenerational transmission of their profile of victim and witness to second- and third-generation descendants.<sup>5</sup> From a more sociopolitical perspective, the above legacy of historical victimhood is essential for the perpetuation of what Zygmunt Bauman has termed Jewish “haunted house mentality” and the legitimization of Israeli right-wing political policies.<sup>6</sup> Practices of enlistment have been examined in such sites as psychosocial support groups, commemorative museums and rituals and the school system.<sup>7</sup>

Although the family is considered the last bastion of privacy and intimacy, therapeutic and pedagogic intervention in Israeli family relations has been shown to be the key to the hegemonic constitution of new

generations of carriers of memory.<sup>8</sup> However, beyond the local context, critical scholarship has shown that hegemonic narratives subtly shape the way individual family members perceive the quality of family relations, their role within the family network, and how they experience voids, ruptures and crises. Therapeutic narratives discursively constitute the family as container of an emotionally toxic environment while also potentially appealing to corrective scenarios with which to bridge voids and reconstitute the wounded self, couple and family.<sup>9</sup> Institutions such as state-run school systems and, as will be seen below, national museums act as bridges through which the state and hegemonic discourses make it into the living rooms and bedrooms of the family and the psyches or conscience of children and parents.<sup>10</sup>

Yet a second glance at Guy's family's experience suggests a far more complex and multivocal interpretation. The family may be an active agent in the school-based and even national Holocaust memory project. Guy's parents appear to make a reflexive choice to transmit memory to the descendant just as Guy chooses to publicly testify and share his new legacy with the emergent school-based community of memory. The school as "hegemonic" institution may be read as a co-producer of memory work cooperating with the family to facilitate the first stage of Guy's travel (and by proxy his entire family) to sites of atrocity.<sup>11</sup> Pre-trip pedagogy and trip planning create the opportunity for public emotive testimony enabling the disclosure and voicing of the family's silent heritage. Rather than only a conspiratorial tool of intervention and enlistment, the letter is also a material conduit permitting Holocaust memory to travel across multiple domains.<sup>12</sup> Thanks to the letter, memory travels temporally from the survivor's tragic distant formative moment on the ramp to the present school trip, while also traversing familial and social spheres—moving across generations and between the private and public domains.

Were we to doubt Guy's agentive role in his transformation into a third-generation carrier of memory we might consider his comments when showing me pictures depicting him and his friends draped in the Israeli flag during trip ceremonies. This common Israeli performative act at sites of Holocaust atrocities has been critiqued as evidence of the long arm of national statecraft strategically framing the school trip to construct xenophobic Jewish-Israeli nationalism.<sup>13</sup> This construction process is considered by critics all the more heinous as students are enlisted in the



army a short time after returning from the trip. However, when I asked Guy why students used the flag in this way, the teenager provided an empirically grounded and thought-provoking response to warnings of Zionist engineering of apparently unsuspecting innocent youth in Poland:

I know that they may be taking us to Poland to make us into fighters, so we enlist in the elite infantry units after being in Auschwitz, but if I choose to wear the flag, it's not because they brainwashed me but because me and my friends feel insecure in that terrible place and we miss home, we miss the security of home and the flag makes us feel safer.

Guy's response not only highlights the role of human agency making its way into and working alongside even the most hegemonically and tightly constructed sites of Israeli national Holocaust memory, but also underscores the danger of critical deterministic readings as they may overshadow micro personal "apolitical" subjective motives and experiences.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, binary readings of hegemonic engineering and disempowered enlisted survivors/descendants elide the way in which "mundane" emotions (in Guy's case—a sense of security and safety rather than anxiety) emerge and function dynamically in public events.<sup>15</sup>

As Geoffrey White has shown for testimonies at the Pearl Harbor memorial museum, although institutions may deterministically set up performative memory work aiming to shape the contours of national allegiance and identity, emplacement of the visitor at the authentic site of occurrence and/or institutionally constructed historical restorations also lays the foundation for an agentive and authentic emotive experience of identification with the site and with testimonial accounts, allowing visitors to make these testimonies and the histories they embed their own.<sup>16</sup> The school may therefore be seen as facilitating access to commemorative performances and to family testimony. It is this institutionally orchestrated performance that permits Guy to emplace himself at the site of familial tragedy and to virtually "reenact"/experience his grandmother's foundational event of loss in a way impossible in Israel or in the previously silent familial sphere. In the case of Guy's testimony to his grandmother's tragedy before his peers, it is precisely Guy's very subjective and personal emotional reaction, moving him to tears, that permits other students to make the tale what Guy himself terms "their story." In Katz's terms, the

public “overflowing” of intense emotion bridges between the self and the Other, inviting the audience to partake in the otherwise subjective and private experience.<sup>17</sup>

Building on the first case-study above of school-based Holocaust memory work, four additional vignettes will be presented from ethnographic research undertaken at a number of sites in Israel in 2000–2005, including: a descendant’s search for her ancestral home during her school trip to Poland and her post-trip Holocaust ceremony; a mini-Holocaust museum where the guide testifies to the familial past of her visitors, chastising them for their ignorance of their legacy; the staging of a “Holocaust Theater” where generational ties and family Holocaust memory are restored at a mini-Holocaust museum; and an ethnic voluntary association (*landsmanschaft*) for survivor families originating from Łódź where communal memory work must fill the void of lost familial memory. Expanding upon Gramscian analyses of top-down intervention, the ethnographic bottom-up exploration of public sites of Holocaust memory will examine the way reflexive individuals and families resourcefully negotiate and appropriate as their own hegemonically imposed discourse and practices to weave complex familial legacies and relations. The article will focus on the following questions: How do public sites of memory orchestrate and frame familial memory work to facilitate descendant identification and intergenerational transmission of memory? What is the relationship between institutionally engineered performances and the agency of families in performing a “shared” legacy of the past? How do testimonies function to evoke emotive identification—allowing for both emotions and memories to travel between witness and audience? Finally, recalling Guy’s letter, what are the conduits facilitating the transmission of memories across otherwise distant and unbridgeable selves, time and space and private/public domains?

#### EPISTEMOLOGIES OF NATIONAL MEMORY: FROM HEGEMONIC CONSTRUCTION TO EMOTIVE CO-PRODUCTION

The construction of national memory and the public sites in which it is housed and performed play an essential role in the maintenance of collective cohesion and cultural continuity.<sup>18</sup> As sites of collective memory, commemorative sites and ceremonies symbolically encapsulate the cul-

tural meanings attributed to events evoking reenactment of the past and consensual remembering.<sup>19</sup> War memories are particularly critical in the construction and maintenance of national identities as their emergent master narratives of victory or defeat potentially shape personal, communal and national identities as heroic victors or vulnerable victim/survivors, and the nation-state as redeemer/sanctuary.<sup>20</sup>

As outlined by White, scholars highlighting a sociopolitical reading of collective memory explore the instrumentalization of war memories in the service of statecraft.<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, memory work at national museums and monumental commemorative ceremonies hegemonically constitute master war narratives that sustain identification with and allegiance to national values and beliefs and ultimately perpetuate the support of those politicians perceived to uphold those foundational values. In contrast to the above approach, the more “psychocultural” perspective has highlighted the way individual and or familial micro processes of emotion, imagination and performance at sites of memory constitute reminiscence and identity.<sup>22</sup> Visitors at sites of memory are depicted as appealing to personal and family biographies in an effort to find points of nexus between the personal and collective which further facilitates the co-construction of a more personalized national memory. As will be seen below, in the case of Holocaust memory, these personal and family biographies are often travel narratives that, today in the retelling, prove critical for the construction of identity and subjectivity. This more bottom-up perspective presents the individual/family as co-producers of national narratives and identities.<sup>23</sup>

The above more psychocultural perspective has engendered person-centered and “experience near” ethnographies that move beyond hegemonic discourses of governmentality to examine the subjective and relational mechanisms of national memory work.<sup>24</sup> Eric Gable and Richard Handler’s study of Colonial Williamsburg and White’s ethnography of testimonies at a museum of Pearl Harbor both highlight subjective processes of emotional and relational remembering and outline the way memory performances identify with communal/collective master narratives.<sup>25</sup> Embodied experiences of one’s own personal recollections or the vicarious experience of witness accounts at institutional sites of memory serve to create a subjective sense of belonging, thereby personalizing national memory.<sup>26</sup>

Expanding upon the above person-centered scholarship, recent research in family heritage tourism has begun to examine the way fam-

ily visits to sites of memory serve to bridge the temporal and existential divide that obstructs identification.<sup>27</sup> Family visits have been found to enable intergenerational transmission of family histories at authentic or institutionally reconstructed/reenacted sites of memory. Yet the above studies have either focused primarily on the institutional contextualization of family transmission or on the emotional working through of survivor family relations at sites of memory. Scholarship has yet to sufficiently explore how the familial configuration permits intersubjective empathic forms of identification with the performed testimony, thereby facilitating not only the transmission of knowledge but also evoking a vicarious sense of emotional and embodied belonging “in the past.”<sup>28</sup> When facilitating this form of identification, the family must be understood as essential co-producer of communal/national memory working hand in hand with institutional engineers of memory, while the relations within the family become an essential conduit for the grounding of abstract national/collective sentiments in everyday life.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the scholarly turn from a more univocal sociopolitical approach to a more multivocal and dialectical approach to the psychosocial co-constitution of national memory, research on Israeli Holocaust memory (as outlined above) has remained primarily concerned with the institutional macro processes of hegemonic construction of memory work.<sup>30</sup> The enlisted survivor witness and descendant remain either passive redeemed receptacles of Holocaust memory or objectified victims of ideological institutional manipulation.<sup>31</sup> Questions remain regarding the agency of the witnesses and their role in the production of familial and national memory. Are institutions single-handedly manipulating the passive witness or do Israeli survivors and descendants have their own agendas, shaping the way they produce Holocaust memory in cooperation with institutional memory brokers? If we were to turn our scholarly gaze to the person and/or family-centered experience we might also ask what are the micro or meso mechanisms or conduits facilitating individual/familial/collective memory work.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to grapple with the above questions, I analyzed five vignettes derived from ethnographic research carried out in 2000–2005 at a variety of sites related to Holocaust commemoration in Israel: national museums, local mini-museums, ethnic voluntary organizations for survivors and descendants, high-school based ceremonies, workshops and debriefings prior to and after school trips to Poland, and numerous descendant support group sessions. During this project, I also conducted 55 in-depth interviews with adult children of Holocaust survivors and 25 interviews with grandchildren of survivors using a semi-structured thematic format. Contacting descendants using a snowball sampling method, I interviewed second-generation descendants (aged 35 to 55), and third-generation descendants (aged 16–32), with equal gender representation. The great majority were born in Israel to survivor parents/grandparents who had immigrated there from Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s after surviving Nazi extermination camps, forced labor camps, ghetto incarceration or extended periods of hiding. Interviews took place either in respondents' homes or in cafés. I asked respondents open-ended questions about themselves and their families, allowing them to narrate and present the self as they saw fit.

Line-by-line coding of data transcripts of the wider data base allowed for the emergence of numerous recurrent thematic categories. One such thematic category was the institutional and familial co-production of Holocaust descendant memory. The dataset of this theme included 23 excerpts or vignettes from participant observation and 36 data excerpts from descendant interviews. The five vignettes presented here, which are emblematic of the wider thematic data set, depict commemorative practices at two high school trips to Poland, two mini-museums and one voluntary organization. Despite their differences in geographical setting (Israel and Poland) and institutional frameworks, these vignettes have been selected as they all illustrate the complex interactive process in which institutions and descendants work side-by-side to salvage lost or silenced familial Holocaust memory. They also depict the diverse temporal, spatial and relational pathways traveled in order to seek out and recover the past and the way once reclaimed memory continues to bridge previously distanced selves, generations and lifeworlds.

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF “ENLISTED” FAMILIAL MEMORY

School trips to Poland

Seventeen-year-old Maya, the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, recounted her experience of searching for her grandfather’s prewar home during her school trip to Poland. Prior to the trip, Maya’s family and teachers had joined forces to plan the search mission designed as one of the key events on the itinerary. Maya’s ancestral home had thus become a Holocaust commemorative site in its own right. In Maya’s case the “treasure hunt” was all the more moving as her grandfather had recently passed away, transforming the standard trip into a familial salvage mission. Echoing the practice of letter writing above, the above cooperation between institutional and familial commemorative agendas is not unusual, as school trips to Poland now entail customized visits to the surviving remnants of descendants’ family heritage. Out of twenty-five third-generation descendants interviewed, six had recounted having sought out and discovered material traces of their family’s past.

Maya recounts how, with directions in hand, she, a Polish guide and her teacher went in search of the apartment. After finding the site, Maya excitedly encircled the building and to her great surprise she met tenants who knew of a Jewish family that had lived there. They then introduced Maya and her entourage to their elderly father who remembered Maya’s grandfather. As Maya recalled: “this was unbelievable, I was not only there and saw his home...but I actually met people who knew him, from then!” The height of achievement was not only to be at the authentic site of material Holocaust presence, but to actually meet someone (“from then”) who had personally survived the passage of time and could authenticate Maya’s discovery. Maya immediately called her parents and, echoing Guy’s account, she too adopted the new role of third-generation mediator and recounted the tale to her group. The descendant’s experience soon became a mythic hero’s journey into the heart of Jewish re-presence in Poland to be told and retold throughout the pedagogic community.

A month later, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Maya’s school staged a post-trip discussion as an integral part of the traditional ceremony. In addition to the student body, “veterans” of the trip, teachers and school management, parents also attended the event. Trip “veterans”

designed and performed key ritual roles in the Holocaust remembrance ceremony as they had now become authentic witnesses of the Holocaust deathworld. The school principal expressed great pride in their students' mature behavior on the trip and their sensitivity to sites and activities. He asked if anyone wished to express their feelings regarding the trip. A hand went up, and Maya stated excitedly: "This trip was so meaningful to me, I found my grandfather's home. But this is not just important for me—but for my entire family. I see myself as a messenger to allow all of us to reconnect with the Holocaust past. I want to thank my teachers for making this possible."

However then a second student, Adi raised her hand and presented her very different account. In a shaky voice, the teenager described having been raised with almost no knowledge of her family's Holocaust past. Not even knowing that her grandparents were survivors, she had decided to ask them prior to the trip if they had lost any relatives in the Holocaust. Supplying their granddaughter with a vague response, the elderly grandparents told her they had barely escaped the horrors themselves, traveling as refugees around Europe. During the trip, Adi asserted, she was especially moved and fascinated by a plaque commemorating a Jewish community in the area from which she believed her family had fled. Adi quietly recounted:

After the trip, I went back to my grandfather and told him where I had been, and told him about...that sign...and he said [long pause] "that was us...I was there" [her voice cracks]...I couldn't believe it [long pause, she composes herself] how could they not tell me...I had to know [shouting]...*I was there and I should have known!* So...I just wanted to tell all you parents...[shouting] don't make my family's mistake, don't keep silent.

The audience appeared dumbfounded by Adi's harsh reproach and her overall emotional performance. The teenager's critique of her family's silence and failure to provide her with the basic knowledge essential for a descendant salvage mission provided a most tragic and vivid portrayal of the twofold moral lesson of school trips to Poland—first, the call to become authentic carriers of memory and witnesses of the survivor generation, and second, the essential cooperation of second-generation parents in the construction of third-generation carriers of memory. Subsequent informal conversations with shocked and moved teachers, parents and

students indicated that Adi's vocal testament to her preempted act of witnessing and mediation was ironically no less, if not more effective at bringing home the above moral lesson than the testimonies of those who successfully fulfilled their role as mediators. In our subsequent interview I asked Adi why she had chosen to share her experience with the audience. She swiftly replied:

I wanted everyone to know how important it was not to keep secrets in the family and how terrible it is for a teenager to miss the opportunity to go there with their family story and complete their mission. The school makes this all possible—but without help from our parents or grandparents, without the stories, we're left with nothing.

In my conversation with Adi's parents, I asked her father what he thought about Adi's performance. He asserted in the same quiet tone as his daughter above:

We didn't know. We just didn't have anything to tell her. Had we known...we would not have hidden it from her. But after the trip we've talked about the silence in our family ... and I'm so happy to say that now Adi has spoken to her grandfather and thanks to her we're all making up for lost time. We found ourselves again.

The above examples illustrate the way in which grandchildren of survivors are enlisted and "groomed" in the school system for ritual roles and mediator status as carriers of Holocaust memory. They are then valorized by their peers, teachers and parents for their particular contribution to the pedagogic institution's commemorative project and to familial Holocaust memory. It is also apparent that these descendants are responsive to and emotively moved by the constitution process—reflexively performing their roles as collective carriers of their grandparents' memory. As in the case of Guy's letter, Maya's ancestral home and Adi's plaque function as essential conduits of previously silent or absent memory. They facilitate renewed connection to their grandparents' past and subsequently trigger familial memory work. Unlike Guy and Maya however, Adi, in the absence of a transmitted story, must struggle single-handed to give voice and story to the plaque as a particularly muted marker—restoring the semiotic connection between the object and her family's untold story. In Adi's case institutional engineering of the trip and attempted enlistment of family



tales prior to the trip were insufficient to elicit family cooperation. Rather it is Adi's intuitive search for semiotic traces in Poland, her initiative to seek out her grandfather's tale and her very public critical reproach as self-empowered agent that together jump-start previously ruptured lines of intergenerational transmission. Adi's initial preempted memory work and her ultimate success (at accessing family memory and creating a post-trip dialog about shared heritage) therefore serve to highlight not only the potential of institutional intervention in the familial sphere but also the mutual interdependence of institutional collective agendas and roles, on the one hand, and the more intimate and emotive agenda of familial or individual Holocaust memory, on the other.<sup>32</sup>

### The House of Testimony

The museum entitled House of Testimony (Beit Ha'edut) is located in the village of Nir Galim, near Ashdod. It was founded in 1949 by immigrants from Czechoslovakia and Hungary who were members of the Zionist Modern Orthodox youth movement Bnei Akiva. Tammy, a museum guide and offspring of Holocaust survivors herself, proceeds to remove a small Torah scroll from an old box. She then begins to tell a large extended survivor family—including adult children and grandchildren of survivors—the “miraculous” tale of the scroll, documented in a letter found within the box:

Moments before his death, an old Jew saved this Torah from a burning synagogue and gave it to a younger man and asked that it be sent to his relatives in “Eretz Yisroel”—the land of Israel. The young man carries the Torah with him throughout his harrowing escapes in war-torn Europe, yet is taken ill and hospitalized at liberation. An emissary from Israel happens to meet the dying man and is asked to fulfill his oath so that he might die in peace. The emissary arrives at the doorstep of the family in Israel and delivers the Torah. Months later, the family's grandmother and aunt, ravaged survivors, immigrate and are reunited with the rest of their family to find their Torah had reached its destination. After years of hiding the scroll in the closet, the survivor donated the Torah to the museum before her death, but unfortunately did not tell the family the details of the

story. The Torah scroll has not just sat in its box here at the museum. Rather we take it out for second-generation workshops. We show it to the second generation so that they extract the stories from their survivor parents before they die, so that we don't have other stories like this Torah scroll, where there was a treasure in the closet that the family didn't even know about and there is no reason for it to be in the closet, so hopefully others won't have to search here for their stories like you do!

At first glance, this is another dramatic example of institutional intervention in the intimate lives of survivor families. Echoing Guy's tale, the institution appropriates private family legacies and material mementos previously silenced/hidden—in the present case—in the family closet. In contrast to the vignette of Guy's letter, where his parents retained control over the tale prior to its transmission, here the museum reveals to apparently passive descendants their own hidden history while also disclosing, rather judgmentally, their morally reprehensible ignorance. Although museums commonly display personal and communal artefacts, "salvaging" and publicly disseminating their embedded histories, at times to be later returned to their owners, here the object is used to chastise the owner and other descendants for the failure of private/familial memory and perhaps their failure to reclaim family property.<sup>33</sup> Consistent with the profile of survivors cited above, the family remains silent and passive throughout and apparently in need of "pastoral" institutional assistance.<sup>34</sup>

In terms of the testimonial performance of the tale of the traveling Torah, the National-Religious museum and the parent organization (Bnei Akiva) orchestrate the family event, where instead of the descendant, it is the institutional memory broker who must testify to the familial past. The broker's performance successfully evokes emotions in the teary-eyed family. Beyond the promotion of public identification with Holocaust suffering and loss apparent in Guy's case, the emotional responses evoked by the moral tale of the Torah appear to serve an additional purpose. As symbolically signified by the "family closet," the Torah tale aims to trigger guilt at previous silence and to far more aggressively jump-start the obligatory process of familial Holocaust memory.

However, after listening to the moving family tale, the family members asked to hold the Torah Scroll and read the attached letter that testifies

to the tale recounted by the guide. After passing the Torah and letter around the family, they asked for copies of the letter. When Tammy left the sanctuary, the family members began to recount to one another the various story fragments they recalled hearing as children, corroborating or challenging other members' versions and checking their fragments against the whole provided in the letter and by the guide. Far from desiring a common and final version of the family tale, the visitors appeared to relish in the negotiation of multiple story lines. Others began to recommend Holocaust-related memory work such as attending lectures by descendant writers and events at survivor family voluntary organizations. It would appear that the visit not only provided a pathos-filled familial "mythic" narrative, it also reinvigorated individual memories of intergenerational transmission of the Holocaust past and engendered an exchange regarding contemporary Israeli descendant practices.

Once again it becomes clear that rather than a unidirectional institutional appropriation of memory the data present a more complex cooperative commemorative process. The museum acts as a temporary receptacle for the Torah and the embedded family tale—until the family is prepared to reappropriate it, literally taking their legacy and filial commitment to the future memory work back home. The museum provided a site of intimacy and familiarity where the family could experience and exercise the performance of Holocaust memory work and Holocaust-related familial ties.

Although the museum "houses" the Torah and the attached letter, it is once again the Torah that is the true material conduit of memory. Eerily traveling not only across the globe but from the deathworld of the Holocaust and the survivor's deathbed via the Zionist New Hebrew emissary's safekeeping to the post-Holocaust Israeli sanctuary, the Torah seems oddly to traverse the key mytho-historical moments of the Zionist narrative.<sup>35</sup> The importance of the materiality of the artefact as catalyst evoking the descendant's emotive link to the past is powerfully illustrated by the family's request to hold the Torah and to read and receive a copy of the letter. No less ceremoniously performative, passing around these objects, literally within the family circle, enables the descendants to sensorially restore their ties to what had been the hidden familial past.<sup>36</sup> Most interestingly, in contrast to the connection between survivors and the artefacts they salvaged from prewar lives, here we see the potential of

inherited objects to contain the past for future transmission to those who had no previous sensual ties to the object, thereby bridging experiential boundaries.<sup>37</sup>

### The House of Being

The House of Being (Beit Lihiyot) is a small Holocaust museum and geriatric center for survivors in Holon, south of Tel Aviv. Founded and managed by an Israeli descendant named Tsipi Kichler, it has a unique agenda, decor and provocative commemorative practice that engenders movement between everyday life in the present and the genocidal past. Humor, particularly focused on Tsipi's ritual clowning, allows Holocaust survivors and descendants to explore contradictions between their family's ever-present lived experience of genocide and public forms of national commemoration.<sup>38</sup> On the day before the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day, Tsipi organizes an event entitled "Holocaust Theater" at the local Israel Defense Forces veterans' organization. In the event I attended, three survivor families, including a survivor, and a second- and third-generation descendant, "performed" their family's Holocaust story on stage before a wider audience of local survivor families.

The second family unit began their performance with an emotionally intense survivor testimony recounting the aging woman's separation from her family. Her daughter looked down at the floor rather than at her mother, but hugged her during one of the more tragic segments of the testimony and turned to her fourteen-year-old son and soothed him. Tsipi urged her on, suggesting that she tell a particularly moving "Passover story." The survivor concluded her Holocaust tale with her liberation but then again recounted her gratitude to the House of Being:

I am so connected to the House...because of the love [at the house], I learned to accept my past, to open my heart. The pinnacle for me was when the second and third generation came to the House and we all told our story to them. Then the walls fell and I realized that when Tsipi said that the members were my brothers and sisters she was right. They were the siblings I had lost [her voice cracks]. But it was Tsipi who did the *siftah* [began the process].

During the survivor testimony, Tsipi attempted to cut the survivor off, so her descendant daughter could perform. The daughter then began her account as follows: “I always knew I was different...we did talk about it at home... during the siren for the moment of silence [on Holocaust Remembrance Day], I was with Mom, in another place. I started looking for my roots already in high school.” Interrupting her, Tsipi asked “did the Shoah do something to you as a mother?” and she responded: “Yes, because Mom told me that I helped her beat Hitler [by having children], and then I felt I did my part. But I want to say that this legacy...it didn’t do us any harm...maybe it made us more sensitive but that isn’t necessarily a bad thing.” Again Tsipi interrupted her, shouting “well, so move on already [*nu kvar*]—what do you want to say to your mother?” She responded, turning to her mother: “You always said you didn’t know how to love us, to show affection, but [voice cracks] that’s not true.” Mother and daughter kissed to resounding applause. The survivor added emotionally, “Tsipi taught us what is love, I can give it because she opened us up.” Tsipi then turned to the fourteen-year-old grandchild with streaks in his hair, saying: “Cool hair you’ve got! So how did you connect to grandma?” He answered: “I interviewed her, it was great, she didn’t let her past ruin her life...but learned the lessons of the past.” Tsipi then asked “you know that a Christian women saved your grandma’s life, what does that mean to you?” He responded: “that there are good people everywhere, of all religions.”

Although survivor testimony is critical for generating the family story, Tsipi interrupted the survivor tale in all three family performances, moving the event along to the second-generation “witness.” The descendant’s account of pride, love and commitment is framed as the highlight of the event overshadowing the parental testimony. With the help of Tsipi’s recurring pointed questions, regarding when they heard their first Holocaust story, how they feel about it, their connection to the survivor and the Holocaust and their Holocaust-framed parenthood, descendants constitute their own post-Holocaust testimony and Holocaust-related self. Holocaust Theater facilitates the articulation of key “constitutive events” such as the first hearing of a Holocaust tale, seeing the ashes that may contain one’s grandparent and namesake, and the birth of a third-generation child to vindicate the past. The Holocaust may then become their personal con-

stitutive event redefining their relationship with their parents and children as well as “obligations” to family and collective memory.

Beyond instigating the re-narration of the self as constituted by the Holocaust, Tsipi’s repeated reference to personal emotive “connections” to parents and grandparents serves to cement intergenerational ties, transforming three separate generations into one cohesive survivor family unit. In keeping with the emotion work in the previous vignettes, the expression of intense emotional pathos and narration (and in this case embodied performance) of empathic feelings of identification are central to reinforcing generational connections. As in the case of Guy, emotive pathos and identification are evoked by tales of parental suffering but on a more positive note they also engender feelings of pride, inherited strength and empowering intergenerational continuity. In Tsipi’s one and only meta-commentary to the audience, she refers to these feelings as “a thread running through the intergenerational stories.” Familial emotive connections are once again a bridge capable of traversing disparate temporal, generational and experiential worlds.

In keeping with the more private moments of the family when passing around their Torah in the previous vignette, the House of Being as institution functions as a space within which the individual and the family can restore family ties—to one another and to the past. The restorative process thus emerges both from within family dynamics and from without as instigated by institutional brokers. In all four vignettes presented above performance and enactment of the familial past and of relations to significant others are acts of self-constitution and re-creation. In the House, however, we see a more extreme shift away from Holocaust history/memory and commemoration as the focus of activities to a new focus on the family unit itself, on its emotion work, and on its cohesive integrity as a unit in which, among other things, transmission may take place.

### The Łódź Landsmanschaft

Our last vignette takes us to the Voluntary Organization of Łódź Survivors or “Łódź Landsmanschaft.” Originally established prior to the Holocaust in Israel and the United States, many such voluntary organizations were founded in the early decades of the twentieth century to represent the needs of Jews from different European localities and provide social welfare

to their new immigrant communities. After the Holocaust, organization agendas became more focused on survivor welfare. *Landsmanschaften* also became important meeting places where survivors would break their silence with like others and preserve their mother tongues and ruptured folk traditions.<sup>39</sup> Descendants have recently become active in these voluntary organizations, seeking traces of their prewar and Holocaust heritage.

When I spoke to the chairman of the organization—a descendant of a Łódź survivor—he critiqued the “multi-ethnic universal” activities in museums and national ceremonies:

Multi-ethnic survivor or descendant activities don’t work. They don’t succeed in creating a connection, because it is precisely the link to one’s “grandfather’s house” [Hebrew idiom meaning also lifeworld in general] and to his heritage which connects you, when you are looking for your identity, for who you are, for your roots...you can’t tell people we are all sons of Abraham, it won’t speak to them...but if you say your great-grandfather walked these streets...that’s more concrete and if you show someone documents that he signed from their village or his family name on tombstones or documents, that really tells you something, or if you meet someone at the organization who knew your grandfather. This creates a sense of familiarity.

When asked how each descendant could possibly identify with the one or two documents or find an acquaintance of their grandfather at the organization, he insisted that the experience at the organization can link every one of its Łódź descendants to their personal familial past:

My grandfather is not concrete to me, I couldn’t talk to him, and I can’t imagine him or his life. But I know he was part of a group... and when I know details about the group, I can imagine his place in the group and it’s easier to find witnesses to the group than to individuals...the group becomes the bridge to the individual you didn’t know.

When I suggested that “knowledge of the group” can be accessed from books or in heritage museums, the chairman narrowed his argument to outline the unique contribution of memory work at the communal site of Łódź Jewish memory:

*Chairman:* The natural chain of generations was severed in the Holocaust. My son has a grandparent, his family is whole. I didn't have a whole family, no one to turn to for information about who came before me, and who I am because of it. Our parents didn't want to remember, or they were too young to remember. So the collective, the ones that are left have to fill in the picture together, connect the broken chain for the descendants. We as the intermediary generation can help re-create the collective and the whole family.

*Carol:* But you and others told me they don't tell you details about their past, so what is filling in the void, or connecting the chain, whose family story is it?

*Chairman:* During the activities on Polish life in Łódź, we reexperience the community's past together, we live it again together—the geography of the city, the traditions, the sound of the language, and once it's shared, we can have a dialog about it, even if it's about something that happened to our Polish-Jewish ancestors 100 years ago. But the family is still put back together again, strengthened, once we know that we have the same past.

According to this descendant, it is one's sense of belonging to a particular communal past that makes you "who you are." Ethnic communal sites such as the voluntary organization provide a renewed link to one's grandparent's lifeworld, his/her heritage and language and, more concretely, the surviving traces of his/her social-cultural milieu—such as the streets, documents and tombstones. He insists, however, that the above link may be restored only through the mediation of the particular ethnic-communal "group" whose very communality creates a "bridge" to the past in a way the ruptured family and detached individual could not. In contrast to the alternative of the pedagogic experience at a heritage museum, the chairman explains that the link to the past must not only be didactically restored by in-group members but must also be experientially shared by the reunited particular community. It is the shared reexperience of the ethnic past that transforms didactic historical knowledge into a group/familial legacy and that legacy in turn into personal identity—constituting roots.

Sara, a member of the Łódź voluntary organization recounted her experience of the testimony of a survivor of the Łódź Ghetto as follows:



He didn't begin with the Holocaust. He talked to us about life in the city before the war. The Jewish shops, the synagogues and the places he played in as a child. We listened to his every word, trying to imagine what it was like for our families, the world they lost. My father never spoke about his past. These survivors are so old. It really is our last chance to get a glimpse of our heritage. Towards the end he talked about the devastated community, what it was like to go back to the city after the war. The void left behind. He kept stopping...he started to cry. We all did. But that's why it's so important to hear about the world before the war, about what disappeared.

As compared to Guy's trip to Poland, or the judgmental morality tale of the Torah, at the Łódź Landsmanschaft there appears to be no hegemonic organization voicing the importance of testimony and no memory broker constituting collective family narratives from above. Here instead we have a community of families and individuals seeking of their own accord testimonial accounts of the Jewish world made absent by the war. Recalling the identity-memory work of genealogical tourism, testimony emerges from within the ruptured collectivity in its attempt to heal itself, to reconstitute destroyed communal lifeworlds and fractured families from the bottom up into a virtual whole.<sup>40</sup> The performance of testimony that depicts the cityscape virtually ushers descendants back to prewar Łódź. Acting as a surrogate parent, the witness speaks for all of Łódź's dead denizens and silent/deceased survivors. As war memories surface marginalizing the prewar lifeworld, the curiosity and excitement of virtual travel and resultant restoration of roots and belonging give way to emotive identification with survivor loss. For these descendants, having virtually traveled to prewar Łódź, and identified with the witness, survivor loss may now vicariously become their loss.

## DISCUSSION

Contrary to analyses of top-down national intervention and orchestration of Holocaust memory, the cases presented here highlight processes of negotiation and cooperation between state-run and state-supported public institutions and survivor families in the co-constitution of familial

Holocaust memory. Critical deconstructionist readings of sites of survivor and descendant memory work often present reductionist and overly dichotomous accounts of commemorative practices.<sup>41</sup> Memory work is reduced to either repressed pathological silence or vocal redemptive memory in the service of state-supported institutions. In these accounts commemorative institutions are demonized and again reduced to sites in which individual and family memory is hegemonically enlisted and orchestrated in the interest of statecraft. The findings presented herein call our attention to niches of intimacy where the survivor family performs not as victim of hegemonic subjugation but as co-producer of their personal, familial and communal Holocaust legacy.

The institutional enlistment process, be it by the museum, the education system or the voluntary association, emerges in these findings to be far more subtle and complex than traditionally postulated. Although the institutions in this study do in fact reach out to enlist members and intervene in private lives, providing them with new narratives with which to make sense of their lives, families appear no less to seek out the “containment” to be had at these sites and the facilitation of memory brokers who promise to restore their intergenerational connections and transmission. In contrast to therapeutic or more monumental national sites of memory, these non-therapeutic and communal/local sites function without pathologizing, medicalizing or collectivizing individuals.<sup>42</sup> Rather, the site restores familial or communal connections to the past by accessing otherwise absent, silenced or tacit traces of the familial past and staging the reappropriation of that past by survivors and their families. Guy could read his grandmother’s tale at the site of its occurrence; Maya could revisit her grandfather’s home and meet those who had witnessed his prewar life; Adi could reinvigorate her family’s Holocaust memory after intuitively interacting with the commemorative plaque and eliciting information from her grandfather; the survivor family could be reunited with the Torah scroll and its silenced past; three generations of a survivor family could express their love and admiration for one another; and finally Łódź descendants could virtually walk the streets of the city and meet their grandfather—all because the institution orchestrated the emotive experience of family connections to a lost landscape, community, family member or narrative. Despite the initial process of institutional intervention, the family/descendant remains the creative center of the virtual reconnection with the past. In the symbiosis

between individual, family and institution, it is the family that weaves its identities. To paraphrase Michael Lambek and Paul Antze's definition of memory-identity work, it is only by exploring, performing and reenacting their phenomenological experience of the past that institutional visitors constitute identities.<sup>43</sup>

By shifting scholarly attention away from univocal top-down sociopolitical agendas, it is possible to more closely examine the commemorative mechanisms at work in the symbiosis between public sites of memory and their visitors and the actual performance of memory. The findings present an array of mechanisms which enable survivor families/descendants to co-orchestrate and reappropriate their previously absent legacies. First and foremost, testimony functions in all the vignettes to narratively re-present a tale from family history. The guide's, survivor's and descendant's emotive and embodied testimonial performance allows descendants and audience to partake in the "meaning-world" and "feeling-world" of their experience and, as White asserts, to make it their own.<sup>44</sup> The virtual co-presence of the descendants with their Holocaust dead, their virtual emplacements in lost eras and landscapes and their restored relations with emotionally distant and silent parents permit the shared emotional experience of death, loss and survival. Emotive and visceral sharing of an experience with those with whom we share "we-relations" enables what Ning Wang has termed "existentially authentic experience," allowing survivor families to traverse temporal, spatial, and generational boundaries to "existentially experience" the Holocaust past.<sup>45</sup> In this way the institutional staging of commemorative testimony may be conceptualized as triggering the first stage of a commemorative process that the family could not initially do for and by itself, and which ultimately enables the reappropriation of the Holocaust legacy.<sup>46</sup>

Yet in two of the five cases, material objects travel, playing a key role in the above staged transmission of Holocaust memory. Both the letter and the Torah scroll are critical conduits linking people and places, temporarily preserving silenced or perhaps forgotten legacies. The scholarship on material culture has extensively considered how museums and other sites of memory capitalize on the semiotic power of artefacts.<sup>47</sup> Moving out of the public domain into the more private sphere, research has also examined the way surviving mementos act as transitional objects encapsulating the past during the mourning process and/or in postwar realities so that

survivors/refugees may sustain ties with worlds ruptured by violence and warfare.<sup>48</sup> Little work, however, has been done in the fields of Holocaust Studies and war memory on the power of objects to conjure the ancestral past for descendants as the object transits “authentic” historical contexts and contemporary social spaces.<sup>49</sup> The letter and more powerfully the Torah scroll raise important questions regarding the role of material objects and their travel narratives in the process of familial intergenerational transmission and the related experiences of identification. Further research is called for to examine how descendants identify with and reappropriate the meanings and feelings evoked by objects not their own and the contexts in which these processes may be facilitated or hampered.

Memory work at the House of Testimony and the Łódź Association point to alternative mechanisms functioning in the absence of survivor testimony or surviving objects. The ethnic community (in the voluntary association) and to some extent the Holocaust theater at the House of Being may be read as temporary surrogates capable of containing and sustaining silenced testimonies or ruptured memories of the past. The “totality” of the family/community as social unit can hold itself together until it can piece together the fragments of their legacy, ultimately allowing the individual descendant or family to reappropriate the past. Although scholarship has examined sociocultural processes of intergenerational war-related story telling, the phenomenon of transmission of violent pasts has been monopolized by psychological theories of pathological transmission.<sup>50</sup> We still know little regarding the everyday non-pathological cultural processes of intergenerational transmission in the domestic sphere and less perhaps regarding the memory work of families who turn to public sites of memory. The findings raise questions pertaining to the way families seek out niches in the public sphere which, with the assistance of memory brokers, may remain sufficiently intimate to salvage memories on the verge of disappearance. Once again as seen in the vignettes, an institutional framework may not be sufficient to virtually restore the past. However, the Łódź community, like others with a shared ethnic and cultural history, may do for the family and the descendant what they cannot do for themselves. Likewise, the three-generational unit of the survivor family at the Holocaust Theater circulates fragments of family stories until voids in family ties have been filled.

We may conclude that the descendants' journey toward reemplacement in the Holocaust past and their consequent reappropriation of their legacy emerge as a product of multiple mechanisms and conduits. Yet the one process threading through all the vignettes is perhaps most paradoxically the newly engendered sense of belonging in the ruptured family and community and even in the distant past. Belonging refers to a state of subjectivity that is necessarily both social/public and personal/emotive. The public/ceremonial testimonial, performed person-object relations and reenacted familial/communal ties are the perfect discursive and emotive means for creating, authenticating and reproducing the meaningful emotion of belonging validated by others. Ironically, this sense of belonging is made possible by the "suspect" intervention of the public institution.

Beyond the empowering sense of belonging, the present ethnographic reading has also highlighted an array of emotions staged and experienced at sites of Holocaust memory such as curiosity, pride, amusement and nostalgic longing. Considering the extensive scholarship on the crisis of Holocaust representation, the sublime nature of Holocaust and genocide suffering and the unbridgeable impasse between the authentic experience of war and violence and its representation by descendants or other vicarious witnesses, the data raise interesting questions regarding descendants' positive emotions and apparently successful attempt to "experience" the past. Future research might continue to deconstruct the sanctification of emotions pertaining to social suffering, thus permitting scholars to grapple with a broader horizon of human experience.

Finally the analysis of these vignettes also provides a rare window into intimate processes of meta-memory—moments in which individuals, families and institutions articulate the way memory travels, the way it "makes it across to the other side" of distant domains and spheres to "become ours" or the ways in which time, space and subjectivity itself hinder its journey. Ethnography is an effective methodology to capture these performative and interpersonal moments in which the public and the private join forces to salvage memory "on the edge" of oblivion. Salvaging moments in which memories of war, violence and suffering become "aware of themselves," of their losses and gains, need not necessarily implicate strategic sociopolitical processes of memory construction or "distortion" or forced national remembering or forgetting.<sup>51</sup> Instead, we might set aside the morally loaded questions of the day that inevitably

attach themselves to histories and memories “on the edge” and adeptly explore how memory work is experienced in everyday life.

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# Is Paris Burning?

## *Touring America's "Good War" in France*

GEOFFREY M. WHITE

Growing numbers of American travelers are making their way to the landing beaches of D-Day where they find places such as the Normandy American Cemetery that reproduce distinctly American visions of World War II. Travelers passing through Paris also find opportunities to explore sites relevant to French memories of the war—sites that have the potential to disrupt as well as validate dominant narratives. This article discusses a walking tour that constructed its history around the story of the liberation of Paris. The analysis explores the interactive construction of historical understanding as the tour's dominant narrative of liberation intermingles with questions about French complicity, resistance, deportation and the Holocaust.

Questions about the fate of World War II memory as it loses its moorings in personal experience inevitably lead to questions about the institutional practices that represent it in the everyday lives of those who did not experience the war. In addition to textbooks, media productions and commemorative events, one of the ways in which the war is made present is through tourism, travel to the war's sites of violence, tragedy and heroism. Whereas the risks of commodification and trivialization are well known to scholars who study the intermingling of commerce and commemoration, we might also ask what happens when multiple national narratives intersect in and around sites of international travel and tourism. For Americans, who know the war primarily as a war that was fought elsewhere, traveling to the battlegrounds of the nation's "Good War" usually also involves an encounter with other people's narratives of the war. In this article, through an ethnography of a walking tour of sites associated with the "liberation of Paris" in 1944, I suggest that transnational war

tourism creates opportunities for reproducing familiar histories while also exposing them to dissonant “other” histories. In the face of such possible disruptions, I argue that dominant national histories are sustained by, among other things, (1) narrative practices in the tour context that focus on “good stories” and (2) the social composition of tours that creates a milieu conducive to the reproduction of those narratives.

Recent scholarship on nationalisms and the production of national cultures has called attention to the strategic importance of international or transnational contexts for the active construction of national imaginaries.<sup>1</sup> Sites of war memory, where multiple national histories intersect, are particularly relevant in this respect. Writing about American memory of both world wars of the twentieth century, Volker Depkat observes that “much of the U.S.-American memory of these wars is connected to sites in Europe, Africa and Asia. At the same time, it is inseparably intertwined with the war memories of the nations the U.S. interacted with during these wars, be that as enemies or allies, as destroyers or builders, as occupiers or liberators.”<sup>2</sup> One of the most ubiquitous contexts in which national memories “intertwine” is in the circuits of war tourism in which travelers of all types visit sites of past conflicts. Just as World War II was a war of states and empires that massively moved military and civilian populations across state borders, some of the most poignant means of recalling the war also involve crossing those same borders as people follow the routes of global tourism. If war histories typically unfold in narratives about cultures and nations in conflict, crossing national boundaries that mark those same identities creates opportunities for evoking, focusing and intensifying the traveler’s own sense of felt national identity, especially when the places visited manifest intersections of personal or family stories with national histories.<sup>3</sup> In line with work that has examined transnational productions of war memory in relation to Holocaust sites, Pacific War battlegrounds and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima,<sup>4</sup> this article examines the interactive construction of World War II history in the context of a walking tour of Paris in which the city’s residents, finally aided by French and American military units, expelled their German occupiers.

What kinds of historical understanding are afforded by the structures and practices of war tourism? As students of collective memory from Halbwachs to the present have made clear, popular understandings of the past are shaped by the cultural and social contexts of remembering.<sup>5</sup> In

this respect, insights from the ethnographic study of tourist zones alert us to the fundamentally interactive nature of histories produced in such contexts. As Edward Bruner puts it, focusing research on touristic borderzones “makes possible the ethnographic exploration of local practice in specific sites within a larger frame ... [where] the final meaning for the tourists, locals, and producers is not given a priori but emerges in dialogic interplay during their interactions in the borderzone.”<sup>6</sup> Tourism practices such as group tours continually recreate a social milieu in which the past is interactively represented, understood and evaluated in relation to multiple, and at times competing, frames of history. The challenge for analysis is to look more closely at the socially organized exchanges transacted in tourism’s memoryscapes.

In her study of representations of the “American War” in Vietnam, Christina Schwenkel shows that tourism practices such as guided tours and museum exhibits provide ways for travelers, in this case Americans, to navigate the landscapes of others, while inscribing it with their own significance(s).<sup>7</sup> The histories that emerge in the walking tour discussed here are both highly scripted and open to connection with larger and at times dissonant frames of French and European war history. To some extent the metaphor of tourist travel as a “sacred journey” fits well the movements of the war tourist who crosses cultural and geographic boundaries to visit war sites full of both known and unknown possibilities.<sup>8</sup> American travelers to European sites of World War II battles are often guided by narratives of the Good War, thickly produced in United States popular cultural media. These travelers seem to defy the conclusion of scholars of European war memory that the horrors of the Holocaust and mass (atomic) bombing of civilian populations in World War II brought a sea change in commemorative culture, away from military memorials celebrating state victories to a greater focus on loss, hastening “an awareness of the cracks and falsehoods of cultural and national unity....”<sup>9</sup> To the contrary, many Americans who travel to the D-Day landing beaches and military cemeteries in Normandy seek, and find, an emotion-filled landscape dense with iconic signifiers of American agency in a war of liberation.<sup>10</sup> It is instructive to note a similar divergence in interpretations in the literature on “dark tourism,” where some scholars have challenged the utility of the metaphor “dark” to describe the affective dimensions of tourism to battlefield memorials replete with stories of heroism and sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> What is often missing in these debates

is enough close-up ethnography to adequately represent the complex and at times contradictory meanings of battleground memoryscapes.

Whereas traveling to the sacred spaces of foreign memorial sites may validate and emotionalize national war narratives, encounters with other histories may also unsettle and subvert those same accounts. Americans' travel through World War II France is always at risk of raising more troubling questions that are generally omitted from popular American histories of the war—questions related to civilian casualties of Allied bombing, to the complex politics of collaboration and resistance during four years of Nazi occupation, and to complicity in the deportation and death of hundreds of thousands of Jews and resisters.<sup>12</sup> How, then, is it possible to (re)produce American narratives on tour in the *lieux de mémoire* of France, with its own array of contested local and regional memories? My approach to this question is to consider both the institutionalized narratives that frame tourist destinations as well as the interactions that emerge in the places where travelers encounter other histories.

## THE TOUR

The analysis that follows is based on observations of a walking tour made off and on over the course of four years, from 2008 to 2012. By comparing commentary and conversation across numerous tours and guides, I examine patterns in historical discourse, interactively produced, in the context of the tours. Recent work in tourism studies has begun to focus attention on the importance of guides and the narrative practices of guiding as the frontline context in which the social and moral dimensions of history are represented or “negotiated” in the course of touring.<sup>13</sup> I first took the tour in question in 2008. Over the next four years I recorded nine walks (in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012) with eight different guides. I also recorded interviews with five of the guides, including one of the founders of the tour who guided the first walk I took in 2008. After first taking the tour anonymously, I began introducing myself to the tour guides and walkers, explaining my interest in American memory of World War II and recording the tour narration along with much of the question-and-answer interaction between guides and walkers. In 2011 and 2012, the company manager assisted by introducing me to all the guides giving

the World War II tours, who in turn helped with a brief introduction to the people taking the tours. I found those taking the walk to be ready conversationalists, and followed up in a few cases via email.

The World War II tour was one of several themed walking tours offered by an American company, one of the largest in Paris, with its main business being bicycle and Segway tours through the streets of Paris. Themed walking tours are a smaller part of the company's business, with generally five or six walks offered at any one time. Other walks offered by this company at the time I began observing in 2008 included "The French Revolution," "The Latin Quarter," "Montmartre," "The Classic Walk" and, for a few years, "The Da Vinci Code Walk."<sup>14</sup> The World War II tour consisted of a two-hour walk through the middle of Paris telling the story of the liberation of the city over the course of six days in August 1944—from August 19, when the French Resistance first took to the streets in an armed uprising, to August 25, the date of German surrender as French and American troops entered the city. Only one other company offered, and continues to offer at the time of writing (2015), an English-language walking tour with World War II content. Different from the thematic focus of the liberation script, the tours offered by this UK-based company focus on the experience of German occupation.<sup>15</sup>

The World War II tour was introduced in 2006, one year after the company launched its business and began developing a repertoire of walking tours. The tour was offered three times a week, with the number of participants ranging between five and twenty on any given day, accounting for about 10 percent of the company's walking tour business. The modest numbers led finally to cancellation of the tour in 2012. It is useful to consider the historical moment in which the tour was created—soon after the sixtieth anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2004, which brought a surge of visitors through Paris to visit the Normandy battle sites—an interest fueled by release of the Steven Spielberg/Tom Hanks TV miniseries *Band of Brothers* in 2001. These developments were no doubt enhanced by patriotic sentiments engendered by the September 11 attacks in 2001. Although few veterans took the tours, due to their advanced age if nothing else, guides reported that the tours did attract individuals with an abiding interest in World War II, either out of family connections or as "history buffs," who often arrived with detailed knowledge of the war, even if not pertaining to the occupation and liberation of Paris. Guides

estimated that about 90 percent of the people taking the tour came from English-speaking countries, with Americans making up more than half, Australians about 20 percent, and the remainder mostly from Britain, Canada and New Zealand.<sup>16</sup> The walks attracted couples and families as well as individuals (the latter a preponderance of males).

The guides were mostly young Americans, college students in the middle of their studies or recently graduated, with some background in France or French studies.<sup>17</sup> They were recruited by the company as generalists who could be trained to guide any of their specialty tours. Training for the World War II tour consisted of studying a detailed script and shadowing experienced guides before going solo.<sup>18</sup> The company's "walk script" was developed from the book *Is Paris Burning?*, a popular account of the liberation of Paris which also became a major motion picture released in 1966.<sup>19</sup> The script consisted of 26 single-spaced pages of information about the French Resistance, the German forces of occupation and life under the occupation, as well as details of the political maneuvering and fighting that occurred as the armed uprising gained momentum.<sup>20</sup> There was considerable variation in guides' knowledge base, with some bringing a personal interest in the war, and others with little to add beyond the script.

In its website and brochure the company described the tour as follows:

The World War II Walk (2 hours) takes us back to Paris' darkest hours—the Nazi occupation. We will explore subjects such as the Resistance, life in Paris during the occupation, the D-Day invasion and, of course, the Liberation itself. Also included are visits to specific Paris sites related to this historical time period.

In point of fact, the tour was more narrowly framed than the description suggests (a misconception that occasionally elicited disappointed comments from walkers expecting a broader scope). Although guides might well touch upon any of these subjects, the walk's commentary focused primarily on events of the one week of armed resistance and political struggle leading to the Nazi surrender and the celebratory return to Allied and French control. The tour would have been more accurately labeled the "Liberation of Paris" walking tour.

Like many destinations and routes in tourism travel, the focus and itinerary for the Paris World War II walk were inspired by a book and film that did much to make its subject relevant for (American) travelers' inter-



Fig. 1. Tour guide points out World War II bullet holes in a wall by the Place de la Concorde, Paris, June 23, 2011. Photo by author.

ests. As noted, the core plotline for the tour was developed from the book and film *Is Paris Burning?* Written by American and French journalists Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Is Paris Burning?* gave audiences in both the United States and France a highly engaging and readable account of the events surrounding the liberation of Paris in August 1944 when the fate of the city hung in the balance as American troops advanced and the French Resistance took up arms against German occupiers. The company owner and one of the managers used its storyline to script a walk that began near the Prefecture of Police buildings on the Île de la Cité where armed resistance fighters had taken up positions, then continued through areas where fighting had occurred and, in a kind of climax to the story, stopped in front of the Hotel Meurice, the headquarters of the German military governor, General Dietrich von Choltitz, who had been approached by intermediaries for the Resistance to spare the city from the destruction ordered by Hitler. The walks would conclude either at the Place de la Concorde, the scene of a dramatic tank battle (figure 1), or a



bit further by a statue of Charles de Gaulle, one of the principal actors in the tour's political drama.

The main script required guides to talk about de Gaulle as a strong leader of the Free French forces with ambivalent relations with Allied military commanders as well as the communist-led French Resistance. This part of the commentary would vary considerably in substance and detail, depending on the knowledge and interest of the guides. Since most of the people on the tour had little knowledge of French politics or the struggles of the Resistance, this line of commentary tended to evoke few questions. De Gaulle as recounted in the tour narrative embodied ambivalent Anglo-French relations, cast as a figure seizing every opportunity to advance French interests and, as a result, distrusted by Allied political and military leaders. And yet in the story of the liberation of Paris, de Gaulle's ability to maneuver himself, and French forces, to be the first into the city, striding down the Champs-Élysées even as German snipers remained active in the city, conveyed an image of battlefield political acumen that might be expected of a military leader about to become a head of state. Here the Paris story, also a story about political history that anticipated complications of the postwar world, differs greatly from the singular combat focus of the histories generally associated with guided tours of Normandy battle sites. In France the further one is from Normandy the more difficult it is to sustain the kind of unifying Franco-American discourse that has been characteristic of that region's commemorative culture.<sup>21</sup>

And yet the foregrounding of battle narrative in the Paris walks also focused attention on events not unlike those told in histories of the Battle of Normandy, only in this case the events unfolded over the course of just a few days instead of weeks. As a result, the walking tour offered a consumable narrative made comprehensible through stories "made real" by virtue of being recounted in the places where they had occurred, against the backdrop of streets, plazas and buildings where the struggles had taken place. The tour script included seven locations where guides stopped to expand on events associated with different parts of the liberation narrative. While there was some variation in the stops that guides made, the tour company's "walk script" clearly listed these locations as stops that could be narrated with additional information provided in the script. Depending on guides' knowledge and interest, accounts about actions associated with the designated locations could be supplemented with broader commentary

about the occupation, resistance and collaboration. In this manner, the World War II walk was both highly scripted *and* open to disruptions and “detours” arising from interactions between guides and walkers. Keeping the focus on events in Paris during the final battle for the city and the core drama of the race to save the city from destruction offered up in *Is Paris Burning?* allowed for the exploration of larger and messier topics in the margins of the tour’s itinerary. Indeed, one of those complications arrived in the very first stop, the Deportation Memorial (discussed below), a place that is distinctly “off script” of the central theme of liberation.

#### AMERICAN(IZING) NARRATIVES OF WORLD WAR II

Critical studies of cultural tourism have long noted ways in which travelers seeking other times and places are often nonetheless surrounded with the familiar. They remain at home while away.<sup>22</sup> In this article I am concerned with a particular version of this question, the maintenance of familiar histories of war in transnational circuits of travel, where foreign battlegrounds are perhaps the most affectively significant examples of places where multiple national histories intersect. The ever-present possibility of dissonant information or contradictory narratives poses the question of how distinctly national histories are sustained in tours of war zones elsewhere (for Americans, all the wars of the twentieth century were fought “elsewhere”).

In my analysis of the Paris walking tour I focus on the influence of both popular narrative and social context as factors that contribute to the reproduction of dominant American perspectives on World War II as the Good War. First, the tour’s choice of the *Is Paris Burning?* script turns World War II history into a story about the liberation of a city, one that can be told in terms of human drama and street fighting that unfolded over the course of a few days in August 1944. The story of the liberation of Paris becomes, in turn, a synecdoche for World War II as a story about the liberation of Europe, a point that Marianna Torgovnik and others have made about the power of D-Day in shaping American perspectives on the war.<sup>23</sup> Second, the composition of the tour, made up of a large plurality of Americans, created a social milieu in which similarities of language and culture, while variable, oriented travelers to many of the same anchor points

of popular history. The social context of the tour, in turn, encouraged individual travelers to volunteer personal contributions (discussed below) that further define the tour's history in terms of American experience, particularly that of military veterans and their families.

Many American travelers are at least somewhat familiar with the "liberation of Paris" story, no doubt a factor in the company's decision to use the *Is Paris Burning?* script in the first place. The chaotic, violent and ultimately celebratory events of August 1944 were recorded in a large archive of still photographic and film images that circulated widely at the time and are often recirculated. Thus, photographs by several well-known war photographers filled a ten-page spread in the September 11, 1944, issue of *Life* magazine, at the same time as a collective of filmmakers in the French Resistance were releasing their own documentary of the events from the first moments of the uprising to the arrival of Allied troops and General de Gaulle.<sup>24</sup> Photos and film footage of joyous civilians greeting American and French troops lend powerful visual support to the liberation narrative. The popularity of these images is helped by the fact that the city had been largely spared the devastation inflicted on so many other European cities (whether by Allied bombing, combat or Nazi demolition). As told in the *Is Paris Burning?* account, the German commander von Choltitz emerges as an unlikely hero as he defies orders from Hitler to leave the city in ruins.<sup>25</sup> Even though many of the key details are contested, the mythic story of the preservation of Paris re-narrated in the walking tour keeps travelers' gaze fixed on the monuments most had come to see in the first place. In so doing the tour's history also works to deflect attention from the wholesale destruction that was experienced by so many other European cities, including those of Normandy.

Although not a site of prolonged battle between Allied and German militaries, Paris does occupy a strategic position in the liberation narrative. The surrender of German forces in and around Paris is often taken as the end point of the battle of Normandy that began with the D-Day landings. Thus, typical of most American timelines for the war in France, at the time of fieldwork for this study the homepage of the American Cemetery in Normandy invited the reader to "Learn the story of the Normandy Campaign from D-Day through the liberation of Paris," with a chronology that moved from June 6 to August 25.<sup>26</sup> As Bertram Gordon notes in his essay on the evolution of World War II tourism in France, American

and French interests in commemorating the war have often converged around “the account of the 1944 liberation of France”—an account that has guided the creation of tourism routes and, in today’s parlance, the branding of destinations for decades.<sup>27</sup> This utilization of the liberation narrative in organizing travel routes arguably began in 1947 with the dedication of the *Voie de la Liberté* (the path or highway of liberty), a French (and Belgian) project that marks the succession of places taken by General Patton’s U.S. Third Army with distinctive cone-shaped markers emblazoned with a “flame of liberty” placed at one-kilometer intervals along the route.<sup>28</sup> The theme of liberation represented by the *Voie de la Liberté* would continue to be the dominant trope in Normandy war tourism during the years that followed, evident in projects such as a three-day touring itinerary called the “Liberation Circuit” created by a French tourism committee in 1953, a system of thematic markers introduced in the late 1990s to mark key battle points,<sup>29</sup> and the use of interactive maps on regional tourism websites. In these circuits, the D-Day landing beaches are the focal starting point for a narrative of liberation, with each village, town and city marking progression of the narrative with memorials and museums.<sup>30</sup> Seeing the importance of D-Day and the liberation story for tourism, regional officials have succeeded in bringing about a French application to have the landing beaches inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In addition to the close articulation of the narrative of the “liberation of Paris” with the larger narrative of D-Day and the liberation of France,<sup>31</sup> present-day routes of American visitors in France also connect Paris with Normandy through the availability of package tours. Paris, which is just a two-hour train ride away from the battlegrounds of Normandy, is the most common jumping-off point for Americans visiting the D-Day beaches, whether on one-day or overnight excursions.<sup>32</sup> The tour guides and managers interviewed indicated that many of the Americans who took the Paris tour had travel itineraries that took them to Normandy and the D-Day beaches before or after their Paris visit. No doubt seeing the market for this, the company itself offered a one-day (subcontracted) excursion to the D-Day beaches in Normandy.<sup>33</sup>

Interest in the Holocaust aside, the great preponderance of stories and images of World War II in American popular culture focus on military actions seen through the eyes of U.S. soldiers—as in the influential pro-

ductions *Saving Private Ryan* (directed by Steven Spielberg, 1998) and *Band of Brothers*.<sup>34</sup> Consistent with these expectations, the tour's focus on the six-day uprising and liberation offered a combat narrative as a final coda of the battle of Normandy. Nonetheless, the location and theme of the tour, in which the principal players were French and German, moved tourists away from the American-focused D-Day story and toward issues associated with the occupation of France. The darker history of the occupation, including French complicity in deportations and internal political struggles that divided the Resistance, lurks in the margins of the streets of tourist Paris. As will be addressed in the last section of this article, the war's history of repressive violence associated with deportations and executions appeared as a frequent intruder in tour narratives.

In addition to the importance of the liberation narrative and the *Is Paris Burning?* script with its fixed sequence of sites, another major factor that worked to reproduce American perspectives on the war was the composition of the tours. The fact that the tours consisted of a large majority of Americans, usually led by an American guide, made it possible for participants to draw upon taken-for-granted cultural and historical assumptions when interpreting histories and posing questions and answers. The guides I interviewed estimated that 50–80 percent of the people taking the tour were American (guides interviewed in the last two years gave the highest estimates, suggesting that online comments on the tour by Americans may have had a snowballing effect).

The fact that most of the participants and guides were American meant that the walking tour could more easily transplant American interests and perspectives to the French context. For one of the guides interviewed in 2012, the American-centered nature of the narrative was so ingrained that she had to correct herself to refer to “Allied” forces rather than simply “American”: “One thing I did realize is you really have to be careful ... when I first started I used to say you know “the Americans.” But you really have to say “the Allies” because ... people from Canada and from Australia get like ‘Hey, we were there too!’”

From the first moments in which the guide and visitors would introduce themselves, a context of casual familiarity was created that encouraged participation in the co-construction of the tour's historical narrative. Only rarely did either French or German citizens take the tour. One guide's comment on the discomfort he experienced when, on occasion, German

travelers joined his tours underlines the fact that most tours functioned smoothly because the majority were Americans, or Allied nationalities, who could be assumed to share certain assumptions about the war:

It's always a little awkward for me when we get Germans on the tour. Yeah, not often, but it always throws me for a loop because, obviously I'm not like...anti-German, or...or, I just feel like, it just becomes awkward for me, talking about this terrible time in their history and world history and staying at the same time at [their] comfort level....<sup>35</sup>

#### PERSONAL(IZING) WAR MEMORY

By creating a social context that takes the form of a familiar conversation by and for Americans (among others), the tour allowed participants to more readily volunteer their own stories from personal experience or family involvement with the war. Tour guides interviewed talked about people's "personal experiences" as a source of interest behind their questions and eagerness to add their own comments to the tour narrative. Guides seized on these interactions, encouraging their expansion in the tour's dialogue and even adding them to their repertoire of stories to be used in future tours. The response of one guide to my question asking if she made use of anecdotes learned from individuals on her tours is typical of the enthusiasm for such expansions:

Yes I do! I bring these stories as soon as I learn something new that I bring in, yeah yeah. Absolutely. I'll share it, to either ask if I can share it with the others or on the following tour, then I'll, then I'll share it. Because people like to hear that fresh information. Makes it, makes it real.

Another guide noted that the availability of "personal experiences" made his World War II walks different from those he did on the French Revolution theme:

you do get the people, you know, have these personal experiences, they wanna throw it out there. That's one thing I've found interesting just between the World War II tour and the French Revolution tour

... with World War II, it's almost like there's an infinite amount of knowledge because ... anybody who was alive during that time can have their own perspective ... especially when it's just being passed down one generation.

By signaling the importance of these contributions for the tour, guides were, at least implicitly, also highlighting the value of these points of intersection between personal stories and the larger public history offered to participants in the tour. In other words, guides acknowledged that such personal testimonials make a valuable addition to the oral archives of history writ large, at least in the momentary opportunities afforded by the tour context in which individuals are encouraged to speak about their own personal or family experiences with a wider audience, gathered together on the basis of a shared interest in World War II history. Here is an example of the kind of enthusiastic response from guides (and others on the tour) that would encourage travelers to expand on stories from their own families. In the exchange below, a participant is talking to the tour guide and has just indicated that her father had been in the U.S. Army and been in Paris, bringing home numerous German souvenirs including Nazi stationery:

*Traveler:* There were like, big stacks of stationery, you know, from the Third Reich, and my dad started writing my mom.

*Guide:* So your dad was here?

*Traveler:* Yeah, he...he was.

*Guide:* Wow, you're gonna have to tell me all the stories...

*Traveler:* Well, I went up to the [?] today, and the place where the Americans were up there—it's a big hospital insane asylum, and they actually let me go in and see the room he stayed in, so I was really kinda surprised.

*Guide:* Really?

*Traveler:* And so we have these letters from my mom with the swastika on the stationery. It's pretty funny.

*Guide:* Wow. Letters?

*Traveler:* Oh yeah, yeah. I've got about a thousand letters since my parents wrote each other every day.

*Guide:* Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh! That's amazing...

Among the Americans who took the tour, two types of personal connection with the war were particularly frequent: those with World War II veterans in their families and military veterans of other wars. For some the tour is part of a pilgrimage to European war sites that have significance in family histories, usually because of a parent or grandparent who was in the war. Most of the guides interviewed mentioned these types of participants. Travelers with family ties to World War II often made reference to their conversations with a parent or grandparent veteran, as well as to photographs and other war memorabilia that index their family's collective memory of the war. As one example, a mother and eighteen-year-old son talked of recently finding a photo album of the mother's father that included a large collection of photos of the father's service in France. They were on a trip to France, Italy and Germany that they described as a high school graduation gift for the son with a theme of World War II history.

In their interviews several guides recalled interactions with the descendants of World War II veterans along with details of memorable actions or traits, such as the bomber pilot who flew multiple missions over France, including on D-Day, with the motto "Hurry home honey" painted on the nose of his aircraft. And in a few instances guides described encounters that developed into follow-up exchanges with letters and photos. In one of the more dramatic examples, the daughter of an American pilot who famously flew his fighter plane under the Eiffel Tower talked of his feats during the tour and later sent information that the guide used in the "Classic" city tour as well as the World War II walk. Since there was a considerable turnover in the cadre of guides for the tour, the frequency of these anecdotes suggests quite a density of personal ties to World War II history. The guides also reported meeting a significant number of American veterans of other wars (Korea, Vietnam, and, in lesser numbers, the Middle East). Indeed, military veterans, and even active duty military personnel, are an important constituency for war tourism, counting among the frequent visitors to former battlefield sites and memorials. One of the veterans I talked with later emailed me his own thoughts about some of the reasons for his interest in World War II, citing the influence of his own military training:

As I mentioned to you ... I was in the Marine Corps from 1957 to 1960. As part of the training in boot camp, we learned the history



of the Marine Corps, a huge part of which was World War II. I met a few Marines who had been in the Pacific during the war. Also, an older brother had been in the Navy during the war, and he had told me stories. I realized as we spoke that I had been programmed by my Marine Corps days to be interested in that war, in which the Marine Corps had played such a huge role....<sup>36</sup>

In general the nature of the street fighting in Paris is different enough from combat experience in later wars to limit contributions from those veterans. Yet, in one instance, when the guide was relating the story of an ambush of a German patrol car by French Resistance fighters, an American woman who worked as a consultant in special forces training spoke up about the relevance of such situations in their own training regimen. The tour script uses the story of the ambush to describe street fighting around the Prefecture of Police through a story vividly presented in *Is Paris Burning?* on the basis of recollections by German Sergeant Bernhard Blache, the only one to have survived the ambush. After the guide had finished, the woman spoke up as follows:

*Traveler:* Actually, you call that “getting out of the kill-zone.”

*Guide:* What’d you say?

*Traveler:* It’s called, “getting out of the kill-zone.”

*Guide:* Are you military? Is your husband military?

*Traveler:* No, I just trained [?]....

*Guide:* Do you mind telling us more? This is kind of interesting. I’ve never met anybody that—

*Traveler:* I...I did training for Navy Seals, green berets, whatever group was going to travel or live in high-threat areas, and we did both footwork and work in vehicles, and we based all of what we learned starting from World War II forward. Every assassination, everything that happened, and what we basically told everybody is, “you gotta get out of the kill-zone. Don’t think about anything but putting your foot on the accelerator. It doesn’t matter if you go forwards or backwards, you’ve just gotta get out of the kill-zone.”

Of course, not everyone spoke about connections to World War II history. Although it is difficult to ascertain the nature of silences, conversations with some of the travelers lead me to speculate that families with Jewish

histories tended to hold back in this context, despite possible relevance, for them, of the events commemorated at the first stop of the tour, the Deportation Memorial (see below). In one case of a husband and wife and son on the tour, the wife said she had booked the tour because of her husband who reads a lot on war history. Yet, as we spoke, she went on to speak about the importance of the war for her own family, saying that “an entire branch” of her family had been “wiped out” in Poland. It was only because her grandfather had left Poland for the United States as a teenager that he had been the only one to survive. “If he hadn’t done that, none of us would be here.” She had never been to Poland and it was not part of the itinerary for their trip.

#### COMPLICITIES AND COMPLEXITIES

The first stop on the tour, the Memorial to the Martyrs of the Deportation (Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation) was also one of the most variable in the way it was treated by different guides. Most typically guides would stop at the site and offer people the option of entering the memorial on their own, before gathering again to move on to the next site, usually with minimal explanation of the events memorialized there. At least one guide bypassed the Memorial altogether while, at the other extreme, another worked out an arrangement to have a guard at the Memorial provide a brief explanation about its history. Whereas most guards at the Memorial act simply as gatekeepers at the top of the stairs that descend down into the crypt-like memorial space, this arrangement had the guard accompanying the walking tour and providing a history of the memorial, along with commentary on its architectural symbolism (figure 2). I interpret this variation as evidence that the subject of deportation lay outside the themes contained in the *Is Paris Burning?* script as well as the liberation narrative generally (although the liberation of camps is prominently part of the latter). It seems likely that the Memorial was included in the tour because of its proximity to the path of the walk and its importance as a World War II site, rather than because of its relevance to the primary themes of the tour.

In addition, the tone and protocol of the visit marked the Memorial as a different sort of space than other stops on the walk.<sup>37</sup> The “sacred”



Fig. 2. Guard recounts memorial history for the walking tour. Memorial to the Martyrs of the Deportation, Île de la Cité, Paris, July 12, 2012. Photo by author.

quality of the Memorial was immediately evident in the person of the guard standing at the entrance who regulated the flow of people descending down a narrow stairway and reminded visitors of the need for silence as they entered the somber memorial below (which includes a tomb of the “unknown deportee”). Dedicated in 1962 by Charles de Gaulle, the Memorial honors the estimated 160,000 people, including approximately 76,000 Jews, deported from France to concentrations camps in Germany and elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> The only interpretive signage at the Memorial is a plaque mounted to the side of the entrance (figure 3) which provides a brief history of the deportations (in three languages, French, English and German), listing ten categories of people imprisoned by the Nazi regime, including Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and political prisoners.<sup>39</sup> It is said, on the tour, that only 3 percent ever returned.

Not surprisingly, these facts, emanating from a history that complicates the common view that Nazi death camps were only for Jews, draw many questions. The following somewhat confused exchange is typical of the conversations that ensue as tour participants seek clarification:



Fig. 3. Visitors read plaque at the entrance to the Memorial to the Martyrs of the Deportation, Île de la Cité, Paris, July 12, 2008. Photo by author.

*Guide:* Each one of those [referring to points of light in the Memorial] represents one deportee, and then there's like a crystal sphere at the base of that gate—represents an unknown deportee.

*Visitor:* Deportee residents?

*Guide:* Uh, yeah. Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, political refugees.

*Visitor:* They didn't just execute them like they did...?

*Guide:* They deport...well, they...they deported them to concentration camps, so they were—

*Visitor:* In Germany?

*Guide:* Uh, there was one in Alsace in the east of France that they had built, and then the others in Germany, but I think most of them were shipped off to Alsace. No schnapps and sausages for them that time unfortunately.

*Visitor:* About how many returned?

*Guide:* Of the 200,000?

*Visitor:* How many?

*Guide:* 3 percent of the 200,000.

*Visitor:* Returned?

*Guide:* Yeah.

*Visitor:* Wow.

In another exchange at the same site, one of the tour participants pressed for details about the logistics of arrest and imprisonment. In this case, the participant was curious to learn more about French society and the line of questions went too far off the script of the tour to develop.

*Guide:* Not all of 'em but a good amount uh, were held in the military academy—there's a plaque on the side—uh, before they were deported. They were held in...

*Traveler:* Some were held in prisons right outside of Paris?

*Guide:* Does anybody have any questions about the Deportation Memorial?

*Traveler:* I have a question.

*Guide:* Yeah?

*Traveler:* Uh, I've been to other places in eastern Europe where there was Nazi occupation, and a lot of those places, they had...had ghettos or they like, um,

*Guide:* Jewish ghettos?

*Traveler:* Yeah, were there like...did they have any of those in France?

*Guide:* Uh, yeah, in the Marais there was a Jewish ghetto. That's a little more mixed, but it wasn't like as a result of Nazi occupation. Jewish ghettos in European cities were usually uh, were...usually came about even way before the Nazis.

*Traveler:* But then how would they like control who would go in and who would go out, and then the Nazis, they would like, confine the people to...

*Guide:* Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That...yeah, that...that was kinda how it started, yeah. They would keep people restricted to those [?]

*Traveler:* So did they do that in Paris or was it not the same? No? So how did they like, find the people that they wanted to deport....

*Traveler 2:* Yeah.

*Guide:* Oh just, you know, uh, being denounced by neighbors. You know, some people were pro-Nazi as well, so—

*Traveler:* Oh.

*Guide:* Yeah, getting denounced, getting found also just by your name. Names gave people away. I have a friend whose dad uh, changed his name, and changed his religion as well. He was a Moroccan Jew, and uh, converted to...to avoid persecution.

*Traveler:* Thank you.

While a more holistic analysis of the multiple strands of American popular memory of World War II has yet to be done, one of the most important elements, related to the Good War theme discussed here, is memory of the Holocaust. In Peter Novick's account, popular awareness of the Holocaust grew in importance in the United States from the 1970s onward, in conjunction with a variety of social, cultural and political factors, including literary and cinematic productions.<sup>40</sup> Because of that prominence, American travelers generally understood the Deportation Memorial as a Holocaust memorial, creating confusion regarding other kinds of persecution as well as the complicity of the collaborationist French regime in the deportations.<sup>41</sup> In fact, over the period in which I was observing the walking tour (2008–12), this issue emerged as a common question on the tour because of a film released in 2011 based on the book *Sarah's Key*.<sup>42</sup> The book and film depict the complicity of the Vichy government and French police in the detention and deportation of Jews in France through the story of one family arrested in the infamous Vel' d'Hiv Roundup (*La rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver*)—a mass arrest and deportation ordered by the German occupiers but executed by French police on July 16–17, 1942.<sup>43</sup> One of the guides interviewed in 2011 said that increasing numbers of people on his tours were asking questions based on the book's plotline. This had led him to read the book himself and discover some aspects of that history and memory.

In several instances on the tour, one of the travelers would know the name of the collaborationist French government, Vichy (actually listed as a topic in the company's advertising of the tour), and ask for more information about the way it worked during the war years. One of the guides, who was able to expand in more detail than usually emerged on the walks, ventured into a reflection about the moral conflicts facing postwar French society:

A lot of [the collaborationists] right after the war were sentenced to death. Philippe Pétain was actually pardoned and just given life

in prison<sup>44</sup> ... but eventually, they kinda had to make a distinction ... I think the best translation would be collaboration versus accommodation. Did you collaborate with the Nazis? Were you, you know, helping them advance in whatever they were doing? Or did you serve a German guy breakfast one morning when he came in from the cold?... Okay, you know, how much did you do? You know, did one of them sleep in your barn for a night? Or were you housing them for four years and, you know, telling them where Allies were being spotted or something like that. Um yeah, but right afterwards, a lot of them were life imprisonment or a lot of them were death, and eventually some of them were...many of them were life imprisonment. But I think the last trial ended in something like 1999 or 2001 or something like that. There's actually a trial that went on that long so kind of absurd....

In most cases, however, guides did not expand on the nature of wartime collaboration, leaving a space for more overt criticism from the walkers, creating what one guide termed "awkward" tensions in the give and take of the tours. Two of the guides interviewed described a degree of discomfort regarding negative comments about French capitulation in the face of Nazi invasion. Since this stereotype of French surrender is common in U.S. circles, the American(izing) context of the walk makes it easy to express views that might otherwise seem out of place. Yet, even for American guides living in Paris, hearing longstanding anti-French views voiced by Americans creates a different kind of "awkwardness." In the following reflection one of the guides notes the tension between the goal of eliciting conversation and dialogue with people on the tour:

And, uh, yeah and they're...quick to judge the French. And I mean, I...like I said, I don't really like, uh, deny their judgments or...or call them wrong, but as a tour guide with multiple different nationalities on the tour, I try not to chime in with the "yeah there's a lot of capitulations." Uh, but, yeah, I think the Jewish families are acting a little bit more bitter, um, towards the French. I don't think it...I don't think it's ruining their trip to France, but they're still...very much aware that it was French forces, French troops, soldiers that were rounding individuals up. And the police....

Anytime there's a negative comment on this tour, it's either because we focused so much on six days of the entire occupation, or because the tour guide didn't have much knowledge outside of Paris. Um, so that can be...that can be frustrating. But at the same time ... part of the fun in the job, often times, most of the job is the interaction. You hope for some kind of interaction.... Oftentimes ... you'll get somebody trying to get me into being like, "Yeah the French surrendered, and...and...and were really bad." And I just try really hard not to [get into it]...'cause you don't know who you're... you'll offend, so you'll kind of agree with someone else.

As this guide expanded on his own thoughts on the subject, he made it clear that in fact he had thought at length about the moral complexities faced by the citizens of occupied France, but in the context of the tour, where the basic rule is "not to offend," he found no way to engage tour participants:

I think I have my own opinions, and there was, like I said, a lot of collaboration, but, you know...I don't think all the collaborationists were terrible people, and also what defines collaboration, you know, uh, a café that would be thriving during the time of the occupation, uh, were afterwards deemed collaborationist. Were they really in support of the Nazi regime and ideals and goals? Or were they just happy to still have business and be able to feed their families...

## CONCLUSION

To listen to the narratives and conversations engendered by war tourism such as the Paris World War II tour is to ask how multiple frameworks of and for memories of war interact. In this article I have been particularly interested in the transnational dimensions of war memory that emerge as travelers visiting foreign war sites contend with "other" histories. Similar to the findings of related work on transnational war memory, this study suggests that as people move, crossing social and cultural boundaries, familiar domestic narratives come into sharper focus at the same time as they become vulnerable to disruption by other histories. Not surprisingly for a subject as large and (in many quarters) as well known as World War



II, the dominant stories and images of the American (and French) liberation narrative work to frame and focus much of the traveler's historical gaze. At the same time, the tour's somewhat under-interpreted visit to a memorial to the victims of Nazi violence and French complicity evoked a range of responses from blank incomprehension to questions that probed the "dark years" of French occupation.

Even if American references to World War II as the "Good War" are usually rendered in self-conscious quotes, the label points to a discourse about the war as a war against tyranny fought by a patriotic generation willing to sacrifice for national ideals (the "greatest generation"). These tropes emerged in American popular culture in the 1990s, in the context of commemorations marking fifty-year anniversaries of the war, accompanied by a host of film and media productions, most notably Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*.<sup>45</sup> As that generational era recedes, overtaken by the more recent and still unfinished memory of inconclusive wars in the Middle East, what will be the career of the Good War in American memory? Richard Golsan's analysis of the powerful impact of the film *Saving Private Ryan* in American popular culture illuminates the relevance of the film for American attitudes toward post-World War II conflicts, veering between wishful nostalgia for moral clarity posed by the fight against Nazism and deeper reflections about the place of warfare in contemporary engagements—questions that have become more conflicted and ambivalent for Americans since the inconclusive outcomes of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.<sup>46</sup> To ask about the historical trajectory of memory is to ask about the events and activities that make memory "real" and relevant to present lives. This article suggests that war tourism is one such context, even if it is always vulnerable to flattening experience into consumable portions that reproduce dominant narratives.

Asking questions about the personal or emotional salience of World War II histories is particularly relevant at this juncture in history in which the generation of witnesses is passing away, posing questions about the future of emotive memory. This study suggests that, for Americans, the descendants and relatives of veterans (of all wars) constitute a substantial portion of tourists to World War II destinations in France. Conversations recorded in the course of the walking tour, along with reflections of tour guides, show that many travelers bring their own family histories into the discourse of the tours, adding an element of personalization to the tour's

own historiography. Whereas the personalization of war history often works to valorize the veteran-centered discourse of the Good War, tours such as the Paris walking tour may also afford opportunities for individuals to discover things that might alter or transform their own perspective. Some aspects of the tour described here, such as the guides' preference for agreement even when participants voice views they find ill-informed or distorted, suggest these opportunities may be very limited. The importance of preference for agreement is characteristic of most guide/traveler interactions in the global tourism industry where guides are trained and/or have the common sense not to disagree or displease travelers whose satisfaction is fundamental to commercial success. And yet, the interactions that occur in tourism encounters may open up new questions. When traveling, the transnational quest for historical and emotional validation in which personal or family narratives find connection with national histories will always open those narratives to the risks that follow from encounters with other historiographies, other epistemes. Attending to the conversational spaces of these routes of travel is one way to gauge the consequences of these encounters for the future of memory.

#### NOTES

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1. Udo J. Hebel, ed., *Transnational American Memories* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

2. Volker Depkat, "Remembering War the Transnational Way: The U.S.-American Memory of World War I," in *ibid.*, 186.

3. Cf. Maruška Svašek, ed., *Moving Subjects, Moving Objects: Transnationalism, Cultural Production and Emotions* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), for an approach to the emotionality of transnational movement generally.

4. See, for example, Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New

York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Geoffrey M. White, "Remembering Guadalcanal: National Identity and Transnational Memory-Making," *Public Culture* 7, no. 3 (1995): 529–55; Lisa Yoneyama, "For Transformative Knowledge and Postnationalist Public Spheres: The Smithsonian *Enola Gay* Controversy," in T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 323–46.

5. See Lewis A. Coser, ed., *Maurice Halbwachs on Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

6. Edward M. Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 17.

7. Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam*.

8. Nelson Graburn, "Secular Ritual: A General Theory of Tourism," in Valene L. Smith and Maryann Brent, eds., *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century* (Elmsford, NY: Cognizant Communication Corp, 2001), 42–50.

9. Paul Harvey Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 160; citing Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9–10. Brigitte Sion, in her discussion of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, sees a similar transformation: "Traditionally, Western monuments have celebrated military victories, heroes, and triumphs. However, years of dictatorship and crimes against civilians have challenged these architectural and political conventions. The Second World War, and specifically the Holocaust, shifted commemorative practices. The focus on victims moved from soldiers to civilians, and memorial design turned to increased abstraction." Brigitte Sion, "Affective Memory, Ineffective Functionality: Experiencing Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe," in William John Niven and Chloe Paver, eds., *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 244.

10. Michael Dolski, Sam Edwards and John Buckley, eds., *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2014); William Keylor, "La Mémoire, l'oubli et l'utilisation politique de l'histoire du débarquement aux États-Unis," in Stéphane Grimaldi, ed., *Normandie—6 Juin 1944: L'émergence d'une mémoire collective?* (Caen: Le Mémorial de Caen, 2012), 55–60; Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chap. 1; John E. Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

11. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009); M. Bowman and P. Pezzullo, "What's So 'Dark' About 'Dark Tourism'? Death, Tours, and Performance," *Tourist Studies* 9, no. 3 (2009): 187–202.

12. Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Knopf, 1972); Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Bertram M. Gordon, "French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem," in Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, eds., *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 239–71; Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); Richard J. Golsan, "The Legacy of World War II in France: Mapping the Discourses of Memory," in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 73–101; Kate C. LeMay, "Gratitude, Trauma, and Repression: D-Day in French Memory," in Dolski, Edwards and Buckley, eds., *D-Day in History and Memory*, 159–88.

13. Sharon Macdonald, "Negotiating on the Ground(s): Guiding Tours of Nazi Heritage," in Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 146–63; Noel B. Salazar, "Guiding Roles and Rules," in Salazar, *Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 111–38; Jonathan R. Wynn, *The Tour Guide: Walking and Talking New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

14. The trajectory of the Da Vinci Code walking tour illustrates well the connection between tourism and popular culture—the tour was created in response to visitor interest in the sites included in the hugely popular novel of the same title, and grew to meet a demand equal to all the other tours combined (Mike Franz, interview with the author, July 5, 2008). Yet once the film had appeared and interest in the novel waned, the numbers dropped to the point where the tour was canceled after just three to four years.

15. As of 2013 the company Paris Walks ([www.paris-walks.com](http://www.paris-walks.com)) continued to offer two themed tours on World War II topics: "The Resistance and the Occupation, Left Bank Circuit" and "Paris during the Occupation," although neither as part of the regularly weekly schedule.

16. Guides' estimates suggest a growing percentage of Americans as the tours matured, from less than 50% at the start to as high as 80% by the end.

17. A change in French visa regulations in 2011 that made it impossible for the company to sponsor visas for young American guides hired on a temporary

basis was an important factor in the termination of the World War II walks in 2012. The guides for the walks during the last year of the program became more international, recruited from the UK and France.

18. Simon Burke, interview with the author, May 31, 2013.

19. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Is Paris Burning?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965).

20. Anonymous, "The Liberation of Paris" (unpublished ms., Paris, n.d.); obtained from Classic Walks, Paris 2013 (author's files). The role of the script for these Paris tours was much like that described by Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*, for tours of Nazi historical sites where scripts did not "set out precisely what guides should say" but rather listed the main stops with "themes that should be covered" (148). In this case the script identified the starting point of the tour as the bridge connecting the two main islands in the middle of the Seine, the Île de la Cité and the Île Saint-Louis. It then made reference to a site that could be discussed from that vantage point (the Hôtel de Ville) before listing seven places that made up the tour's main stops: the Deportation Memorial, Hotel Dieu Plaque (location of a de Gaulle speech), the Prefecture of Police, the Louvre, the Hotel Meurice and the Place de la Concorde. The script also offered a "Timeline of Events" running from June 7 to August 31 and a list of "Other Things to Know" that included the topics "Socialists," "Vichy Collaborators," "Jews" and "Women" under "miscellaneous." Anonymous, "The Liberation of Paris," 20–22.

21. For this insight I am indebted to one of the anonymous readers for this journal.

22. Bruner, *Culture on Tour*; Miriam Kahn, *Tahiti Beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Plume, 1989).

23. Torgovnick, *The War Complex*, 22.

24. *La Libération de Paris* is a short documentary by a group of filmmakers working with the Resistance who shot film of the uprising in the streets between August 19 and 25, 1944. The film was hastily edited and released to French theaters on September 1, 1944.

25. To underline the desired portrayal of von Choltitz as a commander willing to defy Hitler, the film *Is Paris Burning?* even makes up a scene in which he is shown reaching for a pistol in his desk, presumably to resist arrest by two SS officers, before he realizes that their visit to his office is unrelated to the order to destroy Paris.

26. See <http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/no.php> (accessed July 2013).

27. Gordon, "French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem," 250.

28. LeMay, "Gratitude, Trauma, and Repression," 162–63. It is relevant to the transnational theme of this article to note that the U.S. Third Army at this point included the French 2nd Armored Division commanded by General Philippe Leclerc.

29. These markers, tall blue obelisks with distinctive blue-and-white coloring and seagull logos, were produced by SETEL, the Société d'études touristiques et d'équipement de loisirs, to map "eight thematic circuits following the progression of battle after D-Day." See *ibid.*, 173.

30. Michael R. Dolski, "'Portal of Liberation': D-Day Myth as American Self-Affirmation," in Dolski, Edwards and Buckley, eds., *D-Day in History and Memory*, 43–84; Torgovnick, *The War Complex*, chap. 1; Keylor, "La Mémoire, l'oubli."

31. Bertram M. Gordon, "Warfare and Tourism: Paris in World War II," *Annals of Tourism Research* 25, no. 3 (1998): 616–38, and "World War II Tourism in France," in David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds., *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 179–98.

32. For recent work on D-Day tourism, see Geoffrey R. Bird, "Place Identities in the Normandy Landscape of War: Touring the Canadian Sites of Memory," in Leanne White and Elspeth Frew, eds., *Dark Tourism and Place Identity: Managing and Interpreting Dark Places* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 167–85; Dolski, Edwards and Buckley, eds., *D-Day in History and Memory*; Sam Edwards "Commemoration and Consumption in Normandy, 1945–1994," in Michael Keren and Holger H. Herwig, eds., *War Memory and Popular Culture: Essays on Modes of Remembrance and Commemoration* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 76–91; Gordon, "World War II Tourism in France"; and Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, eds., *Back to the Front: Tourisms of War* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994).

33. The Classic Walks brochure (2011) description of the World War II Walk listed the Normandy excursion under the heading "D-Day Beaches": "Enthusiasts of *Band of Brothers* and *Saving Private Ryan* should not pass up the opportunity to visit the actual locations where the invasion occurred. This day trip from Paris will take you to Omaha Beach, the American Cemetery, Pointe du Hoc, the Longues-sur-Mer Battery and more. Reservations are required (€150)."

34. Richard J. Golsan, "Il faut sauver le soldat Ryan: La politique du souvenir et de la nostalgie," in Grimaldi, ed., *Normandie—6 Juin 1944*, 91–98.

35. Recorded interview with the author, June 28, 2011.

36. Email to the author, August 8, 2011.

37. The only other overtly memorial space on the tour is a line of wall plaques near the Place de la Concorde honoring individuals who died in the street fighting.

38. Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments*.

39. The plaque displays ten insignias that prisoners were required to wear, labeled as follows: German political prisoner, French political prisoner, Jewish political prisoner, Gipsy, Jehovah's Witness, Stateless person, Anti-social, Homosexual, Professional criminal, Jewish star.

40. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

41. There is in fact a significant Holocaust memorial and museum, the Mémorial de la Shoah, which opened in 2005 just a few blocks away, on the site of the Memorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr. Except for many Jewish travelers, most participants and some guides seemed unaware of its existence.

42. Tatiana de Rosnay, *Sarah's Key* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007).

43. More than 13,000 people were rounded up and held before being put on trains and shipped, ultimately, to Nazi death camps, Auschwitz in particular. On July 16, 1993, an official memorial was dedicated on the former site of the Vélodrome, with the day to be observed each year in a memorial ceremony. Gordon, "French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem," 259. In 1995 French President Jacques Chirac apologized for the cooperation of French police in carrying out the deportation.

44. In fact, Pétain was never pardoned. After he was convicted of treason in 1945, Charles de Gaulle, as President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, commuted his death sentence to life in prison, where he died in 1951.

45. Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*.

46. Golsan, "Il faut sauver le soldat Ryan."

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# Enabling Remembrance

## *Japanese-Indisch Descendants Visit Japan*

EVELINE BUCHHEIM

Intimacy between Japanese men and Dutch-*Indisch* women during the Pacific War in the Dutch East Indies (1942–45) resulted in offspring who often were unaware of their descent. Even though, after the war, they were considered compromising consequences of fraternization, in recent decades the Japanese government has invited ex-POWs and children of Japanese fathers for a visit to “promote a spirit of reconciliation with Japan and the Japanese people.” This article examines the images and sentiments produced in the context of these travels, asking how Japanese-*Indisch* descendants envision their affinity to an unknown fatherland and what is at stake for the Japanese organizers.

### INTRODUCTION

War memories come in many guises and they often travel thorny paths. The Japanese scholar Yoshiko Nozaki summarizes this aptly: “memories of war appear not only politically explosive, but also culturally and psychologically complex.”<sup>1</sup> The intricacy of the issues Nozaki alludes to become particularly clear when assessing reconciliation trips to Japan, organized by the Japanese embassy in the Netherlands and sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Originally only those who had been POWs during the Japanese occupation of the former Dutch East Indies were able to participate in these trips, but after intense lobbying, descendants born of unions between Dutch women and Japanese men during the Pacific War were also permitted to apply for them.

The racial fear and hatred that John Dower identified as one of the most important factors why Japanese and Anglo-Americans considered



each other the “inferior other” also play a role in how the conflict in the Pacific, decades after its end, is perceived in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> For children of Japanese fathers being “other” is an experience that continues to haunt them and heavily influences the way they lead their lives. For many of them middle age is the time when they start looking for their unknown fathers, and also when they increasingly start taking pride in their distinctiveness. For them a trip to the homeland of their fathers is therefore a unique and intense experience.

The way the Pacific War is remembered is in constant flux both in Japan and in the Netherlands. Although outside Japan there is a common perception that the Japanese people have a uniform approach to Japan’s role and actions in the Pacific War, an increasing number of studies have shown that the discussion over war memory in Japan is as multilayered and contested as everywhere else. The manifold and opposing visions are expressed every day in newspapers, textbooks, museums and monuments.<sup>3</sup> With regard to the Netherlands it is striking that it was only in 1999, decades after the end of the conflict, that the commemoration of the Japanese capitulation officially became a national event.<sup>4</sup> Former inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies, most of who moved to the Netherlands after the war, mainly remembered the Japanese occupation within their own circle and in relation to their victimhood. The prevailing sentiment in their community was that the Japanese occupiers were to blame for the loss of the colony. As a result there was a strong anti-Japanese resentment and this was one of the main reasons for concealing the Japanese background of children of Japanese fathers.<sup>5</sup>

Because of the complicated position of the half-Japanese descendants and the contested memories of the Pacific War in both Japan and the Netherlands, the trips to Japan evoke numerous questions: why would the Japanese government want to organize and sponsor these trips? Why would they publicly support people whose ancestry had been kept quiet in private and public for a long time since they were regarded as the result of fraternization, of illicit relations between Dutch mothers and Japanese fathers during the Japanese occupation of colonial Indonesia?

The trips of half-Japanese descendants to Japan shed light on three strongly interconnected themes: the impact the war in the Pacific has had on personal lives; what Franziska Seraphim has termed the different “strands of memory” of that war;<sup>6</sup> and the tourism it has recently generated.

Research on war tourism often focuses on “sacred places” and memorials that commemorate noteworthy events or locations.<sup>7</sup> Here different aspects of war memories are at stake. Although the half-Japanese descendants did not personally experience the war in the Pacific since most of them were born around the time the conflict ended, the conflict had an enormous and lasting impact on their lives.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it is essential to assess how intergenerational memories frame their experiences. The memories are also unsettling because most mothers of half-Japanese children effaced the remembrance of their wartime partners. One can assume that their attempts to erase these traces strongly influenced how half-Japanese descendants recall the war and their ancestry. Paul Ricoeur’s statement that “forgetting is the challenge par excellence put to memory’s aim of reliability” has a disconcerting meaning for this group.<sup>9</sup>

This article discusses the background of tours organized for former inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies who suffered, directly or indirectly, under the Japanese occupation. The main focus is on the trips organized and sponsored by the Japanese government for half-Japanese descendants: in particular those born of relations between Japanese men and women of mixed Dutch and native Indies descent, known as *Indisch* in Dutch.<sup>10</sup> The article will consider what motives were at stake for the different actors: the Japanese authorities, the Dutch lobby groups and the travelers; in what way past and present experiences converge in the trips and how wartime memories are employed in the process; and whether these trips affect memories of the Pacific War, and if so, in what ways. It thus seeks to contribute insight into the importance of intergenerational memory and this specific type of war tourism for memories of the Pacific War in the Netherlands and Japan.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies (today Indonesia) completely reversed existing colonial power relations. One of the first priorities of the Japanese military after the occupation of the Indies in 1942 was to ensure the disappearance of all Dutch public presence and erase all Western influence from society. This fitted the idea of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere that was promoted as a way to free Asia from West-

ern colonial powers. In order to attain this goal a large part of the Dutch population was interned in camps and thus made invisible in public space.

At first the Japanese occupiers thought they had a natural ally among the Dutch of mixed descent, the *Indisch*.<sup>11</sup> *Indisch* is a complex concept with several different meanings. It can imply “colonial,” referring to power relations, or signify mestizo, of mixed racial descent.<sup>12</sup> Here it will be used mainly in the latter sense. The Japanese occupiers expected that because of their mixed descent the *Indisch* inhabitants would sympathize with the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity sphere. But most of the *Indisch* population refused to regard themselves as Asian. The government in the Dutch East Indies distinguished between three different groups in their population politics: Natives, Europeans and Foreign Orientals.<sup>13</sup> Belonging to one or the other category had legal consequences and affected one’s social position in society.<sup>14</sup> Every child born of a mixed Dutch-indigenous union who was officially recognized by the European father became part of the European group. Being officially part of the European group, they would never think of associating themselves with the indigenous population.<sup>15</sup>

In everyday practice the divisions between the groups were much more fluid than the clear-cut categories suggest, particularly in the case of the inhabitants of mixed descent. If officially recognized by a Dutch father, they belonged to the category of “Europeans,” and if not, they were considered “Native.” While formally there was no distinction between “full-blooded” Dutch or Dutch of mixed descent in the legal category of Europeans, there were nonetheless marked differences in status and class between the two. These differences had been part and parcel of daily life in colonial Indonesia and had led to many conflicts.<sup>16</sup> Under the Japanese occupation issues of loyalty to the Dutch cause further deepened the division. In interviews and diaries there are both explicit and implicit references to *Indisch* disloyalties to the Dutch cause during the war. Referring to cases of betrayal and espionage committed by *Indisch* men, a Dutch man wrote in his diary: “one is not sure what is worse, Japanese sadism or being betrayed by one’s own circle even though this is done by people who are only half or even just a quarter European.”<sup>17</sup>

Because the Japanese internment operation was primarily focused on the Dutch inhabitants, especially on Java, quite a few *Indisch* women, along with their children and elderly men, remained outside the camps.

It is difficult to define the exact number of those who remained outside the internment camps. Estimates, which are based on the recorded figures of POWs (42,000) and civil internees (100,000), range from 120,000 to 220,000.<sup>18</sup> The women who remained outside the internment camps found it extremely difficult to make a living. Their husbands were gone, often interned as prisoners of war. Wives stayed behind with few or no resources and a family to sustain. Some tried to sell scarce goods or food, others tried to find employment in offices or restaurants. In addition to earning money, being active in the job market also provided opportunities to meet other men. Among them were Chinese, Indonesian, but also Japanese military personnel, mostly from higher ranks. It was against this backdrop that consensual intimate relationships started between some of the *Indisch* women and Japanese men (who also had relationships with Indonesian women, but those relationships fall outside the scope of this article).

Although fraternizing unions mostly began on the basis of unequal power relations, it is important to stress that many of them were consensual. It is very difficult to establish the exact number of these unions, since they typically were not made public at the time and were glossed over after the end of the war, but from interviews and archival sources we know that they were not exceptional. The number of children born of these unions has been estimated at between 800 and 8,000, but again these estimations are difficult to verify because many of these children were born out of wedlock and birth registrations were incomplete during the Japanese occupation.<sup>19</sup> Couples usually met in private, and they were seldom seen together in public. Fraternization was frowned upon by both the Dutch community and by Japanese officials. The Japanese army officers thought that they catered sufficiently to the sexual needs of their troops by establishing so-called “comfort-stations,” a well-organized form of military prostitution.<sup>20</sup> Postwar interviews and wartime diaries reveal fierce statements of disapproval and condemnation of the behavior of fraternizing women. During the Japanese occupation, European judgments of these unions often seemed more mitigated and based on pragmatism, since in the uncertain time of war Japanese contacts could be useful and all material and bureaucratic help was appreciated. As to be expected, those who did not benefit from Japanese contacts defamed these women, but as long as the Japanese occupation continued this was done only in private.<sup>21</sup>

The Japanese occupation radically changed many aspects of daily lives and the changes in social norms evidently affected sexual behavior. The relationships between Japanese men and *Indisch* women are a clear example of the way intimacy was challenged and negotiated in times of war and transition.<sup>22</sup> What was considered common practice and “decency” under “normal” times seemed less relevant now; in times of war new strategies were necessary but at the same time there were also new opportunities.<sup>23</sup> Female sexuality is a complex topic that becomes even more contested in wartime since female chastity, fidelity and motherhood are considered a matter of national honor.<sup>24</sup> Adulterous women betrayed both their husbands and the nation, and fraternizing women were primarily judged on that basis.

The way Dutch residents of the Indies assessed the Japanese was greatly affected by the Pacific War. From the start of the conflict, Japanese men embodied all evil and they were considered the ultimate enemy. As in all Western propaganda, the Dutch, too, focused primarily on their supposed racial traits to depict them in a negative way.<sup>25</sup> The stories of Japanese sexual aggression in Manchuria increasingly dehumanized their image.<sup>26</sup> In addition, many of the Dutch inhabitants of the Indies were convinced that it was primarily due to the Japanese occupation that the Dutch had had to give up their colonial possession, Indonesia, a conviction that fostered deep enmity against anything Japanese. Most of the *Indisch* women who were involved with Japanese men during and right after the war therefore chose to conceal their wartime liaisons after the end of the conflict.

#### CHANGING ATTITUDES, GROWING AWARENESS

Although direct bilateral relations between Japan and the Netherlands were formally restored in 1952, for former inhabitants of the Indies who had suffered under the Japanese occupation any involvement with Japan and the Japanese people remained problematic. Dutch war claims against Japan were settled in the Yoshida-Stikker agreement (1956). As part of this agreement, Japan paid \$10 million in war damage compensation to 90,000 civilian internees.<sup>27</sup>

Politicians in both countries hoped that after this agreement the case would be closed, but discontent and unease about the outcome continued to smolder in the *Indisch* community. Many there see the Yoshida-Stikker agreement as a violation of their rights because it did not really acknowledge the needs of the victims; one interviewee even stated that the agreement would never have been signed if the *Indisch* community had stood up for its rights in the 1950s.<sup>28</sup> As a result of continuing demands from the *Indisch* community in the Netherlands the issue of compensation for war damage resulting from the Japanese occupation has recently become the subject of new research.<sup>29</sup>

In 1971, when the plans for a visit of Emperor Hirohito to the Netherlands were made public, the discontent surfaced again. One of the main advocates against the visit of the emperor was the Dutch comedian Wim Kan.<sup>30</sup> Being a former prisoner of war, Kan had started to complain in the press when members of the Dutch royal family visited the 1970 World's Fair in Osaka and used this opportunity to pay a visit to the Japanese imperial family. At that time Kan had composed the "Railroadsong," recalling the experiences of the prisoners of war at the Burma Railroad, where he had also been forced to work. Kan urged the Dutch government to refrain from receiving Hirohito, intensifying his protests when it became known that the emperor would undertake an official state visit in October 1971. The result was a torrential flood of articles in newspapers and debates on national radio and TV. The Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* summarized the feelings in the *Indisch* community under the headline "Baffling Insult to Victims of Japanese Internment Camps."<sup>31</sup> In a TV broadcast on October 3, 1971, Kan again demanded that the government cancel the visit.

These protests led Japanese officials to doubt whether the visit should continue at all, but the Dutch government insisted and continued preparations, merely changing the status of the visit: it would no longer be an official state visit, but instead a private visit. Nonetheless, the visit was marred by severe protests and well-wishers were scarce along the route. In graffiti scrawled on walls, Hirohito was described as a war criminal; a thermos was thrown through the window of the emperor's car, and bricks were thrown through the windows of the Japanese embassy. But for the Japanese people and Japanese officials the rudest insult was the way their national Japanese flag was publicly burned and spat upon.<sup>32</sup> Accompanying Japanese journalists were deeply offended by this desecration of their

flag and informed the public in Japan about the scandalous treatment their emperor had received in the Netherlands. The Dutch ambassador to Japan officially apologized for the incidents during the visit and expressed the hope that this would not harm the centuries-long warm relationship between the two countries.

The incidents surrounding the imperial visit of 1971 can be considered a turning point in the awareness of the general Dutch public of the strong sense of resentment in the wartime memories of the *Indisch* community. Although not particularly supportive of the *Indisch* community, because the communists still despised them as colonizers, the Dutch communist newspaper *De Waarheid* caustically asked why war victims “were seen as ‘those people with such a long memory’ who thus cannot ‘humanistically’ forgive and forget ... since when does memory count as a logical error, historical understanding as stupidity, and caution as a stupid trait?”<sup>33</sup> The period of collective forgetting of wartime experiences in the occupied Dutch East Indies—forgetting that Schwartz aptly calls “a metaphor for failure to transmit information about the past”<sup>34</sup>—seemed to have come to an end.

The early 1970s marked a change in how war experiences in general were remembered in the Netherlands. The Dutch sociologist Jolande Withuis has identified this period as the moment when emotions became emancipated, and the psychological consequences of the war experiences became more evident.<sup>35</sup> During this period, wartime memories of the *Indisch* community entered the public domain, with a growing corpus of published memoirs. At the same time protests became ever more vociferous and lobbying for compensation intensified. As a result of Kan’s insistent campaign against the Japanese emperor’s visit and the widespread press attention, the Japanese occupation of the Indies began to attract increasing attention in the Netherlands. Wartime memories came to the fore and commemorations entered the public discourse in many guises.

The arousal of war memories had consequences on many levels, especially once they became more and more prominent in political debates. In the 1980s newly established groups and foundations of former inhabitants of the Indies and POWs started lobbying more actively for compensation. In the next section I will discuss two of these groups who led the effort to establish contacts with the former adversaries. The activities of these groups clearly show how memory works in the present through concerted social action.<sup>36</sup> At the same time it demonstrates how these memories are

framed to meet diverging purposes and as such form different “strands of memory.” Attention mainly focused on the results of the Japanese occupation, while the negative legacies of Dutch colonialism were rarely discussed. This trend is clearly manifested by the still growing corpus of literature published by former inhabitants of the colony, which focuses on the atrocities and hardships under Japanese internment, while portraying an idyllic picture of colonial life.<sup>37</sup> As Elleke Boehmer and Frances Gouda have noted, “the status of the Netherlands as an ex-colonial power remains unproblematised.”<sup>38</sup> Ulbe Bosma has also addressed this absence of a postcolonial debate in the Netherlands, stating, “what is missing in the Dutch case is the ambition to achieve an overarching theoretical perspective on its colonial legacy.”<sup>39</sup>

#### WAR MEMORIES AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN FORMER ENEMIES

The first group that tried to change the way the Japanese occupation was commemorated in the Netherlands was the Stichting Ex-Krijgsgevangenen en Nabestaanden Japan (EKNJ, Foundation for Former POWs of Japan and Their Relatives). EKNJ was founded in 1986 by a former POW, Dolf Winkler, who had worked on the Burma Railroad and in the coalmine in Mizumaki, Japan. In its heyday, the foundation had 800 members. Winkler’s aim was to reestablish contacts between Japan and the Netherlands. In 1985, he returned to Japan for the first time after the war. In his own words, his goal was “to meet the good Japanese.” One of his plans was to organize trips to Japan for former war victims in order to enable them to reengage with the Japanese people. Winkler also took the initiative to build a monument to the forced laborers of Mizumaki, in an attempt to convince former POWs to reconsider their view of Japanese people as the ultimate enemy. Even today, Mizumaki is the point where the cultural program for the organized trips to Japan begins with ceremonial activities at the monument (discussed below).<sup>40</sup>

Winkler made it explicit that the trips to Japan should be more than just another holiday and that they should serve as a means for better understanding and dealing with wartime experiences.<sup>41</sup> The trips, termed “reconciliation” by travelers, organizers and sponsors alike, were an important activity for EKNJ and at one point the increasing member-



ship was directly linked to the trips, since only members could apply for them. Initially the travelers themselves financed these trips, but soon some subsidies were provided by a Dutch foundation, and later the Japanese government sponsored them.<sup>42</sup> Although both lobby groups and the Japanese government use the term reconciliation in connection with the trips, neither of them clearly defines this notion, using it in a loose everyday manner so that its meaning remains ambiguous and open to numerous interpretations. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term refers to both “the restoration of friendly relations” and to “the action of making financial accounts consistent.” In this particular context the latter would connote compensation payments, which would be a more contentious subject. What is clear is that the word is used as an umbrella term that broadly signifies the intention to restore friendly relations between the Japanese and the Dutch.

A few years after the establishment of EKJN, on April 4, 1990, the Stichting Japanse Ereschulden (JES, the Japanese Debt of Honor Foundation) was established. This lobby group has very different goals from EKNJ, placing less emphasis on improving relations with Japan or the Japanese people. Instead JES stresses the need for compensation, and claims that Japan has a moral obligation to engage in communication with the Dutch inhabitants of colonial Indonesia, who suffered under the Japanese occupation. The ultimate goal of JES is to convince the Japanese government to officially recognize the wrongs Japan committed against them during the war and to receive both an official expression of regret and financial compensation. The least they expect is a resolution in the Diet, the Japanese House of Representatives. In order to force a proper dialogue with the Japanese government JES has held protest rallies in front of the Japanese embassy in The Hague and submitted a petition to the Japanese ambassador on the second Tuesday of every month since 1994. This tenacity resulted in group talks with the Japanese ambassador or his secretary that can be considered some kind of dialogue.<sup>43</sup>

JES is especially concerned with the issues of international human rights raised by the Pacific War. On January 23, 1989, the foundation was officially granted Non-Governmental Organization Status by the Committee on Human Rights in New York.<sup>44</sup> JES maintains a strong international network with contacts in Japan and, through Japan, in other Asian countries. The board of JES works together with the International Solidarity

Council in countries like North and South Korea, China, Taiwan and the Philippines, but also the United States and Germany. The common goal of all these organizations is to put pressure on the Japanese government and convince them to recognize their wrongs.<sup>45</sup> When the Japanese embassy, during talks with JES, raised the possibility of sponsoring trips to Japan for board members, there was a crisis within the JES board. Two members of the board, who opposed such trips on the grounds that accepting the proposal would weaken their independent position, resigned. Others said they wanted to accept the opportunity to visit Japan because members of the board could then talk to Japanese officials.<sup>46</sup>

EKNJ and JES were not the only groups who communicated directly with Japanese officials in the Netherlands during this period. Since the mid-1990s biannual meetings have been held between representatives of the *Indisch* community, organized in the Stichting Indisch Platform (Indisch Platform Foundation), and the Japanese embassy.<sup>47</sup> According to Leo de Coninck, a former secretary of this foundation who attended the meetings, it was important for the Japanese embassy to ensure that the *Indisch* representatives would be able to calm their members in preparation for the state visit of the Japanese Emperor Akihito in 2000.<sup>48</sup> Unlike in 1971, this time nothing was going to be left to chance and in the years preceding the visit both governments made meticulous preparations.

Meanwhile the last decades of the twentieth century also saw changes in how the Pacific War was debated in Japan itself. As in the Netherlands, civic groups in Japan wanted to discuss and even reconsider memories of the war, as demonstrated by the discussions around one of the most contested war memories, that of the forced prostitution.<sup>49</sup> This debate centers on the challenge of personal memory to official history. According to the Japanese feminist Chizuko Ueno “the comfort women issue has become a litmus test of attitudes about war responsibility and the construction of public memory.”<sup>50</sup> Although their existence was common knowledge it was not until the 1980s that the forced prostitution endured by women was seen as a crime, changing the discussion fundamentally.

Fifty years after the war the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a special program, the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Initiative, to account for the suffering caused by Japan during World War II.<sup>51</sup> The Japanese government wanted to make clear that Japan was ready to address its war responsibility. John Dower, who reviewed a range of Japanese

statements and debates that took place in 1995, relating to Japan's role in the war, concluded that they indicated "serious domestic engagement with fundamental issues concerning Japan's past, present and future."<sup>52</sup> A resolution in the House of Representatives expressed "deep remorse" for Japan's wartime actions. This resolution provoked strong reactions with both conservative and more progressive viewpoints, but it resulted in the establishment of the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Initiative with exchange programs to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and further historical research.<sup>53</sup> One of the initiatives was the establishment of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), within the National Archives of Japan, which was launched on November 30, 2001, with the aim of collecting historical documents related to Japan's relations with neighboring Asian countries and making them available to both researchers and the general public.<sup>54</sup>

#### THE TRIPS TO JAPAN

When the reconciliation trips to Japan first began in 1986, they were intended for former POWs who had suffered under the Japanese occupation.<sup>55</sup> Children of Japanese fathers were not a likely group for the Japanese government to consider engaging with at all, as the existence of these children had never been publicly acknowledged. Dolf Winkler thought that sponsoring trips for half-Japanese descendants was somewhat problematic for the Japanese embassy, because such precedence could have important consequences for half-Japanese descendants living in countries like China or Korea.<sup>56</sup> Leo de Coninck stated that he had brought up the issue of half-Japanese descendants during meetings of the Stichting Indisch Platform with the Japanese embassy. He attributed the lack of direct contacts between half-Japanese descendants and Japanese officials to the fact that their existence was considered shameful in Japan. On one occasion de Coninck explained to the Japanese ambassador that Japan was sponsoring Japan's biggest enemy (JES), but that their allies—Sakura and JIN, two organizations for children of Japanese fathers in the Netherlands—did not receive money for trips.<sup>57</sup> The main goal of these organizations is to find the Japanese fathers of their members, but they are also very active in lobbying for and preparing the trips to Japan, which provide addi-

tional opportunities to establish contacts with their members' Japanese families, as well as former Japanese soldiers.<sup>58</sup> In 1994 Chérie Landegent, daughter of a Japanese father, was the first half-Japanese descendant to go to Japan with EKNJ. She paid for the trip herself, and her main goal was to find her father. Her story was broadcast on Japanese television.<sup>59</sup> In 1997 half-Japanese descendants went to Japan on a sponsored trip for the first time. They had planned to finance it themselves, but a few weeks before their departure they were informed that the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs would cover their expenses. In subsequent years a core funding for these trips was arranged. Members of JIN and Sakura submit their applications to the chairpersons of their organizations and are put on a list that is then discussed with the embassy. The chairpersons seek to enable all their members to visit the land of their fathers and grandfathers.

The trips to Japan for first- and second- generation descendants of Japanese fathers, financed by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organized by the Japanese embassy in the Netherlands, turn out to be an intense experience for all concerned. For children of Japanese fathers and *Indisch* mothers a visit to Japan is closely tied to personal questions of identity and often makes it possible for Japanese-*Indisch* descendants to see their father's homeland for the first time. The importance is reflected in the meticulous preparations for the trip. All participants meet beforehand as a group with the boards of JIN and Sakura, when they are informed about all practical and emotional aspects related to their visit. Practicalities vary from having business cards made, suggestions about what presents to take for the Japanese people they will encounter, and advice about the organization and content of speeches. They talk to former participants and meet with embassy officials. During these preparations special attention is dedicated to possibly important sensitive points. People are strongly advised not to use the terms "Jap" or "Japs," since these are considered insulting. These terms are still frequently used in the Netherlands today, as is the word "Jappenkamp" (Japs camp), which is commonly used by people who suffered under the Japanese occupation. Considerable attention is given to the emotional impact of certain visits or meetings. The atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a particularly acute topic of disagreement between hosts and visitors. The Japanese representation of the past at these sites clearly clashes with how the Dutch perceive the end

of the war in the Pacific. Instead, many former inhabitants of the Indies attribute their survival to the atomic bombs.

The journeys themselves are filled with official gatherings, and the format of the program is similar to that of earlier trips for POWs and war victims. No specific alterations to the program have been made for the half-Japanese descendants. On the day of departure representatives of JIN and Sakura and of the Japanese embassy meet at Schiphol airport to wish the travelers a fruitful trip. From Narita airport in Tokyo the group flies to Fukuoka, the starting point for the trip to the first destination, Mizumaki. The journey starts with ceremonial activities, a visit to the monument in Mizumaki where speeches are given by the mayor of Mizumaki and representatives of the Committee for the Promotion of Peace and Culture, as well as by the Dutch travelers. The groups then visit libraries and schools and hold meetings with local people. A very important contact to meet is Kaoru Uchiyama, a Japanese veteran who for many years has tried to find fathers and relatives in Japan for the half-Japanese children from the Netherlands.<sup>60</sup> During these interactions it becomes clear that the collective denial of atrocities committed during World War II that is attributed to the Japanese people is a simplification of more complex attitudes. On a personal level there are many opportunities to discuss the shared history and the visitors express their admiration for the fact that the Pacific War and its consequences can be discussed during their trip. One traveler wrote that he was impressed about how much the wrongdoings committed during the war still impacted the personal lives of Japanese people today.<sup>61</sup>

Since the group travels on invitation of the Japanese government they are treated with special respect everywhere. A large part of the time is reserved for cultural excursions, like a visit to a teakettle museum, attending a tea ceremony and a visit to Hirado castle. Other cultural highlights include visits to Kyoto and the Buddhist Kyomizu-dera temple from the eighth century. Special attention is given to Pacific War memorials in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. For half-Japanese descendants ceremonies at these sites can be very difficult because of their ambiguous position vis-à-vis the victims of both sides.

The program elegantly combines disparate elements, including visits related to Japanese culture, the Pacific War and the centuries-long Dutch-Japanese ties. Visitors are introduced to the natural and cultural beauty of Japan and visit schools and war monuments. They are also guests of honor

at official receptions and visit sites where the long-standing relationship between Japan and the Netherlands is emphasized. Although the Pacific War is present, the conflict is framed in a very specific way, with every allusion to it designed to remind visitors of the need to prevent such a conflict from happening again. This corresponds with the goals of the Peace, Friendship, and Exchange Initiative, which the Japanese government outlined in 1995:

In the historic fiftieth year 1995 since the end of the war, a conflict which was marked by our country's acts of aggression and colonial domination, the Japanese government expressed feelings of deep self-examination for the unbearable suffering and sorrow caused among many people in the neighboring countries of Asia. The Japanese government, resolute in its antiwar stance, believed that the necessary future path for our country was one of exerting ourselves toward the establishment of world peace....<sup>62</sup>

The monuments are presented as symbols of peace reflecting the wish to live in friendship with the rest of the world.

The program is very tightly scheduled, and the opportunities for experiencing everyday Japanese life or spontaneous meetings with ordinary people are limited and even explicitly discouraged.<sup>63</sup> Although this is understandable from a practical point of view, it encourages reciprocal orientalist representation. During the short trip with traditional tourist highlights the Japanese-*Indisch* descendants mainly see what they had expected, despite the fact that understanding each other's culture is one of the goals of the Sakura Foundation, as stated on the homepage of its website. During these trips a very specific, fixed and often reified image of both sides is presented.

For Japanese-*Indisch* descendants the trip is a way to experience and explore a crucial part of their background, and they try to comprehend the mixed feelings evoked by the trip by expressing them in terms of recognition, acknowledgment and involvement. These terms are used in their reports and are related to the silence surrounding their background. They describe the experiences during the trip as a way of engaging with Japanese people and being able to make sense of the secrecy that surrounded their descent. Meeting Japanese relatives for the first time or attempting to establish contact with Japanese colleagues who are trying to find informa-

tion on their parentage is an important yet ambiguous part of the official trip. On the one hand, these meetings are not an official goal of the trip and have to fit in with the official program. On the other hand, the ability to meet a relative is an important element in being selected for the trip. Both Sakura and JIN have established contacts in Japan with the POW Research Network and veterans, like Kaoru Uchiyama, who have tried to help find the fathers or families of the Japanese-*Indisch* descendants.

The perspective in both countries regarding their common World War II history is multilayered, but inhabitants of Japan and the former Dutch East Indies often share a general feeling of having suffered extreme losses in the conflict. Although many of the Japanese-*Indisch* descendants cherish their Japanese background and even claim to feel Japanese, their memories of the war are primarily framed by the wartime experiences of the *Indisch* community. In the Netherlands Japanese-*Indisch* descendants who attempted to contact their fathers or families experienced manifold difficulties. In Japan the situation was complex because of the reluctance to discuss shameful episodes of the war in the public domain. As a result, Japanese-*Indisch* descendants find it reassuring to travel with people of the same background. A woman who had previously traveled to Japan on her own mentioned that traveling with a group was very important for her, because earlier private visits to Japan had left her with an abandoned and lonely feeling, “all the more so because it is your father’s land, your family’s land, to which at the same time you do and do not belong.”<sup>64</sup> In a speech, made in English during his trip to Japan, another participant expressed his feelings as follows:

I hoped that through my participation in this journey to Japan my puzzle of life will become more complete, so that I can project myself in a more [*sic*] brighter perspective. I consider this outstanding gesture of the Japanese government as a possibility to close the chapters of life behind me and continuing [*sic*] my life with a better knowledge of the origin of my roots and thus to accept my past-performance of life.<sup>65</sup>

While some Japanese-*Indisch* descendants state that their visit to Japan was an intense moment of both feeling genuinely Japanese and being honestly accepted in Japan, for others, in the end, this “rite of passage” can lead to a more detached attitude toward their Japanese identity. As

one man who managed to find his previously unknown siblings in Japan pragmatically stated: “My life is in the Netherlands, and I feel Dutch, even though I have a different color. That my father happened to be Japanese: so be it. Times were different then, there was a war going on, customs and values were so different at that time. For me the story has come to an end.”<sup>66</sup> For others it remains difficult to hide their ambivalent feelings, since Japan is part of them and totally strange to them at the same time. To find a solution for that sense of in-betweenness, they sometimes try to play an intermediary role: “I do not see sympathy with both groups [victims and perpetrators] as contradictory any longer, I now see it as a bridge between oppositions or contrasts.”<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Intimacy between Japanese men and Dutch-*Indisch* women during the Pacific War in the Dutch East Indies resulted in offspring who were often unaware of their ancestry. Since for a long time they were considered compromising consequences of fraternization, after the war their background was concealed both in public and in private. Even the children who were born of these liaisons were often kept uninformed about their fathers’ background. As a result, for most of their lives, Japan and everything Japanese was uncharted terrain for these half-Japanese children. Being able to visit the land of their (grand)fathers gave them an opportunity to engage directly with their Japanese background and sometimes even mitigated their sense of otherness. These trips add a different, Japanese perspective to their memory of the war in the Pacific. How the trips for half-Japanese children came into being and how they are experienced can show us what happens when different narratives confront each other in the public sphere.<sup>68</sup> Although the Japanese have not officially confirmed this, it can be reasonably assumed that the strong lobbying and persistence of groups like JES and EKNJ have influenced the Japanese decision to invest in this type of compensation.

The programs through which these trips are financed also show how Japan invests in reinventing itself as a peaceful and democratic society. The special relationship between Japan and the Netherlands was an important factor as well. Over the years there have been changes in the program, how-



ever modest, that are the result of communication and ongoing negotiation. These trips are a very specific kind of war tourism that seems to transform forbidden memories into a form of public memory that may be more easily integrated into contemporary lives. For the Japanese-*Indisch* descendants the trips to Japan offer alternative ways of remembering World War II. Before the trip their memories are mainly based on experiences shared by their *Indisch* and Dutch relatives. During the trip they come into contact with places and people who provide different views on the war. Whether, and in what ways, these trips enrich the wartime memories of Japanese citizens who come into contact with the half-Japanese descendants still remains to be explored in order to establish the contribution of these trips to the broader aim of reconciliation between the Dutch and the Japanese.

#### NOTES

The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their detailed comments and insightful suggestions.

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

3. Roger B. Jeans, "Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan," *Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 149–95; Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the "Rape of Nanking": History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Philip A. Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories: The "Memory Rifts" in Historical Consciousness of World War II* (London: Routledge, 2007).

4. E. Locher-Scholten, "After 'The Distant War': Dutch Public Memories of the Second World War in Asia," in Remco Raben ed., *Representing the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Personal Testimonies and Public Images in Indonesia, Japan and the Netherlands* (Zwolle-Amsterdam: Waanders and Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, 1999), 55–70.

5. Eveline Buchheim, "'Hide and Seek': Children of Japanese Fathers and Indies European Mothers," in Karl Hack, and Kevin Blackburn, eds., *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia: National Memories and Forgotten Captivities* (London: Routledge, 2008), 260–77.

6. Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945–2005* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 13.
7. K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2005), 1–11.
8. Buchheim, “Hide and Seek.”
9. Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 414.
10. The information on the trips is based on archival data, reports written by the travelers, interviews by the author and informal communication with members of JIN and Sakura, two organizations for half-Japanese descendants in the Netherlands.
11. Jeroen Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken* (Amsterdam: B. Bakker 2002), 20–23.
12. Ulbe Bosma and R. Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500–1920* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), xiv.
13. The Eurocentric category “Foreign Orientals” was reserved for Chinese, Arab and Indian inhabitants.
14. Gijs Beets, *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders* (The Hague: NiDi, Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut, 2002), 18.
15. Iris Heidebrink, “The Eurasian Community during the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945,” in Peter Post, William H. Frederick, Iris Heidebrink, Shigeru Satō, William Bradley Horton, and Didi Kwartanada eds. *The Encyclopedia of Indonesia in the Pacific War* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 334–43.
16. Paul W. van der Veur, “Race and Color in Colonial Society: Biographical Sketches by a Eurasian Woman concerning Pre–World War II Indonesia,” *Indonesia*, no. 8 (Oct. 1969): 69–80.
17. Diary of D. H. Meijer, entry for September 30, 1944, NIOD (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation) Archive, Amsterdam, collection 401: inventory 262.
18. L. de Jong, *The Collapse of a Colonial Society: The Dutch in Indonesia during the Second World War* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).
19. Buchheim, “Hide and Seek.”
20. George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995). Researchers are increasingly avoiding the euphemistic term “comfort women” because it elides the very brutal and oppressive treatment of the women who were forced into prostitution.
21. See, for example, KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), SMGI (Stichting Mondelinge Geschiedenis Indonesië [Oral history project on Indonesia]), interview no. 1165.1 with F.P.W., October 23, 1997.

22. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Dagmar Herzog, *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
23. Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, eds., *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 5.
24. *Ibid.*, 7.
25. Dower, *War without Mercy*. 3-14.
26. Toshiyuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 79–105.
27. L. van Poelgeest, *Japanese besognes: Nederland en Japan 1945–1975* (The Hague: Sdu, 1999), 219, 258, 277.
28. Interview no. 2073 with J.W., November 20, 2008, Interview Collection “Indisch Knooppunt,” KITLV.
29. For a detailed account of how colonial and postcolonial governments dealt with war damage compensation and restitution after the Japanese occupation, see Peter Keppy, *The Politics of Redress: War Damage Compensation and Restitution in Indonesia and the Philippines, 1940–1957* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2010).
30. Wim Kan was touring the Indies with his cabaret program when the German army occupied the Netherlands in May 1940. He remained in the Indies and was taken prisoner and forced to work on the Burma Railroad during the Japanese occupation.
31. “Onbegrijpelijke belediging van slachtoffers Jappenkampen,” *De Telegraaf*, February 24, 1971.
32. As *De Telegraaf*, October 11, 1971, reported, citing Yuji Hanamoto, a reporter for the *Asahi Shimbun*: “The Dutch people have unbelievably insulted the Japanese people.... The visit has harmed the good relations between your and our country.”
33. *De Waarheid*, October 7, 1971.
34. Barry Schwartz, “Collective Forgetting and the Symbolic Power of Oneness: The Strange Apotheosis of Rosa Parks,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2009): 123
35. Jolande Withuis, *Erkenning: Van oorlogstrauma naar klaagcultuur* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2002), 37-61.
36. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4–5.
37. Pamela Pattynama, “Laat mij voor één keer schaamteloos terugverlangen...’ De herinneringsknoop van Indische nostalgie,” *Indische Letteren* 23, no. 2 (2008): 50–62.

38. Elleke Boehmer and Frances Gouda, "Postcolonial Studies in the Context of the 'Diasporic' Netherlands," in Michelle Keown, David Murphy and James Procter, eds., *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 39.

39. Ulbe Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 201.

40. NIOD Archive 813, inventory 60.

41. Interview no. 2031 with A.W., February 4, 2008, Interview Collection "Indisch Knooppunt," KITLV.

42. The trips were initially subsidized by the Dutch foundation SFMO (Stichting Fondsenwerving Militaire Oorlogs en Dienstslochtoffers [Military Service and War Victims Fundraising Foundation]), since 2007 called V-Fonds.

43. JES explains the monthly demonstrations on their website: <http://www.jesinfo.org/werkwijze/index.htm> (accessed May 20, 2015).

44. NIOD Archive 852, inventory 251.

45. Interview no. 2014, Interview Collection "Indisch Knooppunt"/KITLV.

46. Interview no. 2073 with A.M.P., February 2, 2007, Interview Collection "Indisch Knooppunt," KITLV. Except for two inventories at NIOD, which mainly contain documents relating to the establishment of the foundation, most of the JES archive is not yet public and not accessible to third parties.

47. The Stichting Indisch Platform was founded in 1991 and one of its goals is to develop and maintain effective relations with politicians. See [www.indisch-platform.nl](http://www.indisch-platform.nl) (accessed March 21, 2014).

48. Author's interview with Leo de Coninck, July 12, 2013.

49. In the debate the problematic term "comfort women" is still used for forced prostitution.

50. Chizuko Ueno and Jordan Sand, "The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self," *History & Memory* 11, no. 2 (2004): 129.

51. For the goals of the Peace Friendship and Exchange Initiative, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/outline.html> (accessed May 20, 2015).

52. John W. Dower, "Japan Addresses Its War Responsibility," *Journal of the International Institute* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1995), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0003.103> (accessed May 20, 2015).

53. For the speech by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama on August 31, 1994, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/state9408.html> (accessed May 20, 2015).

54. See <http://www.jacar.go.jp/english/index.html> (accessed May 20, 2015).

55. The information for this section is partly based on travel reports written by Japanese-Dutch descendants after their trips to Japan. See <http://www.jin-info>.

nl/category/japanreizen/reisverslagen/ and <http://www.stichting-sakura.nl/sakura/index.php/nl/reisverslagen> (accessed May 20, 2015)

56. Interview no. 2031 with A.W., February 4, 2008, Interview Collection “Indisch Knooppunt,” KITLV.

57. Author’s interview with Leo de Coninck, July 12, 2013.

58. Both groups have their own websites: <http://www.stichting-sakura.nl/> and <http://www.jin-info.nl>.

59. Author’s interview with H.G., December 27, 2006.

60. In October 2013, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, Kaoru Uchiyama was presented with a letter of appreciation from the Dutch government through the Dutch embassy in Tokyo.

61. Quote from travel report by Max Nagel, <http://www.stichting-sakura.nl/sakura/index.php/nl/reisverslagen/50-nederlands-nl-nl/reisverslagen-2013> (accessed May 20, 2015).

62. See <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/outline.html> (accessed May 15, 2015).

63. See, for example, the agenda of a preparatory meeting at the Stichting EKJN for the 2003 trip to Japan, NIOD Archive 813, inventory 61.

64. Hideko Gieske-Erentreich, report on trip to Japan, November 2002, available on the JIN website, <http://jin-info.nl/japanreizen/reisverslag-hideko-2002/> (accessed April 29, 2015).

65. Speech made by Silfraire Delhaye during his trip to Japan in September 2008, available at <http://www.jin-info.nl/en/japanreizen/speech-silfraire-mofa-2008/> (accessed May 15, 2015).

66. Author’s interview with M.M., July, 14, 2005.

67. Hideko Gieske-Erentreich, report on trip to Japan, <http://www.jin-info.nl/japanreizen/reisverslag-hideko-2002/> (accessed May 20, 2015).

68. Rothberg *Multidirectional Memory*, 2.

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