Introduction

If the past does not bind social consciousness and the future begins here, the present is the “historical” moment, the permanent yet shifting point of crisis and the time for choice.


In tracing the development of Japan’s architectural modernism from the 1920s to the 1940s, the historian Inoue Shoichi offers an arresting story about the possible aesthetic origins of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Situated at the heart of the city, close to the site of the atomic bomb’s detonation, the park was built on a vast, open field of ashes created by the explosion. The park’s location was once the city’s busiest downtown commercial and residential district, crowded with shops, residences, inns, and theaters. Today the commemorative space accommodates a number of memorials and monuments, museums, and lecture halls and draws over a million visitors annually. It also provides a ritual space for the annual 6 August Peace Memorial Ceremony, which is sponsored by the city of Hiroshima. The design for the Peace Memorial Park was selected following a public competition that took place in 1949, while Japan was still under Allied Occupation. According to Inoue, the park’s stylistic origin can be traced back to a nearly identical ground plan that had been adopted three years before Japan’s surrender as part of a grand imperial vision, the Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia (*dai-tōa kensetsu kinen eizo keikaku*).¹

Both designs were the creations of the world-renowned architect Tange Kenzō. For the 1942 competition that took place while Japan was in the midst of war, Tange proposed a grandiose Shintoist memorial zone to be built on an open plain at the foot of Mount Fuji.
His ground plan envisioned four blocks of buildings that would be laid out within an isosceles triangle. At the center of the triangle's bottom side was the main facility, which would serve metaphorically as an entrance gateway to the commemorative space. Two building blocks, placed symmetrically on each side of the main structure, were to serve as commemorative and exhibit halls, where people could congregate. A central axis extended from the entrance structure in a straight line toward a commemorative monument that would be located at the triangle's tip. The axis served as a "worshipping line," which was to function, as in similar commemorative spaces built under European fascist regimes, to pull the attention of crowds and their movements toward the central monument. With the collapse of Japan's empire that followed defeat by the Allied Forces and, more important, by anti-imperialist resistance against Japan in Asia and the Pacific, Tanige's 1942 plan was forever aborted. Yet the majestic space that he envisioned as monumentalizing the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity appears to have been revived in his 1949 postwar design; it was subsequently realized in 1954, albeit at much-reduced scale, with the completion of Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park.

Nothing epitomizes the Heideggerian irony of Japan's imperial modernity more solemnly than the incorporation of the monumentalized ruins of what is called the Atom Bomb Dome (Genbaku Dōmu) into the park. As in Tanige's earlier plan, the central worshipping axis extends from the entrance, through the central cenotaph, to these ruins. This commemorative site is the artificially preserved remains of what used to be the Industry Promotion Hall, a quintessential sign of Japan's early-twentieth-century imperial modernity. Designed by an architect from Czechoslovakia, Jan Letzel, this continental Secession-style building, crowned with a distinctive dome-shaped roof, was completed in 1915. It served as a public space where crafts and commodities from Hiroshima's environs, as well as from different regions throughout the empire, were brought in and displayed. The atomic blast caused extensive damage to the building, leaving only some brick walls and the exposed iron frame of the dome-shaped canopy: hence the name of the ruins, the Atom Bomb Dome.

In the postwar plan, the earlier concept of a sixty-meter Shintoist-style commemorative structure was scaled down and transfigured into the more human-sized, arch-shaped design of the central cenotaph that is now officially named the Hiroshima Peace City Commemorative Monument (Hiroshima Heiwa Toshi Kinen Hi). The symmetrical place-
ment of clusters of structures also, as Inoue observes, remained in large part faithful to the original 1942 vision. Two wings of buildings containing public facilities such as lecture halls and exhibit rooms were placed symmetrically in alignment with the Peace Memorial Resource Museum, the structure that serves as the main entrance to the triangular commemorative area. In this newly recrafted public space, people are to congregate—not to celebrate the modernity, enlightenment, civilization, and dreams promised by the pan-Asian co-prosperity sphere, but rather to remember the inaugural moment of the nuclear age and to imagine the possible self-annihilation of civilization.

Inoue reminds his readers of the striking parallels between what was once hailed as the vision best “representing the sublime objective of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” and the commemorative icon to prayers for peace and the world’s first use of a nuclear weapon. Yet, while Tange’s role in designing Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park is celebrated in tourist pamphlets and other popular accounts, it is fair to say that his earlier commemorative design—and the extraordinary resemblances in the aesthetic forms of the two projects—is hardly known. The structural continuity between the two ritual spaces and, more crucially, the widespread failure to recognize their analogies alert us to the conventional status of Hiroshima memories, both nationally and in global contexts. Whether within mainstream national historiography, which remembers Hiroshima’s atomic bombing as victimization experienced by the Japanese collectivity, or in the equally pervasive, more universalistic narrative on the bombing that records it as having been an unprecedented event in the history of humanity, Hiroshima memories have been predicated on the grave obfuscation of the prewar Japanese Empire, its colonial practices, and their consequences.

The unproblematized transition of Hiroshima’s central commemorative space from celebrating imperial Japan to honoring the postwar peaceful nation suggests the persistence of prewar social and cultural elements, even at the iconic site that supposedly symbolizes the nation’s rebirth and departure from the past. We must begin by determining just what these persistent, albeit forgotten, elements are. Certainly, progressive critics in Japan have observed that the presence of a rising sun flag in the park indicates continuity between the prewar regime and what is often referred to as “A-bomb nationalism” (bibaku nashonarizumu). Yet it is not only the fanatical nationalism of imperial Japan that needs to be remembered. More important is the absence of memories of the Japanese Empire in mainstream society, which has resulted in a
general tendency to occlude former colonial subjects from the post-1945 national mise-en-scène. When Japan’s so-called postwar history began with the collapse of its empire, the universalism in Japanese nationalism ceased to have any sway over its colonizing and colonized subjects. The modernity, progress, and civilization that it represented in the 1920s global milieu came to be possessed exclusively by the West, especially by the United States under its cold war hegemony. Japan came to be imagined as a nation limited to a single ethnos or race, contained within what was internationally acknowledged as its natural sovereign territory. Political exigencies in postimperial Japan rendered the nation’s multi-ethnic, multiracial, and multicultural constituencies invisible and produced a forgetting of Japan’s relationship to its former colonies, along with its promises and the agonies it had inflicted upon them. By shedding light on the forces in ongoing cultural politics that seek to contest or maintain such amnesic elisions, this book aims to disentangle the processes that have produced postwar forgetfulness about the nation’s recent past. It is an attempt to dislodge memories of Hiroshima’s atomic obliteration from their confinement in humanist narratives and national histories, and to reconsider them within the terrain of post–cold war and postcolonial realities.

If we are indeed witnessing a “memory boom of unprecedented proportions,” as Andreas Huyssen has observed of the European cultural scene, then it becomes imperative to reflect on why issues have come to be formulated in terms of remembering and forgetting, rather than in other ways. We must also question why and how we remember—for what purpose, for whom, and from which position we remember—even when discussing sites of memory, where to many the significance of remembrance seems obvious. Moreover, the postwar and postcolonial reality within which we remember is one of late modernity, of late capitalist culture, in which a sense of history has tended to dissipate, even as yearnings for the real and the original intensify. What are the implications of recalling the past under such conditions, other than simply intensifying the search for origins and reauthenticating the truthfulness of what has already come down to us secondhand? And what will become of such memories when unearthed? As recovered memories become incorporated and settled into our commonsense knowledge about the past, present, and future, the mystifying and naturalizing effects of remembering itself seem ceaselessly at work.

My study of Hiroshima memories is a reflection on the anamnestic process that has rapidly become a far-reaching, global cultural current
of the fin de siècle. Precisely at this historical juncture—when memories throughout Asia, Europe, and other corners of the world appear simultaneously threatening and in danger of obliteration, when different peoples at different locations urgently call for the recovery of heretofore marginalized or silenced experiences—I address the questions that ineluctably accompany attempts to fill the gaps in given historical knowledge. In exploring the cultural meanings and political implications of the practices of remembering, reinscribing, and retelling memories of the past, this book asks how acts of remembering can fill the void of knowledge without reestablishing yet another regime of totality, stability, confidence, and universal truthfulness. How can memories, once recuperated, remain self-critically unsettling?

PHANTASMATIC INNOCENCE

Like the absence of memory concerning the Peace Memorial Park’s wartime archetype, during most of the postwar years there has been remarkable indifference about Japan’s prewar and wartime legacy of colonialism, military aggression, and other imperial practices. To the world outside Japan, perhaps one of the best-known illustrations of Japan’s historical amnesia occurred in 1982. What came to be known as the “textbook controversy” erupted when it was reported that the Ministry of Education, as a part of its routine administrative inspection procedures, was attempting to rewrite textbook descriptions so as to euphemize the history of Japanese expansionism. Specifically, the ministry sought to replace the key term “invasion” (shinryaku), which indicates an act of violation and unjust expropriation of sovereign territorial rights, with a vaguer and more neutral expression, “advancement” (shinsbutsu). In this case, unlike similar instances in the past, government agencies of other Asian nations officially joined in condemning the long-standing historical distortions perpetrated by the Liberal Democratic Party and the Ministry of Education.

Almost two decades earlier, the historian Lenaga Saburō’s first lawsuit against the Ministry of Education had brought the inadequacies of postwar national historiography to public attention. In 1965 Lenaga charged that the ministry’s censorship of his descriptions of the war in Asia and the Pacific and the Great Nanjing Massacre infringed on his constitutional right to freedom of expression and academic thought. Lenaga’s legal battle lasted more than thirty years, as he pursued a number of lawsuits in courts at different levels. The modifications suggested
to Lenaga’s descriptions of specific historical incidents reveal how those responsible for inspecting textbooks have attempted to obfuscate the immediate agency and involvement of the Japanese government and the Imperial Army in various atrocities.¹¹

Still other signs of the widespread inability to confront the specter of Japan as a victimizing nation include conservative politicians’ repeated “slips of tongue”—or “phantasmatic statements” (mōgen), as the media call them—as well as other public figures’ persistent denials and cover-ups of atrocities committed in the name of imperial Japan. In 1986 the newly appointed minister of education, Fujio Masayuki, was dismissed from the Nakasone cabinet for asserting that Korea was partially responsible for its own colonization. The Rape of Nanjing, in particular, has continued to be an event that for most conservative Japanese seems to invite what Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, following Sigmund Freud, have termed “the inability to mourn”—a phrase they used to characterize the German collective unwillingness to confront Nazi crimes at a deep psychological level.¹² Ishihara Shintarō, a writer who was elected to office as a member of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, and Watanabe Shōichi, a professor of German literature, joined others in questioning the credibility of the Chinese government’s official figure for those massacred. A decade later, in the spring of 1994, the desire for self-absolution reappeared: newly appointed Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto publicly stated that the Rape of Nanjing was a “fabrication” and was subsequently forced to resign. More recently, the Japanese military’s involvement in the sexual enslavement of women from occupied territories—what is known as the “comfort women” issue—has touched off similar denials.

Even when admitting that the war (or, more precisely, defeat in war) did indeed bring disasters and inflict much suffering on people throughout the region, LDP leaders, conservative critics, and officials in the government’s ministries have argued from the position that Japan fought the war in defense of the Asia Pacific region against the Western superpowers. According to this view, Japan’s military expansion, colonial takeovers, and the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity project were not schemes to “invade” other territories but instead were intended to liberate the people of Asia from Western domination. The cause, in other words, justified both the ends and the means. According to historian Yoshida Yuraka, whose earlier research includes a detailed and extensively documented reconstruction of the Rape of Nanjing, the most influential works to popularize this understanding of the Asia Pacific
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War were essays by the writer Hayashi Fusao, “Daitōa sensō kōtei ron” (“On Affirming the East Asia War”), published in Chūō Kōron from 1963 to 1965. Yoshida indicates that Hayashi’s argument, which was buoyed by the then-reemerging nationalist pride in economic recovery, reinforced the notion that the war was solely a conflict between Japan and the West and once again obscured the resistance of the people of Asia and the Pacific to Japan’s imperialist expansionism. In the conservative historical outlook favored since the end of the war by many, both within and outside the government, the centuries of atrocities resulting from Western imperialism far outweigh Japanese offenses. Thus the Japanese need not feel remorse until the Western powers repent for their original sin.

Yet a significant shift in the formal political arena did appear after the 1993 House of Representatives election, which ushered in the end of the LDP’s nearly four-decade-long rule. Immediately after forming his cabinet, newly elected Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro defied the dominant LDP position by plainly stating in a press conference that the wars Japan had fought during the first half of the twentieth century were not waged for liberation or self-defense, but were simply self-aggrandizing “wars of invasion” (shinryaku sensō). Since then, the Ministry of Education has also reversed its position on history textbooks and has been encouraging descriptions of military atrocities committed in the name of the Japanese Imperial Army, including biological warfare and the military enslavement of women. Moreover, the ministry has resisted neoconservative activists such as historian Fujioka Nobukatsu and others, who, in yet another nationalist reaction to changes occurring at the political center, have demanded that descriptions of “comfort women” be eliminated from school textbooks.

As evidenced by the 1995 Diet Resolution commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war—in which penitential intent was once again eclipsed by the desire to attribute the cause for the nation’s past misdeeds to Western imperialism—these changes have not immediately resulted in any significant compensation for or even apologies to the victims. Yet they reflect the region’s shifting condition: nations that formerly were subjected to Japanese domination and that in the subsequent cold war fell under the economic and military aegis of the United States have gained a greater visibility and more independent voice on the international stage. Furthermore, these changes are closely tied to the post–cold war alteration in the U.S.-Japan relationship; Japan’s political, military, and economic reliance on the Security Treaty
with the United States has come under question and is less absolute. In order to achieve a new stability within the region, it has become imperative that Japanese politicians and bureaucrats carefully settle past wrongs against neighboring countries by laying to rest the memories about them.

At the same time, it is no less true that these transformations in the formal legislative and administrative arena would not have resulted without the counteramnes(t)ic—that is, unforgetful and unforgiving—practices that preceded them by more than a decade. Since the late 1970s, the need to establish a critical awareness about the past has been felt more widely and more urgently; various efforts to counter the hegemony of historical amnesia have increasingly appeared in academic writings, journalism, pedagogical practices, and grassroots peace and antinuclear activities. Historians have highlighted the issues left unaddressed by the governmental treaties that technically settled reparations immediately after the war. For the past twenty years, public meetings have been held to disseminate testimonial accounts by the victims of Japanese colonial and military rule. Numerous lawsuits have been filed to challenge governmental as well as corporate neglect concerning individual reparations and full retroactive pay to workers mobilized from the occupied territories. Preparations are currently under way for an international court case intended to clarify the Japanese government’s legal responsibilities for compensating those forced into sexual labor. Thus, as this century nears its end, the memories concerning Japan’s misdeeds during its first half have been marked by contestation, conversion, and reconciliation.

As in Germany’s Historikersstreit (historians’ debates) that resurfaced in 1986, the battles over memory taking place in Japan are often seen as symptomatic of a deeper and broader crisis in postwar democracy. Challenges to the regime of forgetfulness also directly criticize various ongoing social injustices and political acts. For example, when the repeated official visits of Nakasone Yasuhiro and other cabinet members to Yasukuni Shrine, where the war dead have been enshrined as gods, became an issue in the early 1980s, the act was on the one hand castigated as yet another indication of a lack of repentance for crimes committed by the Japanese military. On the other hand, the practice was also criticized as a violation of the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state; in fact, the matter has been brought to district courts in several prefectures, and in some cases the politicians’ official visits to Yasukuni have been found unconstitutional. Those who have launched such counteramnes(t)ic criticisms have thus tended to understand their positions as inextricably tied to the task of radicaliz-
ing Enlightenment ideals and the democratic principles of modern civil society. In this sense, their appeals are reminiscent of Jürgen Habermas’s exhortation of intellectuals in Germany to take an active and responsible role in current debates.

Though there are analogies between Germany and Japan, critical differences also separate the two. The disparities do not lie only in the institutional forms that the laws and policies for postwar reparations have taken; more important, memories of past horrors have been addressed intellectually in different ways. In order to explain the divergent understandings and management of the respective crimes committed by the people of the two nations, we must consider how these nations and their victims, as well as their own victimizations, are located in relation to global discourses on humanity, modernity, and the Enlightenment.

The fact that the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust occurred in the heart of Europe, and the realization that they were not necessarily aberrations but were arguably logical outcomes of European modernity and its foundations, compelled postwar thinkers to depart radically from conventional philosophical formulations that have located virtue, purity, and genuineness at the origin of modern Western civilization. Students of European intellectual history have written extensively on this question, especially through their rereading of critiques developed by scholars at Frankfurt University’s Social Studies Institute, including Theodor Adorno, as well as by French poststructuralists such as Paul de Man. It may suffice to note here that this departure from the underlying assumptions of Western metaphysics has produced cultural theories that critically rethink adherence to the notions of totality, the selfsame, fulfillment, future utopianism, and progress. As many have observed, the intellectual agenda in Europe after World War II has revolved around the recognition of and mourning for a loss—a loss of origins and of innocence, which was produced out of the specific historical moment of, and continuous reflection on, European modernity, fascism, and genocide.

In Japan, whose racialized and inauthentic relation to the West stood in sharp contrast to Germany’s centrality to the Enlightenment, modernity, and the humanist tradition, concerns about such loss were far less profound. A sense of modern temporality different from that found in postwar Germany has decisively determined how questions regarding Japan’s history and tradition have been formulated; Marxists and advocates of other progressive traditions in Japan have almost invariably regarded the nation as lagging in modernity. In comparison to the
West, where normative modernity and the Enlightenment tradition were thought to be located, the absence of autonomous citizens who might form a modern civil society was understood to have obstructed the full-fledged development of modern democratic practices. In postwar progressive discourse, this sense of belatedness has continued to provide the interpretive framework for explaining the history of Japanese barbarism during the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, those involved in counteramnes(t)ic practices frequently emphasize that if the nation is to prevent itself from falling once again into military violence and geopolitical megalomania, the backward elements of prewar Japan—namely, such “feudal vestiges” as the emperorship, patriarchal sexual practices, hierarchical relations, and so on—must be overcome. The universal democratic ideals of modern bourgeois civil society have not yet been realized in Japan. Unlike in Germany, where intellectuals such as Adorno were compelled to place the memories of Nazism and the Holocaust in their ironic and inextricable relation to the liberal European traditions of republicanism, Enlightenment thought, and modernity, progressive intellectuals and activists in postwar Japan have emphasized the gap between such modern democratic ideals and practices and the insufficient maturity of Japan’s people and institutions.19

The conventional argument in the social sciences has long been that the lag in Japan’s modernity and the Enlightenment also resulted in the absence of autonomous and responsible individuals. This formulation is important here because it has served to obfuscate the experiences of ordinary people, who were actively and self-consciously engaged in colonial policies and military efforts. To be sure, as Yoshida Yutaka observes, the claim that political and military leaders alone were responsible for the military disaster—what he calls “shidōsha sekinin ron,” a widely held grassroots belief in the immediate aftermath of the war—served to challenge “the collective repentance of one hundred million” (ichioku sōzange) thesis. The latter, which was officially advocated as early as August 1945 by Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko’s cabinet, proclaimed that all of the nation’s people were equally responsible for the outcome of the war. Its objective, according to Yoshida, was to deflect accusations against the emperor and the imperial system.20 Yet shidōsha sekinin ron went beyond mere oppositional discourse. As Yamaguchi Yasushi, who has written extensively on the development of postwar political cultures in both Germany and Japan, points out, Marxists and other progressive critics relegated the responsibility of the ordinary people to the ruling elites and thus spared the former from a full investigation
into their participation in national projects. The postwar Enlightenment paradigm has to a great extent endorsed blaming the activities of wartime leaders and their supporters alone for prewar and wartime disasters. Indeed, it is precisely because the dominant paradigm has had such overwhelming mystifying power that historians' recent reexaminations of Japanese modernity, colonialism, and nationalism in the first half of the century are so urgently relevant to my study of Hiroshima memories.

Given this intellectual milieu, it is not difficult to understand how memories of the atomic bombings of "Hiroshima and Nagasaki" came to be shaped almost exclusively by the perception that ordinary Japanese people had been the passive victims of historical conditions. Memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with retellings of the bombings of civilians in practically every major Japanese city and the ground battle fought in Okinawa, as well as more recently revealed horror stories of Japanese colonists who were deserted by the military in northeastern China after Soviet advances—these all contributed decisively to the notion that whereas military leaders, government elites, and perhaps some soldiers were responsible for the disasters, ordinary citizens were only victims of the war and the nation's colonial policies. This is not to say that those assaulted by the U.S.-led Allied air raids and the two atomic attacks were not victims, nor to argue that they were all ethnically or nationally Japanese. Throughout the book I question the nationalization of shared historical experiences, as well as the binarism that unidimensionally identifies such nationalized collectivities as exclusively victims or victimizers.

More important, this phantasm of Japanese civilian innocence came to be enmeshed within the universalist discourse on humanity. The historian Awaya Kentarō has argued that the differences between the handling of the postwar reparations issue in Japan and Germany also stem from judicial treatment immediately after the war; Nazi crimes were strongly condemned during the Nuremberg Trials, but charges of "crimes against humanity" were downplayed in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. That the people of non-Western nations were only marginally included in the category of "humanity" is also demonstrated by the fact that the local B and C class trials investigated the sexual assaults committed against Dutch women, while ignoring the enslavement of Asian and Pacific Islander women. The cold war began to intensify during the Tokyo tribunal, and the interest of the United States and other nations in turning the occupation of Japan to their advantage, vis-à-vis the Soviet
Union, cut short further investigations of a number of individual cases of Japanese crimes. Yet examination of such Japanese crimes was attenuated from the beginning, primarily because those most brutally victimized by Japanese imperial aggression—Asians and Pacific Islanders—were racially and politically marginalized within the hegemonic discourse on humanity in the immediate postwar world. As a result, many serious assaults and colonial crimes were overlooked, including the forced mobilization of people from the occupied territories by the Japanese government and corporations. That several judges on the tribunal court represented nations that had held and were continuing to hold colonies, even as the trial began, greatly affected the course of the tribunal, for the colonialism of both Japan and the Western powers in the region remained unquestioned.

At the same time, the failure to seriously consider that using atomic bombs against civilian populations might be crimes against humanity, despite the unprecedented mass destructive force they had exhibited, generated the widespread belief in Japan and elsewhere that the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal had resulted in nothing more than “victor’s justice.” That attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be treated, unlike the crimes of colonialism, as crimes against humanity was certainly a sentiment shared widely. A number of postwar intellectuals, writers, and critics, both Western and non-Western, perceived the atomic assault as universal offenses against human civilization and not simply as particular attacks against a people that had been named as the enemy. The notion of using the atomic bombs against populated cities had made even U.S. officials wonder if they might be “outdoing Hitler” in barbarity.

Within this discursive context, the downplaying of crimes against humanity at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal created a subtle conflation of Japanese and other Asians, for neither group was granted full membership in the category of “humanity,” at least within the West-centric discourse of the tribunal. This historical perception enabled Japanese memories of atomic victimization to fuse with those of the victims of their own aggressions and racism. The idea that the Japanese were as much excluded from the Western-centric discourse of humanity as other victims of Western colonialism shrouded the critical differences, the historical specificities and the asymmetrical positions, that distinguish Japan from its neighboring countries. To put it differently, remembering the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as events in the history of humanity has significantly contributed to the forgetting of the history of colonialism and racism in the region.
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Coming to terms with the past in Japan initially involved weighing the actions of ordinary Japanese against the discourse on Japan’s lag in modernity. Moreover, the failure to condemn the acts of colonial and semicolonial domination over the region by Japan and the Western nations as “crimes against humanity” allowed to persist the powerfully seductive “truth” that defined the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere as a project to oppose the Western hegemony. That the Japanese were humanity’s first named victims of atomic age warfare decisively contributed to this equation of Japan’s and the rest of Asia’s experience of Western imperialism and racism. The memories of Hiroshima’s destruction, secured within the global narrative of the universal history of humanity, has thus sustained, at least in the dominant historical discourse, a national victimology and phantasm of innocence throughout most of the postwar years.

TROPES OF THE NATION, PEACE, AND HUMANITY

Despite Hiroshima’s positioning within a global narrative, more often than not the city’s name evokes discrepant memories rather than the shared sentiments and understandings of a universal collectivity. For example, in the official histories of nations that achieved independence after liberation from Japan’s colonial or military rule, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is celebrated as ultimately leading to the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Kurihara Sadako’s well-known poem, “When Hiroshima Is Spoken Of,” dramatically captures the exasperating way in which “Hiroshima” tends to set loose an endless string of names marking atrocities—Pearl Harbor, the Rape of Nanjing, the Manila inferno, and on and on. More recently, the debates on the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum reconfirmed that reactions to Hiroshima, as the memory site of the first nuclear catastrophe, almost always produce discourses of nation-states. At various discursive junctures, Hiroshima’s atom bomb appears to provoke retaliatory memories of atrocities committed by and against specific national entities.

In postwar Japan, the remembering of Hiroshima has as a rule been associated with the idea that the experience of this catastrophe was a “Japanese” one, whether through self-victimization or as a grave consequence of fanatic nationalism. Yet the nationalization of Hiroshima memories, composed of multiple and often contradictory elements, has
been more complex than one might expect. In 1971 the late Sato Eisaku became the first prime minister in office to attend the annual 6 August Peace Memorial Ceremony since it began in 1947 as a "Peace Festival." Appearing as the representative of Japan, the only "atom-bombed nation in the world," Sato's participation marked the beginnings of the official and statist nationalization of Hiroshima's memory. A much earlier popular mass movement, the nuclear protests of the World Conference against the A- and H-Bombs (Gensuihaku Kinshi Sekai Taikai, or Gensuikin Conference, for short) had paved the way. This nationwide movement erupted in 1954, when a Japanese fishing boat, the Lucky Dragon Five, was exposed to radioactive fallout near the U.S. nuclear test site at Bikini atoll earlier that year. One of the crewmen died of radiation exposure. The tuna that the boat brought back to Yaizu harbor was sent to the Tsukiji central market, where the media reported on its highly contaminated condition. Shortly after this incident, housewives in Tokyo initiated a campaign to ban the A- and H-bombs, a move that in the following year developed formally into the first World Conference against the A- and H-Bombs. In less than three months, this mass campaign succeeded in collecting over a million signatures calling for a ban on nuclear testing, and with it emerged the chain of signification that connected the atomic sites of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Bikini. This link, one that was enabled and naturalized by the perception of the three incidents as nuclear attacks that victimized the Japanese nation and people as a whole, served to mobilize a large mass of citizens and all of the major existing political parties.

In the 1960s, when the Japanese central government signed the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Nichibei Anzen Hoshō Joyaku, or Ampo, for short) over the protests of the oppositional parties and a mass movement of citizens, the antinuclear sentiments that had emerged as a national consensus became divided over approving Japan's newly formalized military alliance with the United States. The treaty brought about intense conflicts, protests, and turmoil, for not only did it grant extra-territorial rights for U.S. military exercises on Japanese soil, but it also placed Japan under the protection of the so-called American nuclear umbrella. As he observed the Gensuikin movement's radicalization and splintering in Hiroshima, Oe Kenzaburo saw an opportunity to foster a new and self-critical nationalism by securing the historical experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as parts of Japan's collective memory. As part of a campaign to produce a comprehensive national catalogue on the damage caused by the A- and H-bombs, many antinuclear critics and intellectuals such as Oe criticized the national government for plac-
ing economic growth under U.S. military protection above the pursuit of democratic ideals. Certain strands of the Gensuikin movement also continued to object to the treaty itself. Within this context, Sato’s official attendance at the 1971 Peace Memorial Ceremony can be understood as an attempt to contain the broad oppositional base that had grown out of the peace and antinuclear activities of the preceding decades. The nationalized remembering of Hiroshima has therefore never been monolithic or without contradictions, even within the apparent homogeneity of Japanese society.

While the memory of Hiroshima, whether in or outside Japan, is often embedded within narratives of national collectivities, Hiroshima always seems to have a universal referentiality. In the city’s history, and in other places as well, the temporally fixed sign of “Hiroshima,” together with that of “Nagasaki,” has among other things stood for humanity’s first experience of a nuclear atrocity and for the peace that followed World War II. The instantaneous and massive devastation at this site has also often been construed as an unprecedented experience in human history brought about by scientific progress. Moreover, during the last half century many have visited Hiroshima to seek answers to our “ultimate concerns”: the authentic meanings of life, death, bereavement, and human suffering. And poets, priests, revolutionaries, philosophers, and scientists have visited the city to deliver messages of peace. “Hiroshima,” a master code for catastrophe in the twentieth century, is apparently all-absorbing as it conflates countless particulars into a single totality in the name of world peace. Moreover, subsequent medical discoveries of the lingering and uncontrollable effects of radiation, of their trespasses over geographical borders and temporal limits, have led to a growing sense of alarm that no existing borders—whether national, cultural, or ideological and political—can ensure immunity. The new scientific technology could easily annihilate all of “us.” The subject of remembering the bombing of Hiroshima, the instance that simulates a panhuman eschatology, is therefore humanity, the omnipresent and universal subject that transcends all particular locations and differences.

The idea that Hiroshima’s disaster ought to be remembered from the transcendent and anonymous position of humanity, and that the remembering of Hiroshima’s tragedy should invoke natural and commonly shared human thoughts, sentiments, and moral attitudes not limited by cultural boundaries, might best be described as “nuclear universalism.” Through most of the last half century the politics of Hiroshima memories, and the contradictions and slippages it has produced, are at once impelled forward and constrained by this dominant universalist trope.
of peace and humanity. In this section, I describe three instances in which struggles over Hiroshima memories took the form of conflicts between remembrances from specifically named subjects and from the anonymous, universal position of humanity. The cases not only provide a chronological framing for the present; they also reveal how multiple and intersecting national, transnational, and local forces have worked to solidify the paradigmatic narrative about the bombing that continues to shape the way we access knowledge about the city’s past. This analysis will, I hope, help us disentangle the assumptions, stakes, and concerns that have competed in the development of Hiroshima’s mnemonic topography. It will also enable us to explore the interplay among several key elements in remembering Hiroshima’s catastrophe—namely, the tropes of peace and humanity, the grand narrative of the U.S. cold war world order, and nationalisms of both Japan and the United States.

THE EPIGRAPH DEBATE

One of the earliest public debates concerning the anonymity and universality of the subject of remembering Hiroshima’s bombing took place immediately after Japan regained self-government and involved the inscription on the Peace Memorial Park’s central cenotaph. The contentious words are engraved on a coffinlike stone memorial that, following Tange’s plan, is sheltered beneath the haniwa-shaped arch. This is also where a list of all those whose deaths have been linked to the bomb is placed. The epitaph reads: “Please rest in peace (yasuraka ni nemutte kudasai).” For we shall not repeat the mistake (ayamachi wa kurikaeshimasen kara).” The equivalent of the second line’s subject, “we,” does not exist in the Japanese original, and this absence of the grammatical subject, common in Japanese writing, has generated numerous debates about “whose” and “which” mistake the sentence ultimately refers to.

The public controversy began in 1952 when the Indian jurist Radhabinod B. Pal visited the park during the Asian Congress for World Federation (Sekai Renpō Ajia Kaigi), which was being held in Hiroshima. Pal, a forthright critic of Western imperialism, was the only judge at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal to have insisted that a ruling on Japan’s war crimes should not be made unless the colonial crimes committed by the Western nations were also subjected to interrogation.36 On his visit to Hiroshima, Pal reportedly expressed his indignation at the words on the cenotaph as follows: If the “mistake” refers
to those who are directly responsible for the atom bomb, then their guilt has not yet been expiated. However, if the “mistake” refers to Japanese war crimes, its cause must be attributed not solely to the Japanese but ultimately to the history of the Western colonial powers’ invasion of Asia.

Following Pal’s criticism, prevailing narratives about Hiroshima’s postwar reconstruction have rarely failed to offer the normative interpretation of the central cenotaph’s inscription, as prescribed by the city. In fact, there appears to be a nearly obsessive anxiety about the possible resurfacing of the issue; even to this day, the pamphlet for general visitors distributed by the Peace Cultural Center recounts the entire course of the debate at some length. Starting with a description of the epigraph’s birth, it provides a narrative of the origin of the universalist position from which the city’s atomic bombing should be remembered:

When the [inscription’s] writing was completed, the mayor, unable to repress his joy, brought it into the municipal press conference room. Greatly moved, the reporters greeted [the announcement of the inscription] with loud applause. There was no doubt that the over two hundred thousand victims were not merely those belonging to any one nation, or any one people, but instead, they were memorialized as laying the foundation for peace for all of humanity. The understanding [of all in the room] was that those who would pledge antinuclear peace (hankaku no heiwa) to these victims ought to be the people of the entire world (zensekai no hitobito) [emphasis added].

The description of the joyful moment of the epigraph’s birth is quickly followed by a bitter story of unexpected tribulation, the controversy provoked by Judge Pal’s visit. However, in the narrative’s conclusion, the noble truth ultimately prevails. The controversy ignited by Pal’s visit, it is explained, ended when the city administration intervened; it publicized the official interpretation, which followed the bilingual exegesis provided by Saika Tadayoshi, the epigraph’s author, who accordingly is quoted: “[The official English translation of the inscription should be] ‘Let all the souls here rest in peace; For we shall not repeat the evil.’ In short, those who ought not repeat the evil are ‘We’; and the epigraph’s subject is undoubtedly [each one of] ‘us’ who prostrates before the cenotaph. Because these are words that all of us human beings (ningen de aru wareware no minna ga) need to pledge, [the inscription] is arguably an ultimate expression in which sentiments . . . were sublimated into the level of religiosity.” By deploying the universalized “we” as the subject of memorialization, the narrative turns the
incident into a historical experience shared by the anonymous collectivity of all of humanity. Nonetheless, judging by the opinions expressed in newspapers during the 1950s, the majority of survivors remained unsupportive of the phrase. They insisted that it did not adequately express survivors’ anger toward the bomb’s inhumane use.

In 1970 still another controversy over the epigraph was touched off by a group of right-wing intellectuals and politicians. They demanded that the city change the inscription because it was shameful in suggesting that the massacred were apologizing for what had been inflicted upon them. But by this time, it became clear, the majority of citizens actually supported the phrase. Thus in the official remembering of Hiroshima, at least as indicated by the central cenotaph’s epigraph and the official interpretation of it, neither the perpetrators nor the victims have been named. The anonymity of the subject of remembering has enabled the dissemination of the notion that atomic annihilation may occur in contexts culturally, politically, and geographically remote from Hiroshima; yet it also problematically obscures the historical relations and differential positions of all those with stakes in remembering Hiroshima.

THE PEACE/BOMB MEMORIAL PARK

Nothing more eloquently illustrates the global workings of the ideology of nuclear universalism than the discursive production of post-bomb Hiroshima. In the years immediately following the end of the war, it was not self-evidently clear that as the site of the world’s first nuclear destruction, Hiroshima would become a universal symbol of peace. By paying close attention to Hiroshima’s transition from the A-bombed city to the so-called mecca of peace, we can see more clearly the necessarily unstable tie between the two signs, “Atom Bomb” and “Peace,” in the early postwar years.

The public articulation of the idea that the municipal community ought to play an active role in promoting world peace and culture can be traced back to the 1948 “Peace Memorial City Construction Law” (Heiwa Kinen Toshi Kenseisuhō); the city’s post-1970 administrative identity as the “International Peace and Cultural City” was also largely determined by its characterization as the Peace Memorial City in the late 1940s. The concept of “peace administration,” or heiwabu gyōsei, which is used to define the distinctive nature of the city’s administrative responsibilities, also derives from this law. Yet the act was notably
short on specifics.\textsuperscript{42} Notwithstanding this obscurity, it was believed at the time that the law provided the moral impetus for the city's rebuilding. The idea of reconstructing the city as the central site for world peace was particularly attractive to city planners, who eagerly sought to create special incentives for the central government to provide financial aid. In short, the law provided at once a sublime cause and the means to achieve it, giving a focus to what had thus far been scattered and limited efforts toward recovery.\textsuperscript{43} The newly instituted law had as its primary agenda the construction of a commemorative space that would properly exhibit Hiroshima's municipal identity, resulting eventually in what we now know as the Peace Memorial Park.

For the lobbyists who exercised influence over the legislation, however, the concept of world peace was carefully severed from the memory of Hiroshima as the site of the first nuclear destruction. For instance, in the authoritative interpretation that he attached to a draft submitted to the Diet, one of the main lobbyists, Teramitsu Tadashi, explained at length that the notion of peace was not linked to the bombs; the term \textit{kinen} (commemoration or memorialization) appearing in the bill was \textit{not} by any means intended to imply "the reminiscent, nostalgic, or in other words negative spirit that the term \textit{kinen} connotes." Instead, it referred to the more "lofty and creative spirit" of constructing a symbol of eternal world peace. Teramitsu continued his convoluted exegesis: although the term may misleadingly evoke "bitter memories" that "the end of World War II was brought about by the atomic bomb attack against Hiroshima," the spirit of the Peace Memorial City Construction Law is "completely divorced from the atomic bomb or 6 August." He concluded, "If one questions why Hiroshima city was chosen to be such a symbolic city, one might provide the historical background of the first atomic bomb attack and the tragedy of 6 August. Although it is certainly a significant instance, that in itself does not mean anything more than that."\textsuperscript{44} Therefore, for him the peace that the city and its commemorative space were to memorialize had no inherent link to the war or to the bomb. The bomb was indeed what justified institutionalization of a special legislative mechanism, as was also true for Nagasaki. Nevertheless, peace in this context signified postwar recovery—what was positive, future-oriented, and not bound by "bitter memories" of the past.

One might suspect that Teramitsu’s almost paranoiac downplaying of the bomb was necessary in order to avert intervention by the Occupation authorities. For U.S. policy at that time included the so-called...
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Press Code, which called for mandatory inspections of and legal restrictions on all publications and public debates about the bomb, regardless of their form. Contrary to such common sense speculation, however, historians of Hiroshima’s postwar reconstruction process have pointed out that the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces—including Douglas MacArthur himself—enthusiastically supported the idea of spatially rearranging Hiroshima so as to turn it into an international showcase for exhibiting the link between the atomic bomb and postwar peace.

For instance, the most influential of the various blueprints for the city’s reconstruction sought to transform the vicinity of the epicenter into a commemorative site, as well as to build facilities to accommodate visitors. In particular, they suggested that Hiroshima’s planners construct icons and buildings that would commemorate both world peace and the beginning of the atomic age. Unlike Teramitsu and many others, the Occupation authorities and U.S. officials determined that their interests would be furthered by connecting the atomic bomb to the idea of peace and, more important, by displaying that linkage to the world. The commemorative city of Hiroshima was, as it were, designed specifically to demonstrate the interchangeability of “the atomic bomb” and “peace.” Remembering a link between the bomb and peace fostered the conviction that without use of the atomic weapon, peace in the Pacific could not have been achieved in a timely manner. This is a historical narrative that stubbornly continues to form our assumptions even today, despite historians’ efforts to show that such an argument—more specifically, that use of the bomb was unavoidable if the war was to end without enormous cost in human lives—was fabricated ex post facto.

At the same time, the identification of peace with the bomb also filled an important gap in the doctrine of U.S. nuclear deterrence. It provided a narrative to rationalize the buildup of offensive military force, which, it could then be argued, would effectively contribute to peace and progress. The textual production of Hiroshima as the A-bombed city that revived as a mecca of world peace thus helped disseminate the view that the world’s peaceful order was attained and will be maintained not by diplomatic efforts or negotiations, but by sustaining a menacing military force and technological supremacy. Hiroshima’s postwar design thus spatially represented the master narrative of the post–World War II order in the Asia Pacific region. The bomb/peace conflation subsequently came to be naturalized, as the cold war narrative for the global order prevailed.

The bomb/peace link is also a metonym for the broader reorganiza-
tion of postwar relations between the United States and Japan. As the Allied Occupation evolved and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty subsequently went into effect, the United States’ postwar military and economic hegemony over the region came to embrace the nationalist interests of Japanese conservatives. Without the latter’s collaboration, the former’s global scheme would not have been possible. Moreover, for those in Japan who wished to rebuild the capitalist nation by relying on the prewar power structure, it was essential that the United States provide not only institutional resources but also the powerful intellectual paradigm of modernization theory, a grand narrative that promised the economic growth and prosperity of the free world.

“ANY AND ALL NATIONS PREDICAMENT”

Frictions between what I have been calling “nuclear universalism” and demands to acknowledge historical and structural specificities have emerged in various institutional contexts. Even within the national antinuclear campaign that appeared to have a remarkable consensus as it emerged in 1954, deep fault lines formed; participants were bitterly divided over who should make pledges for peace, and for what causes. A well-known controversy of the early 1960s, often referred to as the “any and all nations predicament” (ikanarui kuni mondai), revolved around such a contradiction.

The any and all nations predicament appeared as a schism within the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensui Baku Kinshi Nihon Kyōgikai), the organization that had been at the forefront of the national antinuclear campaign up to 1963. It began as a conflict between those who categorically objected to the use, testing, and possession of nuclear arms by “any and all nations,” without regard to the country or political regime involved, and those who insisted on taking particular historical circumstances into account in evaluating the legitimacy of nuclear weaponry. The latter argued that the United States’ possession of nuclear weapons differed from possession of such weapons by nations engaged in proletarian revolutions and anti-colonial struggles. Because the United States had initiated the nuclear arms race and introduced the threat of nuclear attacks in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, the subsequent development of nuclear weapons by other nations should be considered a necessary and legitimate defense against U.S. nuclear domination, capitalist expansionism, and the de facto continuation of Western colonial rule. This argument arose in a
particular global context: in 1957, the British government had conducted its second nuclear test on Christmas Island in Australia; and in 1960, the French had conducted nuclear tests for the first time in northern Africa.

The dissent within the council materialized as a split between those affiliated with the Socialist Party, on the one hand, and the Communist Party, on the other, during the 1962 Eighth World Conference against the A- and H-Bombs. The division was already forming at the national meeting of the conference held in Tokyo in 1961, when the Local Women's Union (Chiiki Fujin Rengō) and other organizations demanded several revisions to the conference resolution draft. For instance, they proposed that the phrase “the military policy of the American imperialists and their collaborators” (emphasis added) be replaced with a less pointed formulation: “the military policy based upon the principle of force.”

They argued that the language of the draft should be less specific, so that rather than being construed as simply anti-American, the council's antinuclear stance would be seen to apply to countries other than the United States and its allies. The proposal, however, was dismissed.

At the 1962 conference, the conflict resurfaced over the Soviet's 5 August nuclear testing. During the national meeting in Tokyo, the Socialist Party and other affiliated organizations tried to lodge a formal protest against the Soviet Union in the name of the World Conference. When that proposal was voted down, the defeated members declared that they were departing from the Gensuikyō Council's national organization. In the meantime, at the prefectural meeting held in Hiroshima, a proposal was made to remonstrate not only against U.S. nuclear tests but also against testing by the Soviets and their allies. Representatives from China, the Soviet Union, North Korea, and members of the Japan Communist Party displayed their resentment by walking out of the conference. At the meeting one Japanese Communist Party member reportedly proclaimed his willingness to expose himself to nuclear fallout, provided it came from bombs tested by socialist nations.

These disagreements over the proper object of antinuclear protest and the legitimacy of possessing and testing nuclear weapons left an irreparable fissure. In 1965 the former members of Gensuikyō established the Japan National Congress against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikaku Kinshi Nihon Kokumin Kaigi, or the Gensuikin Congress—not to be confused with the Gensuikin Conference, which had taken place annually from 1955 on). In 1961 those affiliated with the conservative LDP and Democratic Social Party (Minshatō), who had regarded the Gensuikin
Conference as a growing impediment to fulfilling the terms of the controversial U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, had already founded their own antinuclear conference, National Council for Peace and against Nuclear Weapons (Kakuheiki Kinshi Heiwa Kensetsu Kokumin Kaigi, or Kaku-kin Kaigi). The effects of this controversy are still felt today: the national antinuclear campaign remains split into three organizations, each with a different party affiliation. Yet though their positions on Japan’s involvement in the U.S. military alliance in East Asia are opposed, Gensuikin and Kakukin Kaigi have maintained an important commonality: they protest against nuclear weapons regardless of the different contexts within which those weapons are developed or possessed.

The situationalist argument regarding legitimate possession of nuclear force never gained wide support. As the official exegesis of Hiroshima’s central cenotaph illustrates, nuclear universalism offered an axiomatic foundation for the antinuclear campaign in the liberal democratic postwar nation-state. In hindsight, especially given what we now know of the uncontainable effects of nuclear explosions, the “any and all nations predicament” may seem absurd. Nonetheless, it exemplifies how the antinuclear campaign as a Japanese national movement lost some of its critical edge when its participants refused to specify the nuclear threats within the particular Asia Pacific context. The Gensuikin Conference did indeed continue to oppose the LDP-led central government insofar as it pressed the latter to maintain the three antinuclear principles—not to produce, possess, or bring in nuclear weapons—which were constantly breached by the base-leasing agreement as stipulated in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Yet its indiscriminate protests against nuclear weaponry also deflected critical attention from the geopolitical specificities of who possessed nuclear weapons, who benefited from the world order that they sustained, and who the accomplices of nuclear domination really were. Moreover, by making the ban on nuclear weapons its paramount concern, the Gensuikin movement as a whole also alienated itself in subsequent decades from student groups and other grassroots peace organizations that tended to regard peace and antinuclear issues as integrally linked to other questions regarding human rights, ecology, and resistance to state violence.54

All three examples—the controversy over the cenotaph epigraph, the discursive production of the Peace Memorial City, and the “any and all nations predicament”—reveal how remembering Hiroshima from the transcendent and anonymous position of humanity has embraced and
supplemented particular nationalist concerns. Nuclear universalism has served specific interests in a postwar world order in which Japan was incorporated and militarily secured under the so-called U.S. nuclear umbrella, under which the provincial and the partisan masquerade in the guise of the universal. As in the overlooked parallels between Tange's prewar and postwar monumental designs, here the forgotten continuity of the supplementarity of universalism and particularism can be seen in what is transferred between contexts.

Tange's design for the Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia aimed to celebrate the Japanese nationalist agenda, cloaked under the tropes of peace and humanity. Discourse employing such phrases as "Civilization and Enlightenment" (bunmeikaika), "Peace in the East" (tōyōheiwa), or "Liberation of Asia" (ajia no kaibō) was indeed powerfully seductive within Asia from the late nineteenth century to the period of the Asia Pacific War, precisely because these universal claims had instrumental value vis-à-vis local interests. Though the postwar commemorative space of Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park had different aims, the structure for achieving them was analogous: the park observed the universal ideals of world peace while embracing the specific concern of defending the free world against the threat of communism. In the newly formulated master narrative of postwar global relations, the universal values and practices of modernity, progress, freedom, and so on came exclusively under the rubric of the West, especially of the United States. In effect, the dominant mode of remembering Hiroshima resulted in handing over the universal tropes of peace and humanity from Japan's pan-Asian regime of truth to the U.S. cold war commonwealth.

Long lost behind the repeated universal calls for the peace of humanity and beneath nationalized memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, again, the experiences of those who were victimized by the bomb as colonized subjects of the prewar Japanese Empire. In chapter 5 I will discuss the Memorial for the Korean Atom Bomb Victims at some length and explore the ways in which the insistence on universal victimhood has prevented memories of colonialism—and by extension, the call for social justice in current ethnic politics—from infiltrating Japan's mainstream public arena. In 1990 Hiroshima city abruptly made a proposal to relocate the geographically marginalized Korean Memorial into the official territory of the Peace Park, but only after eliminating ethnic and colonial reminders from the memorial. In sup-
porting the city’s refusal to include the racially and ethnically marked memorial into the Peace Park, one survivor, a physician and prominent leader of the postwar hibakusha movement, expressed his objection as follows: “To categorize people as Japanese or Koreans is a low-level argument.” Here, again, the claim that posits a universal category of humanity as the subject of memorialization serves to obstruct condemnations of Japanese nationalism and ethnocentrism. It frustrates cultural practices that attempt to reveal the ways in which culture and society are organized through hierarchies of racial and ethnic differences.

The progressive peace and antiwar discourse, eager to depart from prewar ideology and practices, also contributed to a forgetfulness about those who had liberated themselves from Japanese rule after the war. When Son Chintu, a Korean survivor of Hiroshima, illegally entered Japan from Pusan in 1970 and demanded issuance of a hibakusha certificate that would allow him to receive the same medical relief given to survivors residing in Japan (see chapter 3), the incident profoundly disturbed the ethnocentric remembering of Hiroshima, reminding people that prewar Japan was in fact a multiethnic and multiracial empire. Yet even before Son’s return to Japan, the conservative faction of the Japanese antinuclear movement had been urgently calling for special relief measures to be established for the forgotten atom bomb survivors residing in Korea. Ironically, it was the conservatives’ adherence to prewar imperial practices that bound them to the utopian rhetoric of multiethnic harmony and cooperation. Reported widely in the media, Son’s court case mobilized a nationwide citizens’ movement; for the first time, the broader peace and antinuclear constituencies began to reflect on the historical conditions and material specificities behind Hiroshima’s atomic bombing.

The complicitous relation between Japan and the United States under the cold war global order provided another overarching context for the LDP government’s maintenance of a double standard in remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Domestically the conservative party, as Prime Minister Sato’s attendance at the Peace Memorial Ceremony demonstrated, succeeded in incorporating local experiences of nuclear victimization into a national victimology. Internationally, however, the Japanese government has never formally charged the United States with using the two atomic bombs illegitimately. One of the numerous incidents attesting to the national government’s unwillingness to cast direct blame on the United States occurred during the 1970 World Exposition
held in Osaka, an epochal event that demonstrated Japan's postwar progress and its new membership in the international community. During the event, the central government requested the removal from the exhibit of photographic displays depicting atom-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.  

As we near the end of the twentieth century, many important changes are taking place within and beyond the grand narrative of peace and humanity. They perhaps appear most noticeably in recent speeches delivered by Mayor Hiraoka Takashi at the annual Peace Memorial Ceremony. He has made increasingly explicit references to the question of historical agency; and the more specifically the speeches refer to imperial Japan's acts of military and colonial aggression against people of Asia and the Pacific, the more strongly they implicate the United States as the agent responsible for destroying the Hiroshima community. Such departures from the dominant tropes of universal peace and humanity appear tied to the interrogation of specific actors in the atrocities of the twentieth century's first half, whether as perpetrators, victims, or accomplices. Moreover, the 1997 speech for the first time openly criticized Japan's protection under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, highlighting more than ever the deep chasm between the municipal government and the central government over the issue of militarism and Japan's relationship to the United States. If the cultural agenda of postwar Germany and Europe have been conditioned by, as Eric Santner compellingly argued, the post-Holocaust and the postmodern, then the politics of memory in late-twentieth-century Japan circulate around different “posts”: the post-nuclear, the postcolonial, and the post-cold war. This study examines the remembering and forgetting of Hiroshima memories within such a milieu, in which formerly invisible actors have become visible and multiple, the evident contours of the Enemy have become obscured, and an awareness of the nonbinary and complicitous relations of power has intensified.

ON THE POLITICS OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

In exploring the politics of historical knowledge about Hiroshima, this ethnography deploys the concept of memory as its central device. Indeed, memory has become a primary concern within many disciplines over the past two decades. A number of authors have investigated various dimensions of remembering and forgetting cataclysmic events in
diverse local cultures and social contexts. They have attended to such issues as the manifest and repressive mediations of memories, the cleavages of subject positions along which contestations over remembering and forgetting occur, and the hegemonic and contradictory processes of producing, distributing, and consuming knowledge about the past as they take place in institutions and at various material sites. When questions of history are formulated in terms of memory, researchers must examine not only the content of historical knowledge but also the processes whereby that knowledge is accessed. Investigations of memory always focus on how, as much as what, we know about the past.

Therefore, I do not here define "memory" in opposition to "history." Such opposition has taken two quite different forms. On the one hand, in popular writings and in some studies of social history, Memory has often referred to genuine and authentic knowledge about ordinary people's past experiences, in contrast to official History, which is considered to be a product of power, written from the perspectives of cultural elites, colonists, and other members of the ruling classes. Such works have focused on recovering long-suppressed yet persistent popular memories. Commonly the objective has been to foreground anonymous actors and to reveal the ways in which institutionalized History has misrepresented their experiences. On the other hand, Memory has often been associated with myth or fiction and contrasted with History as written by professionals. Thus personal memoirs, autobiographic narratives, and firsthand experiential accounts are treated as a second-class history, written without hard evidence and from myopic, partisan, and subjective points of view; professionally scrutinized History, by contrast, is regarded as further distanced from immediate experiences, and therefore less partial and more synthetic. History tends to stand for rational and scientific knowledge, while Memory is associated with the "subjective," such as nostalgic passion, longing, devotion, or allegiance.

In either case, the imagined opposition between History and Memory seems to rest on and contribute to a false dichotomy. Taken together, the two views reveal not so much that there is a stable distinction between the terms but rather that the production of knowledge about the past, whether in the form of History or Memory, is always enmeshed in the exercise of power and is always accompanied by elements of repression. In this work, memory is understood as deeply embedded in and hopelessly complicitous with history in fashioning an official and authoritative account of the past. That perspective on history, memory, and knowledge also necessitates an interdisciplinary study.
In short, I employ the concept of memory to emphasize that knowing the past cannot be divorced from the contexts within which retrospections on the past occur. Above all, reliance on this concept means that we begin our investigations into the past with an awareness that historical “reality” can only be made available to us through the mediations of given categories of representation and processes of signification. We must therefore suspend the belief that past events and experiences can automatically manifest themselves and their meanings prior to discourse. We need not, however, reject empirical facts, or disavow experiential truths, though detractors have often hastily and sometimes purposefully so misconstrued the objectives of such exercises. Joan W. Scott has warned scholars against unwittingly allowing essentialism to creep back in as they attempt to recuperate hitherto suppressed and marginalized thoughts and practices: “Experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, always therefore political.”67 This often-misappropriated critique of casual uses of “experience” does not promote a transcendent position from which the truthfulness of a version of the past can be verified or repudiated. Nor does Scott overlook how “experiences” decisively shape social practices and cultural meanings. Rather, the critique urges us to question the very processes of mediation whereby certain events or experiences come to appear natural, authoritative, and self-evident, while others remain inauthentic and parochialized. Such introspection enables our exploration of the ways in which power operates in the production of historical knowledge, wielded both in domination and as resistance, and allows us to ask what exactly is at stake in remembering and forgetting past events in certain ways and not in others.68

Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” and his other related essays on modernity have tremendously influenced the recent rethinking of the project of history. The significance of Benjamin’s observations concerning the irreversible transformations that have taken place in modern society, especially changes in the sense of time and the nature of people’s relationships to objects, and the implications of his deep ambivalence toward the modernity within which he wrote—these and other topics have been extensively discussed by many, and I will not repeat all their points here.69 Instead, I wish to foreground Benjamin’s criticism of universal historiography and his attempt to radicalize the sense of time embedded in European modernity. For it is on these
points that Benjamin’s insights become most relevant to my study of Hiroshima memory.

In proposing to “brush history against the grain,” Benjamin elucidates the crucial disjuncture between the conventional Marxist and bourgeois historiography that assumes continuity and coherence in the progression of time and the historical accounts that help illuminate possibilities for change:

Historicism rightly culminates in universal history. . . . Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. Materialistic historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. . . . Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history.70

Whereas the “universal history” loyally recounts the events as they took place, the writing of a “historical materialist” takes into account that which has been omitted from the former’s inventory of happenings. It reclaims missed opportunities and unfulfilled promises in history, as well as unrealized events that might have led to a different present. By capturing them as a monad in a dialectics of thinking, as in a moment of revelation, the historical materialist frees “the oppressed past” from a history that is made to appear as if it unfolds through time naturally and automatically.

Such a method of recovering facts and remembering events resists the uniformity and constancy of the empty and homogeneous time that governs universal history. While the universal history endorses the status quo of present knowledge, the historical materialist brings to light the numerous counterpoints—the revolutionary “now-time” (Jetzeit)—to the known course of the past and questions history’s inevitability. Elsewhere, Benjamin wrote: “Historical materialism has to abandon the epic element in history. It blasts the epoch out of the reified ‘continuity of history.’ But it also blasts open the homogeneity of the epoch. It saturates it with ecrasite, i.e., the present.”71

Here the “never again” premise of Hiroshima survivors’ testimonial accounts becomes especially relevant, as we will see in later chapters.
For unlike conventional historical narratives, their experiences are remembered with at once an acute sense of irreversibility and an immense regret that compels us to imagine possible alternative courses of history and to suspect that opportunities to prevent the moment of destruction might have been seized, but were not. It is also important to note that the testimonies do this historically, not through the mobilization of a priori knowledge beyond material conditions but by strictly recounting what took place and cannot be reversed.

The counterpoints of history, however, can only be articulated by “seiz[ing] hold of a memory that flashes up at a moment of danger.” This danger arises as knowledge about the past is constantly assimilated into a teleological narrative that assumes historical progress. As Benjamin also observed, “The truth will not run away from us; in the historical outlook of historicism the words of Gottfried Keller mark the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism. For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.” Rememoration is a social practice that allows the past to be “recognized by the present as one of its own concerns.” At the same time, when past events are thus made urgently relevant to the present, they in turn question the commanding power that historical truth is assumed to have over the present. By interrupting the evolutionary continuity between past and present, a Benjaminian dialectics of memory allows historical knowledge to remain critically germane to present struggles for social change.

Susan Buck-Morss’s exegesis of Benjamin can help us understand why his formulation is so crucial to our examination of the politics of remembering and forgetting in Hiroshima. By piecing together Benjamin’s fragmentary writings on Passagenwerk, Buck-Morss makes clear exactly what was at stake in his rethinking of conventional historiography. His purpose, she notes, was “to accomplish a ‘Copernican Revolution’ in the writing of history. . . . The goal is to bring into consciousness those repressed elements of the past (its realized barbarisms and its unrealized dreams) which ‘place the present in a critical position.’ In the dialectical image, the present as the moment of revolutionary possibility acts as a lodestar for the assembly of historical fragments” (emphasis added).

Jürgen Habermas also adopts this Benjaminian rethinking of historiography in seeing “a drastic reversal of horizon of expectation and space of experience.” In his attempt to radicalize the politico-philosophical tradition of European modernity, working stoically from within,
Habermas argues that Benjamin “twists the radical future-orientatedness that is characteristic of modern times in general so far back around the axis of the now-time that it gets transposed into a yet more radical orientation toward the past. The anticipation of what is new in the future is realized only through remembering [Eingedenken] a past that has been suppressed.” Later, when he intervened in Germany’s Historikerstreit and criticized the complicity between the neohistoricist use of the past and the growing desire for national absoluation, Habermas followed Benjamin in grounding his position on what he identified as the present’s “future-oriented responsibility” for the past. This responsibility, when radicalized, necessarily extends to past events with which one may have no ontological relation.

Benjaminian reflections on historical time and memory can be valuable in studies of the experience of modernity outside the West as well. In his analysis of the political and psychological state of mind of those under colonialism, Ashis Nandy also elaborates on the effects of what Habermas calls the “future-orientatedness” of remembering. Nandy’s description of Mohandas K. Gandhi’s politics of memory is strikingly similar to Benjamin’s view of history: “Public consciousness was not seen as a causal product of history but as related to history non-causally through memories and anti-memories. If for the West the present was a special case of an unfolding history, for Gandhi as a representative of traditional India history was a special case of an all-embracing permanent present, waiting to be interpreted and reinterpreted.” This radical break with historical determinism was crucial in freeing the historical imagination of the colonized from the dictates of the past, with its psychological sedimentation of colonial rule and class constraints. According to Nandy, Gandhi’s envisioning of an alternative world and his ability to create a philosophical foundation for the Indian anticolonial struggle were enabled by conceptualizing the past as “a possible means of reaffirming or altering the present.”

As will become clear in the following chapters, the challenges to conventional linear temporality attained through the dialectics of remembering have become especially urgent, now that the hegemonic process in the production of Japan’s national history is moving beyond amnesia, beyond the mere suppression of past knowledge. The current remembering and partial acknowledging of, for instance, the nation’s past military and colonial crimes present a danger analogous to what Adorno once observed in Germany’s Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit (coming to terms with the past) in the immediate post-Nazi period.
unending efforts of Trauerarbeit (task of mourning), or the psychiatric process of working through (Durcharbeitung), whereby memories of past cataclysmic events or experiences of loss are rearticulated by the rememberers to attain an understanding of their present position vis-à-vis such trauma, the process of “coming to terms with the past,” according to Adorno, did “not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory.”

This process of remembering, therefore, necessarily entails the forgetting of forgetfulness. In our case, it masks how the nation’s military aggression, its destructiveness, and the loss of its brutal imperialist dreams have been deliberately and at times forcibly repressed for almost half a century since the end of the war. The ongoing reformulation of knowledge about the nation’s recent past is a process of amnes(t)ic remembering whereby the past is tamed through the reinscription of memories. Precisely because many perceive this danger, the struggles over memory, particularly over the ways in which remembrances take place, have intensified in the local scene of late-twentieth-century Hiroshima.

Adorno’s warning finds an urgent echo in Michel Foucault’s more recent critique of film and popular memory. In a now well-known interview, Foucault described what he called a reprogramming of popular memory: “There is a battle for and around history going on at this very moment which is extremely interesting. The intention is to reprogram, to stifle what I’ve called the ‘popular memory,’ and also to propose and impose on people a framework in which to interpret the present.”

This foregrounding of the memory question as a central analytical concern also resonates profoundly with Benjamin’s future-oriented interrogations of the past. More important, Foucault, like Adorno, warned against the mastery over memory that can occur precisely when people remember what they believe to be new, disruptive, and revolutionary. As in Foucault’s work generally, power is envisioned here as operating not by suppression but by endowing popular memories with expression and thereby producing a truthfulness about them. Whenever the past is evoked, Foucault seems to suggest, we need to be vigilant about the ways in which the newly recovered knowledge is encouraged to re-emerge within yet another regime of truth and the ways in which it is once again subjugated.

To investigate the constructed nature of historical knowledge is not to disregard political and historical agency. To be sure, for some the con-
cept of memory may connote nothing more than a decentering of the "contestatory, subversive, oppositional" qualities that objectivist historical awareness claims to have. Moreover, it may be feared that celebrating diffusion and diversity in the forms as well as subject positions of those involved in commemorative practices will lead to a debilitating relativism, hampering our pursuit of a concrete political agenda. Similar concerns about the deconstructionist crusade have been voiced, especially by feminist writers and people of color. As Nancy Hartsock puts it, "exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, . . . just then the concept of subjecthood becomes 'problematic.'" Undoubtedly, making historical facts and past experiences available as inviolable objective realities can be empowering, especially for those in marginalized social positions.

I am sympathetic to such reservations about the radical denial by deconstructionists and postmodernists of the possibility of centered subjecthood. Yet I also believe that we can consider the politics of historical knowledge without entirely disregarding the individual actor's ability to act on structures and to assume historical agency. By formulating the question of historical knowledge in terms of memory, and by illuminating its constructed and mediated nature, we can determine more precisely the conditions of power that shape the ways in which that past is conveyed and ask how such representations interpellate and produce subjects. These exercises also demonstrate that we can conceive of historical agency in terms of the power to renarratize and re-cite past events and experiences. Certainly, narrativity and citationality cannot exist prior to categories of signification and representation. Nevertheless, by juxtaposing and piecing together unexpected stories and forms, memory work can create gaps and slippages within the structural processes that ground an individual's historical positionality. Historical agency envisioned in this manner allows individuals to become subjects of history, of their own conditions. In this sense, to perform an act of remembrance and to possess a means of memorialization become equivalent to demonstrating power and autonomy.

In part 1, I examine some of the spatial strategies that have contributed to taming knowledge about the city's past. During the last two decades urban redevelopment and tourism projects have reconfigured the
ways in which the discourse on Hiroshima is legitimated and anchored spatially. Capital investment has focused intensively on urban renewal and the promotion of tertiary industries—including tourism, expositions, trade shows, and conventions—while various administrative policies have supported what can be characterized as the postindustrial or late capitalist transformation of the region’s infrastructure. This political and economic restructuring also involved a transfiguration of urban space and aesthetics.

Chapter 1, “Taming the Memoryscape,” examines the productive and transformative nature of space. The cityspace is an object that reflects and mediates infrastructural conditions—urban development projects can change its landscape. At the same time, the reformulated cityspace may in turn provide a new “container of power,” leading to new knowledge and consciousness, as well as amnesia, about history and society. Increasing forgetfulness and a yearning for what is called “brightness,” I hope to show, are intricately intertwined with the manufacturing of spaces that produce subjectivities conducive to the dominant features of the current culture of peace and prosperity. It is precisely this power of space, which can at once illuminate and mystify, which can produce and “hide consequences from us,” that makes urban renewal such a central agenda in contemporary Hiroshima.

The dominant processes of spatial containment define the proper territories for memorializing, prescribing whose experiences should be remembered and when, where, and how they should be invoked. Yet transformations of the memoryspace have not been achieved without provoking conflicts over how to represent the past. Such battles over memories have not simply materialized as struggles over actual space; more important, they have developed out of and been mediated through space. Chapter 2, “Memories in Ruins,” analyzes the preservation campaigns for three structures that avoided complete nuclear destruction and that have been preserved, albeit in varying forms, over the decades. These preservationist efforts reveal the diverse ways in which the “pastness” of the past was perceived. The inconsistent meanings people attributed to conserving the buildings, and the contradictory ways in which they desired to preserve the ever-present past, demonstrate that there are competing attitudes toward remembering, that not all mnemonic sites have endorsed the same sense of pastness, nostalgia, and modernity that underwrite the dominant remembering of Hiroshima’s disaster. Attempts at taming the memoryscape, moreover, have paradoxically led to the proliferation of mnemonic sites which interrupt progress toward amnesia in critical ways.
Part 2 analyzes the testimonial practices of Hiroshima’s survivors. Often referred to as “witnesses” (shōgensha) or “storytellers” (kataribe), these custodians of memory have orally presented stories of their immediate experiences and survival to the public. Throughout the book, they appear as crucial guides to the past. To date, many scholars have considered the survivors’ narratives from the viewpoint of sociohistorical psychology. But while those studies have usually focused primarily on experiences of the bomb and their psychological effects, my inquiry attends to the diffused and allegorically extended nature of survivors’ narrative practices. I concentrate on identifying the quality of knowledge produced through interactions between the storytellers and their audiences, exploring how this knowledge affects the latter’s perception of the given order of things.

Chapter 3, “On Testimonial Practices,” considers the institutional and discursive contexts within which the survivors’ identities as hibakusha (literally, “one who was subjected/exposed to the bomb/radiation”) were rendered multiple and complex as they began to actively adopt identities as “witnesses” and “storytellers.” The chapter contemplates how these categories have encouraged survivors to recollect and narrate their immediate experiences of the atomic atrocity not as an isolated incident in their lives but as inextricably embedded in their entire life stories. Especially from the beginning of the 1980s, many survivors began to situate themselves in multiple ways through the practice of storytelling, even as they have continued to regard their hibakusha identity as ultimately foundational.

Survivors often engage in their testimonial practices while accompanying pilgrims to Hiroshima on memorial tours, or hi-neguri—the latter generally referring to the excursions of visitors to the city’s various memorials, ruins, burials, monuments, and other mnemonic sites. In other cases, volunteers organize and lead outings that are often called “walk rallies” or “peace walks.” The specific significance of these spatial tactics as cultural and social critique cannot be fully grasped without considering their relation to urban renewal and tourism. The tourist guides, maps, and pamphlets issued by the city administration often prescribe routes so that visitors might directly empathize with the dreadful experiences of war and nuclear horrors by first visiting the now museumized Atom Bomb Dome and the Peace Park. They are thus invited to appreciate the “preciousness of peace” (heiwa no totosa) and then encouraged to wander about the streets around the city center, filled with refined museums and expensive fashion boutiques, while entertaining themselves in the culture of peace and prosperity.
The memorial tours and walk rallies do not exist independent of such an official mapping. Nor can they entirely transform the established geography, which is a product of capitalism. Moreover, survivors’ testimonial practices throughout the last half century have always had an ambivalent yet inseparable relationship to the development of Hiroshima’s tourism and other city planning efforts. By making detours through and around official sites of memories, they manage to inscribe memory sites that are not immediately evident. Thus, mnemonic “de-tours” can be understood as a task of deconstructing tourism’s established mapping.

Chapter 4 examines how this tactic of cultural criticism operates not only physically over the cityscape but also discursively and temporally through survivors’ storytellings. Their stories include the nonteleological, de-toured courses of their thoughts and lives before and after the bomb. In addition, their testimonial practices illustrate an ongoing contestation between different temporalities within contemporary society—namely, between the linear, progressive temporality of the postwar nation and the alternative temporalities that are negatively dialectical, cyclical, or sometimes even frozen. Chapter 4 discusses in detail the unsettling effects of the frozen time that appears in the storytellers’ retellings of the moment of destruction.

Survivors’ testimonies are undoubtedly where the past catastrophic moment continues to reemerge, in the selfsame form but with processual differences. The cyclicity of memory, moreover, is enmeshed with conventional calendrical time. In the month of August, for instance, the war and the bomb are remembered at different levels of the society. The national body politic commemorates the end of the war at the official ceremony held on 15 August. Immediately after the municipally administered Peace Memorial Ceremony is held in Hiroshima on the sixth, the city of Nagasaki performs its official ceremony on the ninth. According to the Buddhist calendar, the middle of August is a time when the spirits of the dead make their annual return visits en masse. In Hiroshima, where the overwhelming majority of residents are Buddhist, brightly multicolored lanterns welcoming the dead begin to fill the temples’ graveyards as obon, the day of the all souls’ festival, approaches. But the signs of remembrance do not appear at these places of formal memorialization alone. Flowers, water, and other offerings are also found in riverbeds, at street corners, on tree trunks, and beneath building windows. Every year, myriad mnemonic sites reemerge in this manner and gradually disappear as the month passes, restoring the steady time of the ordinary city.
Furthermore, the deferred effects of radiation, which can erupt at any moment even after many years, have endowed memories of the atomic annihilation with constancy and repetition. A survivor in his sixties who took early retirement in order to become a storyteller described his past forty-some-odd years: “My gums start to bleed; and I wonder if it is due to the bomb. I meet someone I wish to marry; and I wonder if it is all right. We are going to have a child; we wonder if the bomb will have any effect. I begin to get older and worry about cancer; and, again, I wonder about the bomb.”94 A society’s collective representations tend to denote, exclude, and domesticate death, but these persistent yet undetectable traces of exposure to radiation disrupt that process. Like a symptom of repressed trauma, the memory of delayed radiation deaths constantly returns to the surface of society.95

As individuals who are at once victims and survivors of that moment of mass killing, witnesses and storytellers necessarily possess a double existence. On the one hand, they recount the past as members of the community of the dead, who have been bestowed with the authority of the eyewitness. On the other hand, their very presence in testimonial scenes proves that they are forever severed from the temporality of the deceased. Through their aura as witnesses, these survivors bring the past to full presence in their testimonies; but in the very act of remembrance they simultaneously betray that the past is past, and that it can never be retrieved in its originary form. In chapter 4, “Mnemonic Detours,” I argue that it is in this duality of identification and dis-identification of the narrators and their objects, as well as in temporalities of recollection, that the unsettling and transformative quality of the survivors’ testimonial practices resides.

Part 3 considers how acts of remembrance have produced ethnic and gendered subjectivities in the postwar years. In chapter 5, “Ethnic and Colonial Memories: The Korean Atom Bomb Memorial,” we will observe recent attempts to reprogram memories of Japanese colonialism over Korea, as well as of the postcolonial experiences of those Korean resident aliens (zainichi kankoku chōsenjin, henceforth shortened to zainichi or zainichi Koreans) who have been relegated to ethnically minoritized positions in postwar Japanese society.

By establishing a means for their own remembering, the Korean memorial erected in 1970 has authorized and made visible the ethnic Koreans’ presence within Japanese society and history. The memorial constitutes, as James E. Young observed of the Jewish Holocaust monuments, one of those “sites where groups of people gather to create a common
past for themselves, places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their ‘shared’ stories of the past.”° The Korean Atom Bomb Memorial has been a site where visitors remember the experiences of those who have been interpellated collectively as Koreans. At the same time, the collisions and elisions of the memorial’s meanings occur both outside and within the boundaries of nationality, ethnicity, and individuality. The acts of remembrance necessarily entail questions regarding the legitimacy and ownership of memory as well as whether one belongs to the shared past. Who participates in the remembrances, how the event commemorated is construed, and for what objectives—these questions are inherently tied to the issue of communal boundaries and their authenticity. While a number of studies have observed the production of collective identity through commemorative practices, I concentrate on showing how certain forms of remembering have induced “eccentric” and coalitional identities within Hiroshima’s politics, both local and translocal.°

Chapter 6, “Postwar Peace and the Feminization of Memory,” revisits the question of transitions and continuities between the prewar and the postwar, which I discussed earlier in this introduction, to scrutinize its crucially gendered aspect. The transformation of the official characterization of nationhood from a militant empire to a peace-loving democratic nation has often been represented as a change from a country of masculinized prowess to feminized innocence. This shift, moreover, was accentuated by the reconstitution of Japanese womanhood in the postwar regime. At least within the domain of representation, Japanese women as gendered and nationalized subjects, fully enfranchised by postwar reforms, became officially sanctioned and visible political actors and thereby enacted the dramatic metamorphosis of the nation’s character. At the same time, the amnes(t)ic remembering of the nation’s past has been closely linked to the production of memories of women and mothers as victims of the patriarchal and military regime prior to the war’s end, and as postwar victims of U.S. nuclear and military domination. I argue here that through this prevailing mode of remembering the nationalized Japanese women’s past—in which the maternal came to be associated with civilian innocence, peace, and victimhood—postwar Japanese womanhood became fully implicated in sustaining the myth of national innocence and victimology before, during, and after the war.

...
Like other ethnographies, this book attempts to mediate between local voices in one social context and engagements in another. Yet many premises of ethnographic writings fail when dealing with questions such as those in this book. Conventionally an ethnographer could borrow his authority from being “there,” but without being fully implicated in that local situation. He spoke both as an outsider and an eyewitness to the events described. Moreover, his objectivity was considered to derive from his position as an outsider. Yet the memories and testimonies of Hiroshima, and the state of the postcolonial, postnuclear age that they speak to, forbid virtually anyone from remaining external to this global condition. There is no space for the traditional ethnographer who can presume to be transcendent and impartial.

Nevertheless, the perspective of a different kind of outsider is one that has been consciously pursued in both the research and writing of this book—not because such a position guarantees the wertfrei objectivity of traditional ethnographers, but because it is only as an outsider that most of us can approach memories and testimonies of Hiroshima. Too often those who speak of Hiroshima’s past assume its inherent and inevitable significance. Yet for many the need to know Hiroshima’s past and present is far from self-evident. How can those who see no existential link to this place, its history and people, begin to realize that their lives are inseparably interconnected with what went on and continues to go on there? The awareness of being at once an outsider and insider seems crucial when conveying Hiroshima’s politics of memory into another context.

Finally, although the book does not go very far in making explicit comparative analyses, analogies to other locales and historical contexts—such as the innocent phantasm and self-victimology evident at Pearl Harbor’s Arizona Memorial, global tourism’s trivialization of the history of atrocities in Vietnam, the statist appropriation of Nazi Holocaust memories, and so on—were always on my mind as I described the specificities of Hiroshima. The book may be read as a parable for similar plights of memory and historical knowledge in other locations. One important role of theorization might be to call the attention of readers to analogies that they can draw for themselves regarding different contexts. To be sure, theoretical abstraction and ethnographic undertakings are both plagued by symbolic violence. Attempts to mediate for others inevitably objectify and sometimes even patronize the mediated. Yet such efforts should not be too hastily abandoned. Only through
learning the material and historical specificities of others’ experiences can we realize how we are interconnected and how we can find rallying points for political alliances. As Trinh T. Minh-ha once put it, reflexivity on “the danger of speaking for the other” does not suffice to transform the relationship between the self and other. Such a limited awareness may only serve once again “as an excuse for [our] complacent ignorance and [our] reluctance to involve [ourselves] in the issue[s]” that urgently need to be addressed in global terms.