Politics of the Visible and the Invisible
War Images in Japanese and American Textbooks

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Abstract • In this article, we analyze and compare photographic images from some of the most widely circulated Japanese and American high school history textbooks regarding their treatment of the Pacific War. We focus on the visual component of war technology, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the visibility or invisibility of women, especially regarding the comfort women issue. We argue that images in the textbooks are articulated by a dialectic relationship between the visible and the invisible as a political question, thinking about the “off-screen space” as the structural principle of what we see. The textbooks’ visual memories about the Pacific War are not only influenced by what is shown but also by what is omitted and virtually depicted in the surrounding media.

Keywords • atomic bomb, comfort women, Japan, USA, visual memory, visual war technology

What Does History Want from Images?

The field of visual studies has seen long and intense conversations about the relationship between image and text. In his essay series Picture Theory, W. J. T. Mitchell suggests that the relationship between the visual and the discursive can be understood as a dialectical one. In Mitchell’s theory, the picture is seen, postlinguistically and postsemiotically, as “a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality.”1 In particular, there has been renewed interest in the various mediations and communication contexts in which images operate; that is, in the “web of meaning”2 in which a complex series of factors (such as agency, technique, and power) affects the functioning of images.

In this article, we explore the constitutive and reinforcing role that images have in some of the most widely used educational materials at the high school level in Japan and the United States that deal with the historical memory of the Pacific War (1941–1945).

Since there are multiple war scenarios and depictions of the war, we needed to delimit the scope of our analysis. We analyze and compare the conflict under three thematic headings, developed from the section “Visual Technologies and Massive Violence” (in this article). These headings include the visual component of war technology and its consequences.
in the imaginary of the enemy and war victims; the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a specific case of visual distance and proximity and the visibility or invisibility of women, especially regarding the issue of “comfort women.”

In order to emphasize that textbooks function not in an isolated context but in conjunction with other types of media, we also include a reference to the uses of images of pop culture products in educational systems.

Our analysis draws on the work of Lior Zylberman and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca. The scholarly investigation of images related to genocide and mass violence, they have argued, should consider both the power and the limits of images, their circulation and narratives and the historicity of what the images show and of the context in which they were produced. This implies considering the identity of the photographers and the way in which they view the scene; their spatial and temporal conditions in relation to the events; their degree of involvement; and the way in which the narrative acts as a form of interpretation. Thus, to ponder images representing genocide and atrocity does not consist of viewing such images as transparent pieces of data, as unmarked instruments, but rather to observe them as historical products of multiple levels. In accordance with their origin and the context they were produced in, in terms of their circulation, normative capacity and heritage. How they are adapted in other directions, and so on.

We suggest that, particularly in images related to the learning of history, the dialectic of the visible and the invisible has direct implications for the configuration of possible collective memories. In order to comprehensively analyze these images, one needs to interpret them in the context of their transmission and to probe the extent to which they manage to crack their “anchorage,” thus unveiling the conditions under which the images are produced and operate.

To start off, we will describe our corpus and explain our sampling choices. The second section will provide an overview of the role of pop images in Japanese and US visual and audiovisual culture. Although a comprehensive investigation would require a description of the classroom uses of films, manga and/or comics (as well as other pop culture products), we assume that this heterogeneity of visual cultures represents the main frame of reference needed in order to understand how images of the Pacific War are used in textbooks.

The Corpus

For Japan, we decided to analyze the three most widely adopted titles in high schools. These are Yamakawa World History B from 2021 (herein-
after YWHB); Yamakawa Japanese History B from 2020 (YJHB); and Tokyo Shoseki Japanese History B from 2021 (TJHB). We also make comments on a “teaching guide” produced by the China-Japan-Korea Common History Text Tri-National Committee, entitled A History to Open the Future: Modern East Asian History and Regional Reconciliation (hereinafter A History…). Although it is not strictly speaking a textbook and has no direct impact on the classroom, it is one of the few tangible results of the multiple attempts at regional reconciliation in Northeast Asia after the war.

In the United States, there is no centralized entity equivalent to the Japanese Ministry of Education that would be in charge of preparing general guides and approving editorial proposals. Publishers tend to adapt their books to the interests and needs of different states. We decided to include one textbook for each of the two most populous US states. For California, we selected Impact. California Social Studies. World History, Culture, & Geography. The Modern World from 2019 (hereinafter: IMPACT), as it allowed us to draw on internal data from its publisher, McGraw Hill. For Texas, we chose The American Pageant (hereinafter TAP) because it has been shown to be one of the most read in the United States during the last decade.

History, Pop, and Visual Culture

Japan and the United States are emblematic cases of a massive circulation of images. In the wake of ultranationalist movements around Europe and Asia, governments and political elites around the world became aware of the propaganda potential of cinema. Japan and the United States were no exception. In the Japanese context, an emblematic example is Momotaro, Sacred Sailors (Momotaro Umi No Shinpei, Japan 1945, directed by Mitsuyo Seo), a propaganda animated film produced by Shôchiku under the supervision of the Minister of the Navy as part of ideological efforts during the Pacific War. In 1984, Shôchiku re-released the film in theaters in Tokyo. Currently it is possible to find it on YouTube. Scott Nygren describes this kind of film as the “militarization of childhood” during war, with the help of cinema.

Due to their popularity in Japan, manga and anime have been some of the main media in which images of destruction, the physical deterioration of the victims, and even the testimony of survivors (for example, Barefoot Gen) have been represented. These images are a ubiquitous part of war imagery despite their absence in textbooks. According to Jaqueline Berndt, the popularity of manga has caused it to be frequently used as a pedagogical tool to teach the history of the war and to portray its victims.

In the United States, Hollywood historiography offers a well documented overview of the relationship between the US government...
and military, and film production. As in Japan, propaganda films and newsreels were produced on a large scale during the Second World War. The Hollywood machinery continues, until today, to exploit many of the symbolic figures that were gestated in the context of the war. Perhaps the clearest example is the character of Captain America (Timely Comics, 1941), a legendary patriot superhero who fought, in his early days, against the Axis powers.

Like Captain America, other figures that are ubiquitous on the big screen today were born during the Second World War, in the golden age of the comics industry. Unlike Momotaro, racial stereotypes of the enemy are evident in US war propaganda. Notable is the orientalism of the animated short film Japoteurs (in the Superman series), released in theaters by Paramount Pictures on 18 September 1942 and currently available on YouTube.

The sixtieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor provides relatively recent examples of Hollywood’s role in the great American historical narrative. In early 2001, the American public was “crammed with books, movies, television and radio on Pearl Harbor.” The film with the greatest media impact was Disney’s Pearl Harbor (USA 2001, directed by Jerry Bruckheimer). Alan S. Marcus found that 61 percent of high school pupils had seen the film that year, prompting him to state that “interpreting Hollywood’s version of history in the classroom is more important than ever.”

It will come as no surprise, then, that textbooks tell the story of America’s involvement in the Second World War in archetypal heroic fashion. As in Japan, the pedagogical uses of nonfiction graphic novels in the United States have been increasingly legitimized. One example directly related to the Pacific War is Jim Ottaviani’s Fallout: J. Robert Oppenheimer, Leo Szilard, and the Political Science of the Atomic Bomb.

Visual Technologies and Massive Violence

War at a Distance

Zylberman and Sánchez-Biosca distinguish between “at least three distinct modalities which establish, in semiotic terms, the relationship between the subject and the object of the representation [of violence]: images by the perpetrators, images by liberators, and images by direct witnesses.” Each of these modalities has its implications for historical memories. Artists such as Harun Farocki have dedicated a large part of their work to a critical reflection on visual and audiovisual technologies as structuring mediations, not only of the imaginaries but also of the exercise and execution of war. Specifically on the Second World War, there are several investigations about the importance of photographic
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technique for military strategy as well as its role in a new type of mass violence based on “distance.”

One of Farocki’s arguments is that the perpetrator’s gaze has paradoxically shifted to inscription surfaces characterized by the invisibility of the victims in a technical sense.

The chapter dedicated to the Second World War in IMPACT begins, in fact, with a small section on reconnaissance photographs as fundamental tools in the victories and defeats of the different sides. The naturalization of technique and vision was a factor that determined the new logic of a war that was to be decided by air attacks, and not on land or sea. In this case, many of the images are records and documents produced by the perpetrators’ apparatus, which entails a particular analysis of photographic technology. Thus, these off-screen processes that ultimately determine what we see in photographs are fundamental in order to understand agencies and power relations.

If photography is a “footprint,” in the Peircean sense, that is true not only in relation to the object in front of the camera but also in relation to the conditions of photographic production. In this sense, the dialectic of the visible and the invisible is much more complex than the mere selection of a frame. The danger in naturalizing technique and vision is that one may overlook the gestural character of photographic production, which registers not only objects and subjects but also a gaze and a relationship of power between them.

In Chapter 12 of IMPACT, “World War II and Holocaust,” five photos are related to Japan and the Pacific War. The captions of three of these images are relevant in order to discuss the differences between the textbooks. These captions are “B-29 Superfortresses fly over Mount Fuji en route to Tokyo”; “After millions of lives were lost in the Pacific Theater of WWII, the Japanese finally agreed to unconditional surrender” (the only color photograph); and “Of Hiroshima’s 350,000 inhabitants, 190,000 died—some immediately and others after suffering the effects of radiation.” These images, which are not credited, are either aerial photographs or photographs taken from a high and distant point of view. We will proceed with a brief description of each of them, followed by a comparison with other textbooks.

The first image, which shows seven B-29s flying over Mount Fuji, is representative of American aerial photography. In this image, the balanced composition stands out. The distribution of the visual weight of the different elements allows Mount Fuji to be reframed in the background. The photographer managed to capture a scene that stands out for its aesthetics rather than for the information it provides regarding the events that gave rise to it. This photograph from the Bettmann Archive, dated 29 April 1945, is described very characteristically on the official Getty Images site as “B-29 Superfortresses wing gracefully over snow-covered Mount Fuji, Japan’s sacred mountain, en route to Tokyo during recent
raid on the Nip capital.” The “graceful” formation of the planes and the sacred character of the mountain are superimposed on the context of the deadly attacks on the Japanese capital in the first months of 1945. Aerial photography includes additional elements such as golden ratio compositions, reframing, inclusion of reverse shots through shadows, reflections, and other plastic effects that indicate specific production conditions. The treatment of these images within textbooks tends to normalize such visual representations and, therefore, the corresponding historical narrative. The absence of visible subjects or of representations of the consequences of the air raids depersonalizes the image, making it look more like a landscape photo than a reconnaissance photo.

The second image, which appears at the beginning of the section “World War II Ends,” is one of the photographs taken on 2 September 1945 when, aboard the USS Missouri, the Chief of the Japanese Army’s General Staff, Yoshijirō Umezu, signed the instrument of Japan’s surrender to the Allied forces. Although this image, like the first one, is not credited, the location of the photographer can be deduced due to the narrow, angled point of view. Other photographs of the event allow us to observe different photographers located on the upper decks. From this “off-screen” it can be deduced that the surrender was sufficiently covered by the international press (that is, by “witnesses” and “liberators”). Two graphic resources provide information about Adolf Hitler and Douglas McArthur. However, the names of Umezu and Mamoru Shigemitsu (the Japanese Foreign Minister, who was also present at the signing of the surrender) are omitted from the entire book. The name of the emperor, Hirohito, is mentioned earlier to explain that, although he had knowledge of the military actions of the 1930s and had approved them, he did not really have control over the armed forces. Finally, the authors mention that the Japanese emperor was forced to accept unconditional surrender after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The photograph in the textbook is preceded by the following entry from Harry Truman’s journal.

Even if Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new….It’s certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler’s crowd or Stalin’s did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful.

In this quote one sees how the enemies are constructed (Hitler, Stalin, and the “Japs”). Although the image records a specific person signing the surrender, the caption merely states that “the Japanese finally agreed to unconditional surrender.” In both academia and public discussion, there is an ongoing debate about the direct and indirect perpetrators.
of what are now called “war crimes” as well as their prosecution in the Tokyo Trial.\textsuperscript{43} The loss of proper identification of those responsible for starting, continuing, and ending the war in Japan does not contribute to the clarification and compensation that many of the victims of the military regime continue to demand. The set of photographs described before stands out for that loss of identification because there are no visible subjects (or faces), they are not individualized, or the text does not offer information about who appears in the image or why. This is remarkable because it contrasts with the textual and visual narrative that is built around the United States, Europe, and their protagonists in the events of the war. The racism that is evident in Truman’s journal also appears to underlie this thinking about Japan as an entity where subjects are “often left out.”\textsuperscript{44}

The last image is a photograph\textsuperscript{45} attributed to the collection of the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima (epa/Corbis). This photograph was produced by the US Army on 6 August 1945 after dropping the atomic bomb on the city. Thus, it is an image produced by the perpetrators’ apparatus. The reconnaissance photographers seated in one of the B-29 planes that accompanied the Enola Gay\textsuperscript{46} were in charge of recording the aerial view of Hiroshima before and after the bombing. “Perfect visibility” made it possible for the bomb to be dropped\textsuperscript{47} and enabled the photographers to produce the main iconographic motif that has come to represent Hiroshima (distant and impersonal evidence of the disappearance of a complete city and its inhabitants).

We want to highlight an historical paradox. Images of the atomic bombing that were produced by the perpetrators’ apparatus via the use of visual technologies of war are currently used to denounce mass violence (in general, without naming specific perpetrators) and to promote the pacifism that developed in Japan during the postwar period (with encouragement from the United States).\textsuperscript{48}

In the photos selected to represent other aspects of the Second World War, individual subjects are always distinguishable. Examples include images of German soldiers during the invasion of Poland\textsuperscript{49} or in the ruins of European cities\textsuperscript{50}; Jewish victims of concentration camps looking into the camera\textsuperscript{51}; a civilian wandering among the remains of Coventry Cathedral\textsuperscript{52}; and, of course, Roosevelt and Hitler. In contrast, representations of Japan and the conflicts it was involved in seem to dispense with individual subjects.

\textit{Agencies, Power, and Ground Battles}

In clear contrast to the US textbooks, three Japanese textbooks prominently show the human cost of the war, not only regarding the atomic
bombings but also regarding the victims of Japanese militarism. *TJHB* shows an image of the forced conscription of residents in the occupied territories for the reconstruction of the Burma-Thailand railway.\textsuperscript{53} Japanese victims are shown in photographs of the aftermath of the Tokyo air raid (March 1945)\textsuperscript{54} and of a couple of small children taking refuge in a grave during the Battle of Okinawa.\textsuperscript{55} All these photographs are taken in long and medium shots with enough closeness to individually distinguish each of the subjects. In addition, the captions in *YWHB* provide enough information to prevent events from appearing to unfold automatically. However, there are no photographs of those responsible for Japanese military activities in times of imperialism and war.

Another difference within the visual treatment of the Pacific War in *IMPACT* is that while the American book favors “clean/good,” strategic and distance warfare,\textsuperscript{56} the Japanese textbooks approach the soldiers as subjects who exist in the same space as the victims. *TJHB* shows a photograph of Japanese troops attacking Burmese oil fields\textsuperscript{57} and another photograph of American soldiers attacking with a flamethrower during the Battle of Okinawa. This last image appears on the same page as the photograph of the children hiding in a grave. The similarity between the framing (both images are medium shots) and the gestural presence of the photographer at ground level allow us to imagine the scene from a more “human” and less automatized space-time.

### Hiroshima and Nagasaki

#### Establishing Shot

In *YJHB* there are a couple of photographs that reveal the devastation of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki (as indicated by their respective captions). None of the images show direct victims (survivors) of the bombings, but undoubtedly their emphasis on desolation allows a very different approach from that of the aerial photographs of the US military. The image of Hiroshima that Shigeo Hayashi captured with a wide-angle lens\textsuperscript{58} covers a wider field than that of “normal vision.” As the caption of a similar photograph in *TAP*\textsuperscript{59} summarizes, the images attempt to record the “almost incomprehensible destructive power of history’s first atomic bomb.” This degree of destruction, never seen before, challenged the limits of representation. If the aerial photographs taken at a zenith angle over Hiroshima immediately before and after the bombing\textsuperscript{60} noted an instantaneous break in the global vision and distanced the eye from destruction, Hayashi’s photographs indicate a dissonance between an immeasurable visual reality and the limits of a frame.
**Medium Shot**

In *YWHB* we find a photograph of the A-bomb Dome (*Genbaku Dōmu*). The image was taken by the US Army in November 1945 and is part of The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum’s collection. The figure of the dome, also represented in one photograph in *TJHB*, currently stands as the background of an urban palimpsest usually viewed from the bank of the river where the Peace Memorial Park is located. The preservation of the ruined building is clearly a memorial exercise that anchors a dialectical narrative about the city of Hiroshima. At the same time it is a reminder of the “national trauma” and a synthesis of the pacifist discourse that emerged in the country during the postwar period.

**Close-up**

Although there are several pieces of photographic and film evidence of survivors of the atomic bombings, of the so-called black rains and of the effects of radiation (which were incomprehensible at the time), none of the textbooks shows them. In the case of Japan, the Ministry of Education may limit the use of such images due to their harshness. The paradox is that these images are widely used in fiction and non-fiction films (both Japanese and foreign), as well as in manga and anime and on the web. As Hashimoto states, the “national trauma” continues to be elaborated from images and objects that shape daily life. These representations can complement and/or contradict the narrative of textbooks.

The representation of the atomic bombing has been of such importance in Japanese society that since 1945, four different schools of *genbaku manga* or “atomic bomb manga” emerged. Masashi Ichiki traces the development of different notions of national victimization in the various types of *genbaku manga*, which have played a fundamental role in what she calls “the national myth of the victim.” The initial period (from 1945 to 1954) saw the first graphical representations of the bomb. This period is characterized by its humor and irreverent tone. Certain works from that time now appear somewhat insensitive. At times the bomb itself was not depicted; instead, comic allusion was made to its great destructive power.

However, this light and humorous representation changed when manga for girls hybridized with *genbaku manga*. This began with the well-known real case of Sadako Sasaki. Her story deeply affected the Japanese public, and during the golden years of *genbaku manga* (from 1954 to 1973), a subgenre emerged in which the protagonists were young teenagers who saw their lives interrupted and their dreams shattered by a diagnosis of leukemia or “atomic bomb disease.”
It is from 1973 that the genre begins to be known by the name of *genbaku manga*, officially inaugurated by *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) by Keiji Nakazawa, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing. After Nakazawa, the earlier romanticized or insensitive representations of victims gave way to cruel and realistic portraits that would shape the canonical image of the atomic bombing. Over time, this type of manga came to be considered very political and controversial, and the subject of the bomb was shelved until artists such as Fumiyo Kōno (*In this corner of the world*) and Machiko Kyō (*Cocoon*) took it up again. These artists brought back young female protagonists, but rather than portraying them as tragic and melodramatic heroines, they emphasized the female experience of war and the atomic bomb.

### Women and War Images

Throughout *IMPACT* and *TAP*, the authors emphasize the difference between female empowerment in the United States or Europe (an empowerment driven by war) and the passivity of Japanese women. Neither book in any way represents the fact that Japanese women also played an active role in wartime. In contrast, *TJHB* and *A History*... seek to visually highlight the direct participation of women in the historical process. While this unbalanced representation would in itself merit an analysis, for reasons of length we will concentrate, in this brief epilogue, on the issue of “comfort women.”

### The Unknown Victim

The sexual slavery system known under the euphemism “comfort women” is perhaps the most systematic manifestation of gendered violence against women during the twentieth century. None of the books addresses the issue with pictures. We are at a borderline moment in which the surviving victims of the deceptive and/or forced recruitment of hundreds of thousands of women by the Japanese military are in their last years of their lives. Fortunately, many documentary filmmakers and manga artists have been interested in collecting the testimonies of comfort women.67

### Comfort Women in Textbooks

Why is the absence of comfort women from textbooks relevant? In 2015, after the last round of diplomatic negotiations between Japan and
South Korea, the issue was officially closed between the two countries. However, South Korean victims have spoken out against an intergovernmental agreement that does not take their opinion into account, as we can see in many news reports.68

One of the main claims of the activists on behalf of comfort women is that Japan has made ambiguous pronouncements about the responsibility of the state and the military regarding the sexual slavery system. Revisionist groups continue to claim that there is no evidence that comfort women were forcibly recruited. If textbooks continue to address the issue in general terms, there is a risk of perpetuating ambiguity and the non-recognition of women’s individual condition as victims.

By contrast, A History… includes at least three different photographs of victims. One of them was made by the “liberators.” Its caption reads, “‘Four Korean Comfort Women,’ taken by US military photographer, Lâmèng, Yunnan Province, China, September 1944. Pak Yōngsim (pregnant, right), currently living in North Korea, testified at the Women’s Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery in 2000.” Like many others, the image circulates online.69 The other images are recent portraits of Zhu Qiaomei of Chongmíngdao (Shanghai, deceased) and Hak-sun Kim (South Korea).

Faces have become an obligatory signifier in social and artistic activism70 against forced disappearances and other types of collective violence. For this reason, we consider that the individualization of comfort women would restore the personal foundation of politics, reconfiguring their place in historical memory (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Comfort women in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul in August 2011 (© Claire Solery, CC BY-SA 3.0).](image-url)
Conclusion

We have argued that textbook images help to articulate a sense of war memory by establishing a dialectic relationship between the visible and the invisible on multiple levels. This relationship reproduces specific manners of interpreting the war and women’s roles, and defines the limits of the victims, heroes, and villains for new generations. The impact of (visual and audiovisual) popular culture and its multiple representations of historical events makes this understanding even more complex.

Images can break a narrative that reduces complex events (involving multiple subjects, agencies, and power relations between perpetrators, liberators, witnesses, and victims) to single causes, often without clarifying their effects. The decisions of governments, elites, and private organizations about how to understand and teach the past often consciously ignore dissenting views and counternarratives, which reveal that the past, according to Walter Benjamin, is not something that can be simply “narrated” in just one way.71

Our analysis of American textbooks revealed that, notwithstanding The American Pageant’s attempt to position the Japanese as “Makers of America,” they are far from solving the problem of a homogenizing depiction of a Japanese national essence. The depersonalized visual treatment of the Pacific War in the McGraw Hill textbook not only presents a dis tanced and “clean/good” conception of war (fostered by visual recognition technologies) but also omits the bodies and faces of victims and perpetrators. “The Japanese” are portrayed as driven by a single will, and the effects of war are depicted in technological terms.

By contrast, the Japanese textbooks attempt to embody events in subjects. Japan’s main cities were devastated by bombardments, and the civilian population was severely affected by ground battles. For the Japanese, the war was fought on their territory, while for the Americans, it was fought in a foreign land and in their colonies. However, the visual omission of those responsible for Japan’s military actions reinforces the ambiguity of official narratives on historical memory.

It is remarkable that the US textbooks contain no pictures produced during the Allied occupation of Japan (the Genbaku Domu would be an exception) and of the other US colonies in the Pacific, which suffered attacks as damaging as Pearl Harbor. Equally surprising is the scarcity of visual references to the internment of Japanese Americans, in the West Coast camps.

The different visual treatments in the textbooks reflect each country’s visual traditions. The Hollywood-style heroic war narrative contrasts with the censorship Japan faced during American occupation, which created a physical, technological, and historical lag in the pop cultural elaboration of Japan’s national trauma. The signifiers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
arrived displaced in time, so that to the present day, artists, filmmakers, and other image producers continue to wonder about the significance of a war that has been symbolized anachronistically.

Finally, for us it is very important to highlight the absence of images of the so-called comfort women. To recognize them as victims and to show their faces is to reintroduce them into a space from which they have been systematically exiled.

Understanding who produced an image and why, and how it is that it has come down to us in a specific context, reveals the web of meaning that its pictorial condition enables. Our research shows that, by omitting the identifying data of the images (author, date, place, publication medium), textbook authors not only hinder the comprehensive analysis of these images but also naturalize them. An unidentified image is presented as an automatic and transparent fact, rather than as the representation of a specific subject in a specific context. Identifying and locating images in their historicity would allow them to be interpreted as images, and not as extensions of texts. For us, it is fundamental to reflect on the visible and the invisible, not only as an aesthetic matter but also as a political question. By thinking about the “off-screen space” as the structural principle of what we see, we can find the invisible in the visible—in gazes, techniques, gestures, silence, space, and time.

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Notes


2. Laura González Flores, *La fotografía ha muerto, ¡viva la fotografía!: textos sobre teoría fotográfica* [Photography is dead, long live photography!: Texts on photographic theory] (Mexico City: Herder, 2018).

3. Since the 1980s, textbooks in Japan have been at the heart of Tokyo’s diplomatic tensions with its neighbors, especially the People’s Republic of China and South Korea. There have been controversies over the language used, proposed and approved by the Ministry of Education and the publishers. Criticism from civil society groups and the governments of China and South Korea has led to backlash in the form of Japanese nationalist groups that submit textbook proposals to the Ministry, seeking to whitewash some terms associated with the war, such as “comfort women.” These proposals, in turn, are routinely criticized by neighboring countries, which has given the textbook controversy global importance. For more details about this issue, see Yoshida Yutaka, “Debates Over Historical Consciousness,” in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese History*, ed. Christopher W. A. Szpilman and Sven Saaler (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2018), 403–420; Hatano Sumio, “History and the State in Postwar Japan,” in ibid., 421–439 and Hiro Saito, *The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017).

4. In *The American Pageant* a special section is dedicated to Japanese migration to the United States (“Makers of America”), the racist anti-Japanese campaign initiated in the 1920s, and the relocation of Japanese-American communities to internment camps on the West Coast. Because of length limitations, it was not possible to include an analysis of the photographs shown in that section. We want to highlight the work of photographer Toyo Miyatake; although he began to document the camps clandestinely as an intern, later he received special permission to take photographs. Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams also documented the internment of Japanese Americans.


9. The China-Japan-South Korea Common History Text Tri-National Committee, *A History to Open the Future: Modern East Asian History and Regional
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Reconciliation, trans. University of Hawai‘i at Manoa School of Pacific and Asian Studies (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 2015).


11. Kyoko Oshima, “Nihon to Amerika no kyōkasho de wa, taheiyōsensō o dō oshiite iru ka.” For another recent work about the way in which textbooks are edited and approved, see Shin and Sneider, History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia.


14. For a complete study that collected data from the Texas Education Agency regarding the purchase and adoption of different publishers’ products, see Li Lucy, Dorottya Demszky, Patricia Bromley, and Dan Jurafsky, “Content Analysis of Textbooks via Natural Language Processing: Findings on Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in Texas U.S. History Textbooks.” AERA Open 6, no. 3 (2020): 1–27, here 3, doi: 10.1177/2332858420940312.

15. Kyoko Oshima, “Nihon to Amerika”; Shin and Sneider, History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia.


19. Captain America has appeared in more than a dozen television series and in several animated films. Over the last decade, he has been featured in over a dozen live action films, in more than twenty video games, and in countless merchandising products.

20. Clément Chéroux, “¿Qué hemos visto del 11 de septiembre?” [What have we seen of September 11?], in Cuando las imágenes tocan lo real (Madrid: Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2013), 63.

21. Chéroux also mentions the publication of James Bradley’s book, later adapted by Clint Eastwood (Letters from Iwo Jima, 2006).
26. Sánchez-Biosca and Zylberman, “Reflections,” 10. A distinction must be made between direct perpetrators and other actors who have collaborated directly or indirectly in acts of mass violence. In order to include these agents in the category proposed by the authors, we will use the term “perpetrators’ apparatus.”
29. Harun Farocki, *Desconfiar de las imágenes* [Distrust images], translated by Julia Giser (Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2013), 149.
30. Colonel Roy M. Stanley, *Intelligence Images from the Eastern Front (Looking Down on War)* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2016); Bowman, *Mosquito Photo-Reconnaissance Units*.
32. World History Archive, ibid., 469.
33. Peace Memorial Collection, ibid., 473.
36. Even though a secondary school textbook does not necessarily have the purpose of problematizing images, for us it is important to analyze their use as a discursive act that implies, as in a text, a particular relation between subjects, actions, and objects.
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38. Ibid., 452, 453.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 445.
41. Ibid., 473.
42. Ibid., 469.
43. Official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which houses the names of war criminals, have sparked more than one diplomatic disagreement.
45. According to recent research, the cloud appearing in the picture is not “the mushroom cloud,” but “a smoke plume from the fires that followed.” Kevin Roark, in “The Hiroshima Mushroom Cloud That Wasn’t,” accessed 21 January 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/24/science/hiroshima-atomic-bomb-mushroom-cloud.html.
46. Enola Gay is the name of the B-29 superfortress commanded by Colonel Paul Tibbets that dropped the atomic bomb Little Boy on Hiroshima.
47. Harwood, World War II from Above, 369.
49. Ibid., 440.
50. Ibid., 447.
51. Ibid., 437, 463.
52. Ibid., 461.
53. TJHB, 227.
54. Ibid., 229.
55. This image is inevitably associated with Isao Takahata’s film The Tomb of the Fireflies (1988).
56. It should be noted that the US government limited the visibility of its own victims and prohibited the transmission of documents on the massive violence perpetrated by its army against civilians in Japan, following the “good war” narrative.
57. Ibid., 227.
58. In September 1945, Shigeo Hayashi was one of the two photographers assigned by the Special Committee for the Investigation of A-bomb Damages to document the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
61. “A cloud rises following the explosion of an atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945”, U.S. Army, NBC News, accessed 28 September
62. Akiko Hashimoto points out that in Japan, there is a heterogeneity of war memories, which shows that collective memories are “selective,” according to different conditions in which the past is remembered. See Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). On Hiroshima’s significance see Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999).


65. During the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, the American censorship apparatus almost entirely limited graphical representations of the atomic bomb.

66. Ichiki, “Embracing the Victimhood.”

67. See In the Name of the Emperor (Canada 1998, directed by Nancy Tong and Christine Choy) and *Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue* (USA 2018, directed by Miki Dezaki).


70. In Mexico, for example, the forced disappearance of forty-three students from a teachers’ college in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, in 2014 has left a large visual archive of demonstrations led by the parents of the victims, in which the faces and names of each of the students is the main and most forceful form of protest. Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei dedicated one of his most recent works to building the faces of each of the missing students with Legos. This work was part of the exhibition *Resetting Memories* (University Museum of Contemporary Art, Ciudad de México, 2019), accessed 28 September 2021, https://muac.unam.mx/exposicion/ai-weiwei.
Textbook Bibliography


