

production was *A Japanese Tragedy*, which was eventually censored. He then quit Nichiei and returned to Tohō, shooting *War and Peace* (*Sensō to heiwa*) with Yamamoto Satsuo in 1947. Kamei made films under "War" and the Occupation, which was supposed to be "Peace"; under both, his films were censored. In this sense, the history of Kamei's film career reveals the relationship between power and cinema.

— Yamane Sadao

### History and Memory

U.S.A. *Direction*: Rea Tajiri, *Tape*: Akiko Productions, 125 Withers St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11211, video, stereo sd., English, color/b&w, 32 min., 1991.

Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory* sums up the conceptualization behind this book in a variety of ways. Her tape deals with the relationship of historical events to their filmed record. As a Japanese American, the schism between the two is obvious and painful. *History and Memory* is both a personal quest and a re-writing of the history of World War II.

Tajiri reveals the extent to which history is dependent upon the photographic image. Near the beginning of her tape, she reconstructs the decisive historical event in this story, Pearl Harbor. Although edited from a variety of cinematic sources, the montage faithfully follows the battle's temporal sequence of events. The attack begins with American newsreel footage of exploding ships; then jiggling Japanese documentary images taken from planes provide establishing shots of Pearl Harbor under siege; we hear the first radio reports (the first writing of this history) courtesy of *From Here to Eternity*, and see the U.S. Navy's counter attack taken from John Ford's *December 7th; The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya* (*Hawai, Marē okikaisen*, 1942) provides dramatic close-ups of Japanese pilots; finally, *Universal News* shows documentary scenes of the aftermath. This hodgepodge of imagery is re-edited into a continuous flow, a reconstruction of history common to documentary. More than an impressive assemblage, this sequence attempts to break down distinctions between the fiction of feature film and the historical truth of documentary.

Tajiri is interested in analyzing the implications of documentary's "historical writing." She identifies several types of events: events that took place before cameras, events staged before cameras when none were originally present, and events for which there are no images. Images of the first two kinds of events are used by filmmakers to write histories, a prime example being the dramatic attack of Pearl Harbor. Events for which there are no images are recorded only by personal memories. Tajiri's example is her father's story about how, while their family was incarcerated, the government literally picked up their house and stole it away. No one was there to record this event on film, and they didn't even know about it until after the fact. Tajiri's father describes this event over a black, empty screen. Without having been imaged, this kind of history survives only if people release it from their memories.

Tajiri explains how this private memory continues to affect subsequent generations, even if it is never placed in public narrative. She recreates an image of her mother filling a canteen with water which recurs throughout the tape. The setting

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Fig. 35. *History and Memory*. A memento from the camps.  
(Credit: Rea Tajiri)

is a desert place, where her mother splashes cool water on her face. Tajiri retained this potent image from childhood, when her mother told her a story about the camps. The story is long forgotten, but the mental image remains. She recreates the fragmented image and *History and Memory* is Tajiri's attempt to re-write the missing story.

The story of the Japanese American experience during World War II begs for images, and nearly all the photographic images available are inadequate, being Hollywood melodramas or government apologies. Tajiri uses these, but intervenes by manipulating the images and recording new soundtracks. For example, she places the verbal recollections of her own family over the official images from *Japanese Relocation*; sometimes her parents question the veracity of the documentary images. She also uses outtakes from the film, scenes where the uncontrolled reality before the camera spoiled the image for the writing of official history.

Hollywood's images are no less suspect. Tajiri's nephew reads his own ironic review of Alan Parker's *Come See the Paradise* over Hollywood's images of romance during "relocation." Tajiri uses other Hollywood images, ironically identifying with Spencer Tracy in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1954). Tracy travels to a small desert town to investigate the murder of a Japanese American man after Pearl Harbor. Despite being the center of the film, the murdered man never appears on screen. Tajiri comments, "Komoko's disappearance from Black Rock was like our disappearance from history. His absence is his presence. Somehow, I could identify with this search. This search for an ever absent image and the desire to create an image where there are so few." Where there are no images, history is committed to the memories of those present, where it usually remains silent. Tajiri's mother refused to remember for her daughters. She was left only with the image of her mother filling a canteen in the desert, an image without a story. By re-creating both, she comes to understand her mother's silence and the relationship between history and memory.

— Abé Mark Nornes

Translators: Abé Mark Nornes (Yamane Sadao)  
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