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Crawford, Keith A. and Foster, Stuart J. (2008) *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks.* Charlotte, NC : Information Age Publishing

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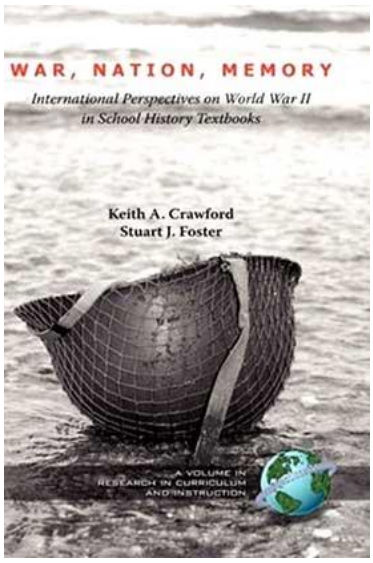
Authors Keith A. Crawford and Stuart J. Foster examine difficulties involved in history education in their 2008 publication: *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks.* They begin with the premise that textbooks are problematic. History texts fragment and anaesthetize the past, representing it superficially and without sufficient clarity.

Yet the authors' research is not driven by a desire to purge the education system of the scourge of textbooks. These, it appears, are too entrenched in contemporary schooling and policy to be easily replaced. Crawford and Foster are more concerned with problematizing *how* textbooks influence and shape national consciousness and collective memory. To what degree, in other words, does the framing of history in texts affect nationhood and citizenship?



Certainly, *War, Nation, Memory* takes the position from the start that war—cruel, harsh, but inevitable—is the stuff that builds nations. The national identity and social cohesion of a group of people are galvanized by common memories. Wars, which affect populations profoundly and in complex ways, are lynchpins. States, which shape and socialize people, use these collective memories to build a citizenry. "Americanization", for example, sanctions particular truths and perspectives at the expense of others. These authorized truths, perspectives, and memories are particularly stressed in the schools, where new and immigrant populations are made into citizens. Crawford and Foster, then, by examining textbooks from a cross-cultural perspective, are actually evaluating at the different themes, issues, and problems of interpretation comprising citizenship policy in different countries.

Their examination concentrates on China, France, Germany, Japan, England, and the United States. Textbooks from these countries are compared with regard to their treatment of the Second World War. This event, affecting and destroying more lives than any other in human history, runs as a common current through the texts of each of these nations' common identities and collected memories. It permeates our consciousness. Its framing is ideological, political, and cultural. History texts, in other words, are not neutral.

This point comprises the authors' main theme in the first chapter. History is not, despite our empiricist heritage, a retelling of the past as it actually was. It is a rational retelling of reality, but not reality in itself. This is because history comprises more than a timeline of dates and a catalogue of names. It is an interpretive retelling, which depends upon evidence and past stories for its authority. The historian, as re-teller, is entitled to speak for the past in the present. This entitlement is confined by cultural, ideological, and political parameters. Consequently, the cultural memorials transmitted by history textbooks are privileged. Their selection betrays much about our present morays and beliefs.

The text's second chapter approaches what is perhaps the most incredible event of the Second World War, the Jewish Holocaust. Museums, artists, and scholars (for starters) have wrestled with the difficulties embedded in trying to represent the complexities of this human tragedy for the last six decades. How does one represent that which defies representation? More to the point here, if teaching involves explanation, how do we explain the inexplicable? The authors engage in a comparative analysis of English and German history textbooks in order to understand how different nations grapple with the same problem. What emerges from their analysis is a sense of the similarity between German and English approaches. Both try to contextualize the rise and destructive potency of the Nationalist Socialist Party within broader socio-economic trends and issues. Both attribute responsibility for Nazi atrocities to the German people but reject moralism and guilt.

If there is a difference between the two approaches, it is in the degree to which the German texts stress the importance of critical reflection concerning this troublesome past. They seem to foster what educational historians Ken Osborne and Rosa Bruno-Jofré describe as "historical mindedness." That is, a critical orientation towards the past that entails more than the remembrance of things passed. Historical mindedness demands a commitment to examining history reflectively, as historians do, connecting historical facts to broader social, transnational, and often contemporary trends or themes.

The third chapter examines what might be considered the "flip side," namely, the Allied firebombing and destruction of Dresden. How do English history textbooks confront and explain

the "justness" of this action, the text asks. It recalls Robert McNamara's comment in the documentary *The Fog of War* wherein he noted that, had the Allied forces lost the Second World War, they would have likely been tried as war criminals for their actions in Dresden. Such trials never happened; instead history saw justice served in the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 and the Tokyo War Crimes Trial of 1948.

Dresden is framed as an example of how awful actions in wartime can be reinterpreted to serve contemporary needs. Textbooks in England vary in their coverage of the facts. This is attributed to the open textbook market in which authors and publishers are free to pursue particular foci as long as the curriculum expectations are met. The bombing of Dresden is alternatively viewed as having been justified on the grounds that it: destroyed German civilian morale, sent a message to the Soviets, and was an act of war, wherein the ends justify the means. The history texts students in England examine raise doubts concerning the ethics, morality, and strategy of the Allied forces. A patriotic allegiance to nation, for right or for wrong, and a grand narrative is alien to the English system, argue the authors of this book. Diversity, rather than uniformity, characterizes British history textbooks.

War, Nation, Memory's fourth chapter confronts wartime resistance and collaboration in France as treated in French history texts. The Vichy regime, which spanned 1940-1944, actively repressed the Resistance, collaborated with Nazi authorities, supported German ambitions, and committed numerous crimes against Jews and other minority groups. Immediately following the war, the authors argue that French textbooks conveniently withdrew into amnesia, allowing the nation to recover from the repressive memories of Vichy / Nazi rule. A heroic interpretation of the French struggle for freedom dominated the period of de Gaulle's rule; it offered a vision of the Resistance as liberating and glorious movement, buoyed by the popular support of all peoples.

Since the 19th century, the history textbook, transmitter of historical and cultural inheritance, has held high status in French schools. Production of these texts in embedded within a highly centralized system of publication, based on the Ministry of Education's curriculum and recommendations. Despite the elevated place of history, with much material to cover, little depth is offered into such events as the lead-up to the fall of France and the shortcomings of the Third Republic. The persecution of French Jews during the war receives greater attention than other topics. Revisionist histories authored by the likes of Cairns, Young, Gunsburg, Alexander, and Jackson have offered more nuanced interpretations of the Second World War experience in France. Yet the complexity, nuance, and plurality of texts do not detract from the overall message of coverage—celebratory pride for the heroic and inspiring past.

The fifth chapter of the text considers the politics of official remembrance in the People's Republic of China with regards to the Sino-Japanese war. Despite increasing political, cultural, and economic exchange between China and Japan, the war, spanning 1931-1945, provides a source of ongoing friction. Accusations of historical revisionism have been directed from each country to the opposite party. The war, characterized by startling brutality and tragedy (China's losses included, for example, 3 million soldiers and 17 million civilians), has incited great controversy with regards to the denial of documented evidence and exaggeration of facts.

History education in China is a deemed a powerful site of political and moral education. This has been particularly true in the post-Soviet era where the communist government viewed its role as necessarily opposing threats of resistance that might lead to social and economic catastrophe. Despite curriculum revisions in 2000 calling for reflexive pedagogical goals (e.g. "historical thinking"), guidelines emphasize ideological bases to history education. Public duty, socialism, responsibility, self-respect and unity for the nation, and patriotism are still regarded as the hallmarks of citizenship. Students, consequently, are encouraged to express opinions, but teachers assess learning via the identification of truth discourses emphasizing ideological correctness, skills, and ability. The Sino-Japanese war and, in particular, the Nanjing massacre, are deeply

imbedded in Chinese historical discourse. The descriptions of these events in Chinese history textbooks unfailingly posit the Japanese as brutal imperial aggressors who victimized China's peace and democracy. These descriptions have 'matured' into a hegemonic commonsense and are unquestioned.

The sixth chapter looks at the same series of events from a different perspective, examining the sense of responsibility and victimhood that is portrayed in Japanese history texts. There is a growing sense in the literature that the Japanese textbooks ignores and marginalizes aspects of the nation's imperial past that reflect badly on the country's character. This is particularly egregious, it is stated with increasing popularity, in light of the abundant evidence of wartime Japanese atrocities. Yet Crawford and Foster argue that this is only partially true. Japan's political elite cannot be accused of deliberately misinforming or hiding the past from students because, for example, references to the Nanjing massacre of 1937 are made in each of the country's officially sanctioned history texts.

But the historical narratives, including criticisms of the Japanese military, are described in identical manner. Blame is attributed to the armed forces and not to the political elite and Emperor. Claims are made that the historical details, including deaths and casualties, are unclear and that, consequently, the past is open to interpretation. Juxtaposing Japanese wrongdoing with Japanese suffering dilutes blame; particular regard is paid to the USAF bombings and to the atomic holocausts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In sum, Japanese history texts acknowledge military wrongdoing, but they frame it in descriptions that deflect attention from the government. *War, Nation, Memory* argues that the aim of 'saving face'—avoiding embarrassment, the loss of dignity, and maintaining pride—supersede other goals in Japanese historical descriptions.

Chapter 7 of *War, Nation, Memory* opens a section dealing with ideology and narrative in history instruction. It concentrates on portrayals of the Second World War in United States textbooks. There has been no shortage of military and armed conflict in U.S. history, but World War II is set apart because it is perceived almost universally as fundamentally just and noble. It represents the sacrifices that American people will undergo in order to uphold their commitment to freedom and democracy. The Second World War, however tragic and destructive, is like a morality tale that sees the forces of evil—tyranny, dictatorship, and oppression—fall before the awesome power of free, unified people.

The authors identify four characteristics of U.S. history textbooks, garnered from close analysis of four textbooks that are widely used in the country. The first of these themes is idealism; it portrays a principled and honorable U.S. nation that fought to make the world a better place. The second characteristic is benevolence and power; a commitment to generously supporting just causes with its mighty forces. A third characteristic is unity and patriotism; the attack on Pearly Harbor is portrayed as a rallying point for the entire nation and a call to arms. The fourth and final characteristic of U.S. textbooks is a stress on nationalistic perspectives; the points of views offered are distinctly and fundamentally American.

Crawford and Foster offer three interrelated explanations for the narrow geopolitical perspective and nationalistic portrayals of the Second World War offered by American history textbooks. The first relates to the nature of the textbook industry in the U.S.; despite being a free market, publishers are motivated by profits. Pressure groups and political lobbying demand that textbooks offend as few interests as possible. Consequently, conciliatory and limited explanations of controversial American actions during the war, including the internment of Japanese-Americans and the dropping of atomic bombs, are offered.

The second explanation involves the perceived aim of history as ensuring the creation of a shared national community. A master narrative of progress and freedom dominates American culture and media. Particularly in a melting pot model of citizenship, where Americanization of immigrants

and children is deemed essential, history provides a well of common purpose and identity. Unity, nationhood, and successes are stressed over fragmentation, diversity, and defeats.

The final explanation, linked to the first two, implicates the political influence of republican values and conservative values. Celebrating U.S. achievements is important for fostering patriotism and preservation of 'traditional' American values. The production of a single 'best story' narrative championing achievements and successes is preferred to the problematizing of the past and the critique of tradition. History is a justification for the justness, nobility, and heroism of Americans.

The eighth chapter of the book offers an historical survey of the ways that women during World War II have been portrayed in British textbooks between 1942-2004. The authors argue that textbooks published in the last decade offered more enlightened and comprehensive understandings of women's roles during the Second World War. There has been progress over the past sixty years in terms of the range of topics and lines of text devoted to women in history texts. By the 1980s, social history and multiple, alternative, and oppositional views of the past, including feminist interpretations, were emphasized at the expense of more traditional historical explanations. Shortcomings in coverage of women's experience persist, particularly with respect to explorations of women's' roles in post-war society and the social movement towards greater gender equality.

The book's ninth chapter and postscript are heavily concerned with *exclusion* in historical explanations. Inclusion of something often comes at the expense of something else. Writing one history involves un-writing a different history. What is marginalized, lost, or ignored? What is emphasized, found, and stressed? World War II, as a piece of history entrenched in the cultural memories of so many people and nations, serves as an example of how disparate and selective recollections can be propagated in order to serve particular needs and agendas. There is a need to get beyond understandings of history forged within the boundaries of national consciousness, orientation, and ideology, argue Crawford and Foster. The past can best be understood as an intricate web of interdependent experiences. Disparate catalogues of national events do not suffice in portraying the complexity of our past.

About the Reviewer

Theodore Christou is a Ph.D. Candidate, studying curriculum history at Queen's University's Faculty of Education. His research interests presently concern the unravelling of Progressive Education as related to the Canadian educational context during the interwar period. Theodore is also a published poet and author. He resides in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

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