

The Concentric Circles of Memory

Mehak Burza

Mark Celinscak and Mehnaz Afridi, eds. *Global Approaches to the Holocaust: Memory, History, and Representation*. University of Nebraska Press, 312pp., \$35 paper.

C ELINSCAK AND AFRIDI'S BOOK CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT and timely intervention in contemporary Holocaust studies that reflects the field's increasing engagement with global perspectives. While Holocaust scholarship has traditionally remained anchored within a predominantly European framework, this volume seeks to recalibrate that orientation by foregrounding the diverse ways in which the Holocaust is remembered, interpreted, and mobilized across a wide array of cultural and geopolitical contexts. Rather than treating the Holocaust as a geographically contained European event, the volume positions it as a phenomenon whose memory, interpretation, and ethical implications extend far beyond its original spatial and temporal boundaries. In doing so, the collection not only broadens the geographical scope of the field, but also underscores the fluidity of its interpretive frameworks.

Organized into three thematic sections on memory, history, and representation, the volume offers a structured yet capacious framework for examining the Holocaust beyond its conventional boundaries. Each section engages a distinct dimension of scholarly inquiry while collectively reinforcing the editors' central premise: that the Holocaust functions not merely as a historical event, but as a globally circulating point of reference through which societies negotiate questions of identity, morality, and historical responsibility.

THE editors' introduction, "Series of Concentric Circles," provides a particularly strong conceptual foundation for the volume. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Alvin Rosenfeld and Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, Celinscak and Afridi advance the argument that Holocaust memory has expanded outward in successive layers, much like concentric circles, radiating from its European epicenter to encompass global audiences, institutions, and narratives. This metaphor is not merely illustrative; rather, it functions as an organizing principle that shapes the intellectual architecture of the collection. At its core, the introduction advances the claim that an event so deeply embedded in European history can be meaningfully remembered across diverse cultural, national, and geographic contexts.

Importantly, the introduction also challenges conventional boundaries of Holocaust historiography by expanding both its spatial and temporal parameters, suggesting that the Holocaust should not be confined to Europe between 1941 and 1945, but instead understood in relation to prewar developments, global wartime experiences, and postwar memory cultures. References to sites of remembrance in locations such as Japan, as well as transnational narratives like those of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese diplomat in Lithuania who helped thousands of Jewish refugees escape Europe, and the *MS St. Louis*, whose 900 refugee passengers were refused entry to Cuba, the U.S. and Canada in 1939, underscore how Holocaust memory circulates globally and acquires new meanings across different contexts. In this sense, the introduction does more than frame the volume—it actively reconfigures the contours of Holocaust studies itself.

The section on "Memory" exemplifies this global approach by foregrounding the constructed and contingent nature of Holocaust remembrance. Rather than positing memory as a stable or universally transmitted phenomenon, the contributors demonstrate how it is actively mediated through local histories, political exigencies, and through cultural narratives. Shirli Gilbert's chapter on South Africa highlights the intersections between Holocaust memory and the legacy of apartheid, demonstrating how different histories of oppression can inform one another without collapsing into equivalence. Similarly, Roni Mikel-Arieli's discussion of Mauritius situates Holocaust memory within the island's colonial and postcolonial history, emphasizing the entanglement of Jewish displacement with broader narratives of slavery and imperial violence.

The chapter on Japan, by Rotem Kowner and Ran Zwigenberg, is illustrative of the editors' "concentric circles" model. By examining how the Holocaust is remembered through figures such as Sugihara, the authors show how global memory is often mediated through local narratives that emphasize moral action and humanitarianism. This reflects a broader pattern identified in the introduction: Holocaust memory is not simply transferred from one context to another but is actively reshaped in ways that resonate with local histories and values.

The Holocaust functions not merely as a historical event, but as a globally circulating point of reference through which societies negotiate questions of identity, morality, and historical responsibility.

The Latin American case studies further reinforce this argument. Emmanuel Kahan and Yael Siman's comparative analysis of Argentina and Mexico explores how national actors and institutions shape Holocaust memory, while Nancy Nicholls Lopeandía's analysis of Chile compellingly illustrates how Holocaust memory is reconfigured through the lens of state violence, as testimonial narratives intersect with the legacy of dictatorship and are reshaped within new historical and political contexts. Collectively, these essays underscore the editors' claim that memory is dynamic, constructed, and deeply embedded in specific social and political contexts.

The section on "History" extends the volume's analytical reach by situating the Holocaust within a broader global historical framework. Aomar Boum's chapter on North African musical traditions stands out for its methodological innovation, using cultural forms as alternative archives of Holocaust experience. This approach aligns with the editors' call to broaden the sources and methods through which the Holocaust is studied. Other contributions in this section focus on refugee policies and international responses, highlighting the global dimensions of the Holocaust as a historical event. Bonnie M. Harris's chapter on President Manuel Quezon's role in providing refuge to Jews in the Philippines introduces a lesser known but significant episode that complicates dominant narratives of inaction. Rebecca Erbelding's discussion of Fort Ontario and American refugee debates, along with Paul R. Bartrop's examination of Jewish refugee migration to Australia, reveal the limitations and contradictions of national policies during this period. Richard Menkis's reexamination of Canadian responses and Daniela Gleizer's analysis of Mexican immigration policy further emphasize the importance of situating the Holocaust within a global context of migration, state policy, and moral decision-making. Taken together, this section offers a compelling comparative framework that elucidates a spectrum of responses, from humanitarian intervention to bureaucratic exclusion, thereby situating the Holocaust within a complex web of global decision-making processes.

The section on "Representation" turns to questions of pedagogy, narrative construction, and public history. The essays in this section highlight the challenges of teaching and representing the Holocaust in regions where it is

not part of national history. Discussions of Holocaust education in the Arab world, Australia, and New Zealand illustrate the ways in which pedagogy must be adapted to different cultural and political contexts, often in the face of denial, distortion, or limited awareness. Navras J. Aafreedi's chapter on South Asia addresses the challenges of denial and trivialization, while Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat explore analogous tensions within the Arab world. Contributions by Lorena Cardona González, Suzanne D. Rutland, and Ann Beaglehole further demonstrate how educational frameworks in Latin America and Australia respectively adapt Holocaust narratives to local pedagogical needs. Tali Nates's analysis of museum representation in post-apartheid South Africa underscores the role of public history in shaping collective memory. Her analysis further underscores how museum spaces function not merely as sites of remembrance, but as active civic institutions that cultivate ethical engagement and critical reflection on contemporary forms of injustice. While this section effectively highlights the ethical dimensions of representation, it also gestures toward an unresolved tension between universality and specificity; namely, the risk that the pedagogical expansion of Holocaust narratives may inadvertently obscure their historical particularity.

One of the volume's most significant strengths lies in its interdisciplinary approach. By bringing together perspectives from history, literary studies, cultural studies, and education, the book provides a multifaceted understanding of the Holocaust's global dimensions. This diversity reflects the complexity of the subject and aligns with the editors' broader aim of expanding the field beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. The concluding sections and epilogue, which return to individual narratives and global experiences, effectively bring together the themes of memory, history, and representation. It ultimately invites readers to reconsider the Holocaust not as a closed historical episode, but as an evolving site of global memory and ethical reflection.

In conclusion, *Global Approaches to the Holocaust: Memory, History, and Representation* is an important and well-executed contribution to Holocaust scholarship. Its emphasis on global perspectives, interdisciplinary methods, and ethical engagement offers valuable insights for scholars, educators, and students alike. By navigating the delicate balance between historical specificity and global relevance, the book provides a nuanced and thought-provoking framework for understanding the Holocaust in an increasingly interconnected world. ■