

**The End of the World as We Know It:  
An International Conference on War, Representation, and Memory**

At Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea

From Thursday, June 4 (arrival day) to Monday, June 8, 2009 (departure day)

Conference presentations: June 5, 6, and 7

**Co-sponsored by Washington University's Center for the Humanities and Yonsei University**

(This is the second in a series of jointly sponsored, humanities-oriented conferences organized by the Center for the Humanities at Washington University and one of the McDonnell International Academy university partners)

Call for Paper Abstracts from Washington University faculty

All Washington University participants will receive free lodging and several meals during the days of the conference

Deadline for Abstracts: September 15, 2008

Send Abstracts to

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**The Theme:**

*You can't break eggs without making an omelette*

*--That's what they tell the eggs.*

*--poet Randall Jarrell, "A War"*

No other man-made act is as catastrophic as war. With its blood and death, mass destruction, cruelty, theft, and brutalization, with its glory, honor, courage, and liberation, war has come to represent both that which is best and worst in human beings. Doubtless, the greatest paradox of war, the greatest absurdity of the act, is that it is meant to produce peace, a better peace (for at least one of the parties participating in it) than that which existed before. War is Peace sounds nearly Orwellian in its duplicity but it is also strangely true. Another Orwellian aspect of war is how War is both the Beginning and

the End, the Beginning of a world where we will know each other anew and the end of the world as we know it. War is both the End and the Beginning of Knowledge. Perhaps the intensity of war's extreme nature, the sharpness of its binary meanings, the obvious irrationality of its contradictions, has made war so deeply affecting on the human imagination and psyche.

Of all the fundamental questions surrounding the act of war and the meaning of humane existence, perhaps one of the most challenging is: How do we, individually and collectively, remember war and what is the significance of that memory? How does the memory of war, collectively conceived, function to shape a nation's politics, its sense of gender relations, its class consciousness, its nationalism, its art, its education, its public culture? Is it possible for the individual to have a set of memories about war that contradict the collective memory of his or her culture and what does such psychological opposition to or difference from one's culture mean in understanding the tension between the individual and the collective? How has the memory of war affected the idea of justice in the rise of claims for reparations for the victims of war? In considering the memory of the war, what bright lines separate propaganda from art, education from indoctrination, celebration from mourning, triumph from tragedy, commemoration from monument, national identity from individual conscience? In what ways, in fact, are the memories of war a form of cognitive dissonance? How has the memory of war been affected by gender? Do women remember war differently from men? They have largely experienced it in ways very distinct from men. It is commonly believed that women, more nurturing and emphatic and less likely to be soldiers, are naturally more opposed to war than men; yet in historical and sociological fact, women have frequently been passionate boosters and supporters of war and the idea of war. And how differently do children think of war? Do they merely mirror what the adults around them think? How do they affect how adults think of war? And what of war as a metaphor for conflict (the war between the sexes), for conquest (the war to subdue nature, the war against cancer, the war on poverty), for determination (sports as a form of warfare), for complete erasure and reformation (Armageddon)? War has clearly served as the image, the idea of the perpetuation of all strife and struggle. Is war inherent in the human mind, a categorical imperative of thought? For even our gods fight wars. And what larger war has there been but that between good and evil? Can we conceive of reality without the image and idea of war?

This conference on the subject of war and memory is meant to examine these very crucial and specific questions. It is meant, to borrow the words of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, "to open the purple testament of bleeding war," for our memory, both collective and individual, our uses of the idea and representations of war, is that purple testament. This conference will be an international forum for an interdisciplinary examination of war and the meaning of its remembrance: how memory has shaped the cultural and political typology of war, its artistic representations, its commemoration through public and political institutions, the idea of justice in providing restitution to the victims of war, its metaphorical deployments. The key disciplinary perspectives will be

- Literature: the representations of war novels, poetry, memoirs, and children's books, war as metaphor, war in the human imagination
- History: cultural and political examinations of particular wars or of the idea of war or of war propaganda, the history and politics of reparations, the construction of "official" histories of war
- Philosophy: the ethics of war, reparations for war's victims
- Film: the representation of war in films for adults and children, war as metaphor
- Art history: the representation of war in art, war as metaphor
- Psychology: the memory of war as an act that defines the individual and human identity, group or collective memory, the need for an "official" account of war, memory and trauma
- Religious studies: the morality of war, war fought in the name of religion, just and unjust war
- Music: the representations of war in music, how music inspires war or critiques it
- War and technology: war and machines, devices, and gadgets, both real and imaginary
- War and medicine: war and illness and disease, both real and metaphorical
- Gender Studies: gender and war, sexuality and war, (re)construction of masculinity, masculinity/femininity and technology, women and violence, women and the military