

(p. 3) of their evolution that it contains, than with any fresh understanding of social theory in the wake of the fall of communism.

*Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space.* Edited by Daniel L. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004. Pp. viii+326. \$23.95.

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*Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* is a useful volume of essays by historians on sites of collective memory, many of them from the pages of *Radical History Review*. Taken as a whole they show how collective memory is fragile, contested, multiple, and that representations and silences alike are shaped by real historical experiences filtered through cultural repertoires and power. Turning the pages of the book we find perceptive case studies on monuments, memorials, museum exhibits, folkloric activity, and civic ritual showing all this at play and accounting for the triumph, survival, evolution, or demise of a particular representation or practice in terms of plural, contingent determinants. For example, in the strongest chapter Andrew Ross maps out the cultural history of Scotland's monument to the medieval rebel William Wallace, showing how its meaning and reception have been caught up with both the vagaries of contending Scottish nationalisms and the freak impact of Mel Gibson's film, *Braveheart*. Other representative entries consider the ambivalences and silences of the atomic bomb museums in Japan, the erasure of Chile's history of dictatorship and torture, and the curious status of the Anglo-Boer War in the collective memory of postapartheid South Africa. We can also read about the fall and rise of Prague's Marian Column, the marketing of Harbin as a cosmopolitan tourist destination in China, Sri Lanka's efforts to construct an inoffensive national monument, and the totemic significance of Israel's Masada. Scholars researching sites of collective memory should be able to find much of interest here, particularly if one of the cases happens to offer instructive parallels in outcome or cultural process to the object of their own inquiry. That said, the book cannot be considered truly pathbreaking; nor can I recommend it without reservation. Many of the chapters were first published around 2001, and one feels that the vanguard of the field has moved on a little since then. Only the essay by T. M. Scruggs on the relationship of folk music to collective memory in Nicaragua ejects us from the now overly familiar territory of conflicts about the production and consumption of monument, space, place, and ritual. In addition the purpose of the volume is compromised by the fact that it should now be possible to download many of the previously published entries individually as required from one's university library. More seriously for a sociological audience—and



*AJS* is a sociology journal—the collection has a topical but not a theoretical core. Disappointingly, there is even little discernable “radical perspective” or shared, explicit deployment of any generalizing critical theory or theorist. The resulting impression is of a collection of essays without any deep common agenda, where the whole is no more and no less than the sum of the parts.

The editors seem to be implicitly aware of this liability but do not quite convince us that there is some underlying continuity. Trying to make a virtue of a necessity they suggest that the disparate empirical materials from around the world will permit reflection on American exceptionalism and will end “parochial debates focused solely on the United States” (p. 3). There are also some remarks to the effect that the varied contexts “speak to each other,” and we can thereby locate “broader currents” (p. 5). This justification for largely descriptive eclecticism is repeated in a dust-jacket endorsement. There we read that the contributions “invite reflection on how quite different situations speak to each other, suggesting more general insights that transcend particular contexts.” True enough—they got me thinking about wider issues. Still it seems a little unfair, to put it charitably, to expect readers to do all the hard work of abstracting some theoretical nub. A more valuable book would see the authors themselves (i.e., the collective memory experts) engaging in these generalizing, dialogical intellectual activities through mutual critique or in open dispute about a shared theoretical referent. Instead they swim silently past one another like fish in a pool. To be fair these comments have been from a sociological perspective, and most historians will see things differently, believing that merit lies chiefly in the faithful exposition of each site of contingencies. Yes, these are solid, professional, well-researched essays, and the case studies are illuminating and treated with sensitivity. But a collection of essays bound together does not always make a good book. And if I found myself agreeing with the entries one by one, this was simply because it is all too easy to concord with what has become a new orthodoxy, with proliferating empirical accounts of proximate causes, and the sensible, grounded explanations that accompany these. Anyone for theory?

*Max Weber's Politics of Civil Society.* By Sung Ho Kim. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004. Pp. ix+214. \$60.00.

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Despite its title, this work has less to do with any particular vision of civil society ascribable to Max Weber than it does with the assumed preconditions for civil society that can be drawn from Weber's work. More specifically, it is a study of what modes of selfhood serve as the