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Aaron William Moore, *Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2013. Pp. vi, 378. ISBN 978-0-674-05906-1.

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In *Writing War*, based on work done for his 2006 Princeton doctoral dissertation, Aaron Moore (Univ. of Manchester) examines some two hundred diaries and many more letters, postcards, and memoirs written primarily by Americans, Chinese, and Japanese who served in the Asian and Pacific theaters of World War II (1937-45). Although, unlike Studs Terkel's *The Good War*,¹ the book does not extensively feature direct quotations from the diaries, it is, Moore asserts, "not a straight-forward military history such as Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers*" (7). With his impressive expertise in philosophy and languages (Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Russian, French, and Latin), Moore is well suited to illuminate just how "a person's diary is a crucible wherein the author attempts to reconcile, through the medium of language, often silent individual desires with the articulate demands of society, media, and the state" (2), in this instance during time of war.

The book comprises six chapters: 1) "Talk about Heroes: Military Diaries in the Modern World," 2) "Self-Mobilization and the Discipline of the Battlefield: The Battle for Shanghai and Northern China," 3) "Assembling the 'New Order': Reconstitution of Self through Diary Writing," 4) "The Unbearable Likeness of Being: The Transnational Phenomenon of Self-Discipline during the Pacific War," 5) "The Physics of Writing War: Recording the Destruction of the Japanese Empire," and 6) "The Consequences of Self-Discipline: Postwar Historical Memory and Veterans' Narratives."

Moore's envisioned audience of historians, linguists, philosophers, graduate students, and advanced college students will probably find quotations like the following (by an American soldier) thought-provoking.

Man killing man. A Nightmare [sic] that I still can't believe really happened. Bearded boys turning into animals, carrying dried Japanese soldiers' ears around in their gear. Jap fingers jammed into spent .45 ammunition casings (hung around their necks). American marines strapped to palm tree trunks slashed to ribbons by Jap officers ... even hoping that by some stroke of luck, we may even be photographed standing over a few dead Japanese with our rifles held in the crook of one arm—with the satisfied smile of the big game hunter. (213)

The diaries routinely record and seek to justify extreme violence against enemy soldiers, unlike the many postwar historical narratives that whitewash atrocities. For Moore, US soldiers who justified their barbarities against the enemy were no different from the Japanese servicemen who developed a sense of superiority over their perceived national enemies and rationalized their brutalities accordingly.

Moore specifically challenges Paul Fussell's theory of the adequacy of language for writing about war and Michel Foucault's skeptical view of individualism and freedom in the modern era. He believes the diaries demonstrate how "inadequate language is for capturing experience, whether it was Chinese, Japanese, or English" (300). While acknowledging the power of social, state, and media institutions, he argues that the writings of the servicemen attest to a control of the authors' subjectivity and their self-discipline under extreme circumstances.

Particularly compelling is Moore's painstaking interweaving of the stories of Chinese and Japanese soldiers in recreating the conditions of battle in Shanghai and north China. As Rana Mitter (Oxford) puts it in her dust-jacket blurb, "[Moore] shows us the lived experience of combat in the Second World War, and the complex and intriguing ways in which it was reflected in writing and identity.... [He] forces us to rethink a subject that we thought we knew." Many of the diary entries reveal how war instills such hatred of the ene-

1. Subtitle: *An Oral History of World War Two* (NY: Pantheon, 1984).

my in the soldiers of all sides as to diminish their humanity. They underscore the damage done to these men rather than their self-discipline. Collectively, they are a powerful, salutary reminder of the importance of peace and the effects of wartime violence against humanity, effects often omitted from the patriotic narratives of our own day.

The book has some shortcomings and makes debatable points. For one thing, Moore's sample is too small—millions of servicemen, journalists, artists, teachers, students, children, deserters, homemakers, ethnic minorities, political dissidents, slave laborers, and survivors of sexual and conventional violence suffered in Asia and the Pacific during World War II. The testimony of a mere two hundred cannot support sweeping generalizations about “the conscience” of American, Japanese, Chinese Nationalist servicemen, or such constructs as “East Asian societies,” the “Western world,” and entire military institutions, societies, regions, or peoples.

Another drawback is Moore's relative inattention to the differences among his witnesses in their individual backgrounds, differences he himself acknowledges (91). This is not for lack of available information, but a result of the selective use of existing sources.² For example, Moore discusses in detail diaries that provide eyewitness accounts of the Nanjing atrocities, including those of Kindō Eijirō (*sic*; read “Kondō Eishirō”),³ a local public servant who enlisted in the Nineteenth Artillery Regiment, and Saitō Jirō, a farmer and father of four who joined the Army's ammunition transportation unit. For Moore, Kondō is one of those who reveled in the killings and felt no shame in describing them in their diaries. In one entry (14 Dec 1937), he indeed wrote that it was fun to fire his light machine gun at Chinese soldiers fleeing by boat on the Yangtze River. Moore ignores other entries in which Kondō expresses sympathy for Chinese servicemen, women, and children.

Moore correctly characterizes Saitō Jirō's diary entries as ambiguous: though they sometimes show empathy for the enemy, Saitō did participate in killing Chinese POWs (18 Dec 1937). His diary suggests that he was a devout Christian, but Moore omits this and finds evidence only of the Buddhist influences apparent in the diaries of many other Japanese servicemen.

In addition, Moore praises Azuma Shirō because his diary shows that he “aimed at writing *the* work of war fiction, at the same time producing a personal record that was also truthful” (145). I have no quarrel as to the literary value of Azuma's writing, but his diary is no collection of purely historical information. In a published account based on his diary, Azuma claims that a comrade threw a Chinese civilian into a large cloth bag, doused it with gasoline, set it on fire, then attached two hand grenades to it, carried it to a pond, and threw it in before they detonated!⁴ This could only be possible in a fictional film. In 1993, his former comrade successfully sued Azuma for libel. While Azuma's account may help us understand his experience of the war and may be the “true work of a soldier” (145), like any other diary it must be carefully scrutinized, for it may include more hearsay and subjective appraisals than historical facts.

The intent to deceive or mislead through selectivity is glaring in the work of Japanese revisionists who dissemble the wholesale carnage in Nanjing by quoting those soldiers who describe their humane treatment of Chinese women and children, while dismissing accounts that inconveniently corroborate the historical facts of the massacre. In short, the significant variations in the content of the diaries and attitudes of their authors can be used to yield quite divergent conclusions about the same events.

Lastly, Moore's discussion of postwar historical memory and veterans' narratives (chapter 6) is too ambitious: he tries to convey the history and reminiscences of World War II among civilians and veterans in Japan, China, and the United States from 1945 to the present in less than forty-five pages. The result is a rather simplistic analysis that glosses over the complex narrative tropes in postwar remembrances.

2. In particular, the nineteen diaries of Yamada Detachment soldiers collected in Ono Kenji, Fujiwara Akira, and Honda Katsuichi, eds., *Nanking daigyakusatsu o kiroku shita kōgun heishitachi* (Imperial Soldiers who recorded the Nanjing Massacre) (Tokyo: Ōtsuki shoten, 1996).

3. Other transliteration/spelling errors include Sakurai *Tadatoshi* (read “Tadayoshi”) and Watanabe *Kiyo* (read “Kiyoshi”).

4. See Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the “Rape of Nanking”: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2006) 143–44.

With these and lesser shortcomings⁵ in mind, critical Anglophone readers will find in Aaron Moore's book many ground-level perceptions of war as recorded not only by American, but by Japanese and Chinese diarists.

5. The book's (four-page) index and bibliography are inadequate. While Michel Foucault and Paul Fussell appear in the index, none of the relevant diarists do. The reader must flip through the book to trace the discussion of a specific writer. Conversely, the bibliography lists only diaries, omitting scholarly monographs, memoirs, letters, poems, and newspaper articles. Moreover, Chinese and Japanese titles are translated only as they are cited in the body of the book, not in the index and bibliography.