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Rethinking the Young Female Cinema Audience: Postwar Cinema-Going in Kansai, 1945-1952

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Japanese title: 若い女性観客を再検討:戦後関西の映画観客 1945−1952

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Approaching the Audience: Introduction to the Study

During the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945-1952), female audiences, particularly children and teenaged girls, became the intended market for censored cinema content designed to support the democratic re-education of the Japanese populace (Allen 1945). With the creation of new roles for young female citizens in everyday life under the 1947 Constitution of Japan, early postwar cinema characters and narratives modeled the new rights and powers that were then becoming available. Yet an ethnographic approach gives a more conflicted picture of the cinema audience who viewed these narratives, revealing that an easy inference of mass female viewership from female-oriented film content, marketing, and

censorship is not supported by the memories of female viewers of the era. In order to better understand the complicated relation of young female audiences to Occupation cinema and its censored content, this article analyzes the memories of a number of female viewers who engaged with the cinema and its stories between 1945 and 1952. This article argues that any attempt to assess the impact of initiatives for social change must engage with stakeholders to identify the significant gap between rhetorical claims for change, or propaganda, and everyday lived experience. In the case of postwar Japanese cinema, this kind of engagement also teaches a number of important lessons for how we study cinema culture, such as the need for a skeptical approach to box office statistics, and the necessity for nuance in making claims about reception trends.

Guided by the large number of young female characters in early postwar Japanese film texts, as well as by Allied Occupation communications outlining the importance of reaching female media consumers (see Tsuchiya 2002; Conde 1965), I began an ethnographic study of postwar cinema-going in Japan with the expectation that a significant majority of participants would be female. I found, however, that women were more reluctant than men to speak with authority on this era of viewership, as female study participants reported restricted access to the cinema theater between 1945 and 1952. Investigating the factors that kept young female viewers away from the cinema allows us to explore the potential impact of a disproportionately small female audience on Occupation-era attempts to use the cinema for re-education purposes after Japan's defeat in World War II and the Fifteen Years War (1931-1945). The ethnographic material analyzed in the following pages was collected between 2014 and 2018 in the Kansai region of Western Japan, specifically Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Nara, Nagaokakyō, Amagasaki, and Kabutoyama. Film fans from neighboring areas also travelled to Kyoto to participate in the study, which comprised of the four key methods detailed below.

I conducted a large-scale questionnaire project with eighty-three respondents at the Kyoto Culture Museum (Kyoto Bunka Hakubutsukan) in May 2016. From 2014 to 2018, I practiced participant observation at four sites, including the cinema theater of the museum, two independent film-viewing clubs in Kyoto, and a cinema in Osaka specializing in Shōwa period cinema (see Coates 2018a). I filmed interviews with ten participants each running, on average, two hours in length for a documentary film on the topic of cinema and memory (Coates 2018b), and conducted multiple follow-up interviews, supported by on-going exchange of letters and emails, with a core group of twenty participants.

Study participants were self-selecting, beginning with interested patrons of the Kyoto Culture Museum cinema and the two Kyoto film clubs, before expanding through word of mouth to over one hundred people living in the Kansai region, all of whom were born between 1925 and 1955. I focused on the Kansai region in order to add memories of the cinema culture of that area to a field that has largely focused on Tokyo film culture in the postwar era, particularly in English-language scholarship. Furthermore, that the major film companies' secondary studios specializing in period dramas were located in Kansai ensures a degree of interest and even insider knowledge among the residents of these areas, as a number worked in the film industry or volunteered as 'extra' performers on location shooting. Fieldwork in Kansai allowed for access to the memories of those with professional, familial, or personal relationships with the cinema industry, as well as fans and dedicated cinema-goers.

In the initial stages of the study, I found that women who expressed interest in the project were reluctant to adopt the expert witness stance favored by male study participants. This contradicted my expectations, based on previous studies of the content of popular cinema texts of the early postwar era (Coates 2016). Furthermore, studio marketing and directives published by the General Headquarters of the Occupation bureaucracy (GHQ) led

by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP), specified the monetary and ideological imperatives of targeting female audiences, particularly female children. In order to ascertain the relation of female audiences to Japanese cinema, I began to ask study participants about their memories of accessing cinema theaters, uncovering significant differences between male and female participants. Given the disparity between SCAP's focus on the re-educational value of the cinema for young female citizens, and the gender of the Occupation-era audience, this article analyses the memories of female study participants born between 1935 and 1945 to better understand the relation of this audience demographic to Occupation cinema. As the average first cinema visit of participants in the study was six years old, these memories relate to participants' early childhood and teenage years, from age four to age seventeen, and have been restricted to the period of 1945 to 1952, excluding some comparative commentary on the years immediately before and after. All data has been anonymized using pseudonyms.

There is a significant gap between popular representations of young women's relation to popular culture and memories of everyday lived realities. Beginning with an overview of the representative trope of the young female popular culture consumer, this article explores historical documentation of girls' relationships to cinema culture, before outlining the Occupation authorities' efforts to use cinema to re-educate young female citizens. The second part of the article explores memories of the lived realities of engagement with cinema culture, revealing a significant gap between SCAP, studio personnel, and advertisers' imagined idealized transmission of cinema content and its reception by young female viewers. The question of young female audiences going to the cinema in postwar Japan is a pertinent one, as the girl consumer is an important figure in Japanese sociology and culture. This article investigates who exactly went to the cinema and what the experience was like for them. While it is difficult to generalize from case studies and interviewees' memories, these testimonies

shed light on the situation of the time. Supported by data from industry reports and sources from Japanese fan magazines and period publications, this article seeks to provide documentation of the period to add a new perspective on the gender dynamics of the era.

Female Audiences as Consumers: Representation Versus Lived Experience

In popular culture representations, from cinema to print media, the image of the young female character, in particular, is intimately connected with consumerism, from the magazine-buying and cake-eating girls of novels and manga (see Ting in this issue) to the young female characters of post-defeat cinema who model the latest Western fashions and consume strawberry shortcake (for example, Hara Setsuko in Ozu Yasujirō's Late Spring [Banshun], 1949). Many magazines, films, and novels featuring young female characters consuming are marketed to young female consumers, and in this way girls are recruited as the consumers of the very same cultural products that depict their consumption, feeding a cycle that restricts girl characters to consumer-focused roles and behaviors. Study participants who remember going to the cinema regularly at the age of four or five recalled the influence of marketing, particularly posters, on their desire to watch particular films. Participants in their early teens during the Occupation remembered the appeal of magazines showing young female stars selling make-up and other products, from the Kanebo advertisements featuring Takamine Hideko to Kagawa Kyōko's Morinaga chocolate campaign, or Misora Hibari's endorsement of Columbia television sets. Yet in assessing the success of this marketing, we must also note that the girl-as-consumer is not always a positive picture. Popular media representations tend to "regard the girl as either a mindless consumer or a powerless victim (consumed)" (Aoyama 2008, 286). She is pictured, photographed, and filmed consuming, and viewers consume her image in turn. Investigating the lived realities of girls' and teenagers' experiences at the cinema during the Occupation and its immediate aftermath, we must remain aware of the gendered images onscreen and in film promotional materials and

advertising, and consider their impact on young female audiences' relations to the cinema. In this way, we can add nuance to the historical materials produced by SCAP that connect the exposure of young female audiences to cinema content with democratic re-education.

A number of elements in early postwar cinema culture, from film content to advertising, have been taken together with Occupation censorship discourse to imply a significant female audience for cinema in Japan over the period of 1945 to 1960, as Colleen Laird has noted (2012, 116). Using interviewees' memories, data from industry reports, and sources from Japanese fan magazines and period publications, this article seeks to add nuance to our picture of who the early postwar audience was, why and how they appeared in the cinema theater, and how they engaged with ideologically-framed film texts, in order to broaden our understanding of the gender dynamics of the era.

Extant historical scholarship reveals the role of cinema in the everyday lives of young female subjects of the same period. Many girls' schools placed restrictions on visits to the cinema theater (Bae 2008, 359), suggesting that school-age female viewers wished to attend the cinema regularly (perhaps more regularly than teachers and parents would have liked). A significant number of study participants of both genders remembered agitating to be taken to the cinema by parents and older siblings, as well as being disciplined by teachers for becoming distracted by film posters and marketing while walking to and from school (Hashimoto 2016).

Girls were clearly interested in the cinema, judging by discussions of cinema-related topics in magazines marketed to young female consumers, often including articles written by female teenagers (Bae 2008). Discourse on the cinema as both place and mode of entertainment or education reflected many pressing issues in everyday life. For example, in transcripts of two roundtable discussions on the subject of girl-boy relations published in the September 1951 issue of *Girls' Friend* (*Shōjo no tomo*) magazine, the six middle- and high-

school-age girls and six boys featured mention the cinema in relation to their changing social lives. Many of the girls speak negatively of the practice of going to the cinema alone with a boy ("Shōjo bakari" 1951, 74-75). Yet as Catherine Yoonah Bae (2008) notes, it was "the activity of going to the movies (as a one-on-one date with a boy, and doing so secretively) rather than the particular content of the movie itself that garnered disapproval" from other teenaged roundtable participants (350). While cinema content moved and inspired girls in fictional representations and in everyday life, actual access to the cinema could prove more problematic, as the ethnographic material below will show.

In the case study that follows, female audience members report memories of feeling shut out of the culturally hegemonic space of popular cinema, as well as their own re-interpretations of film texts and star personas marketed directly towards them. In the early postwar era, engaging with cinema culture meant engaging directly with the Occupation, as film content was censored and modified with the explicit goal of politically influencing the audience. This article considers what it might mean for this generation of women to have experienced disproportionate restrictions in accessing the censored cinema texts of the early postwar era in their childhood years, and the implications of SCAP's use of cinema as a tool for re-education. The next section will discuss SCAP's interventions in cinema content and audience perceptions of its effects—or lack thereof.

Postwar Cinema Culture under Occupation

Postwar cinema content was developed under strict information dissemination and censorship guidelines, with the goal of fundamentally reforming the Japanese way of life. Beginning the Occupation of Japan on September 2, 1945, the offices of SCAP headed by General Douglas MacArthur identified the cinema as a means to educate Japanese viewers away from prewar and wartime attitudes (H. Kitamura 2010, 42). On September 22, 1945, Head of the Motion Picture and Theatrical Division of the Civil Information and Education

Section (hereafter CIE) David Conde met with film and theater producers and forty Japanese Bureau of Information officials (Brandon 2006, 18). Reading from a draft document entitled "Memorandum to the Japanese Empire," written two days earlier, he urged those present to cooperate with the Occupation's goals, particularly in promoting "fundamental liberties" and "respect for human rights" (SCAP 1945). Conde advised producers to develop entertainments to educate citizens about democracy, individualism, and self-government (Brandon 2006, 18). While this particular draft was ultimately not sent to the Japanese government, SCAP soon circulated a "Memorandum Concerning Elimination of Japanese Government Control of the Motion Picture Industry" on October 16, 1945, directing an end to wartime censorship, "to permit the industry to reflect the democratic aspirations of the Japanese people" (Allen 1945, 3). On November 19, 1945, a list of thirteen themes and topics identified as problematic followed. Number nine targeted media narratives that "dealt with, or approved of, the subordination or degradation of women" as undesirable, while number twelve warned against stories and images that "approved the exploitation of children" (H. Kitamura 2010, 36; Brandon 2006, 94). Filmmaker Iwasaki Akira (1978), who was forced to work closely with the censors, recalled that the Occupation personnel "were convinced that cinema was a most important instrument for effecting the necessary changes to make Japan a peaceful and democratic nation" (304).

Information Section personnel instructed Japanese filmmakers in the kind of content understood by the Occupiers to be desirable, assessing synopses and screenplays before final film prints were censored or suppressed. The Motion Picture division of the CIE, while not officially recognized as a censoring body, checked synopses, screenplays, and filming plans, while the Civil Censorship Detachment (hereafter CCD) examined prints. Finished products were often sent back to the studios for cuts or reworking; yet SCAP influence over film content was quite uneven and changed over time. Initially scenarios were examined by Conde

himself, despite having no knowledge of the Japanese language (Iwasaki 1978, 308). He was assisted by a number of Japanese-American officers, whom Iwasaki alleges had “less than perfect command of Japanese” (308). Conde was replaced in July 1946 by George Gerke, a member of the Information Division with prewar experience in the American film industry. In June 1949, contents control was ceded to Eirin (Film Ethics Regulation Control Committee). Although independent from the Occupation and the Japanese government, Eirin followed guidelines similar to those of the CIE, continuing to ban depictions of militarism and nationalism, and limiting the number of period films (Hirano 1992, 98). Overall, impressing new social values on young Japanese minds was a central goal of film contents control between 1945 and 1952.

The popularity of film grew rapidly from 1945, culminating in a peak admissions count of 1,127,452,000 in 1958 (Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan, 2017). In interviews, many viewers recall the Occupation era as one “without many entertainments” (Koyama 2016) and the cinema is remembered as the major attraction for young children in particular, in comparison to radio broadcasts and reading materials. One interviewee referred to the cinema of his childhood as “king of entertainments” (*goraku no ōsama*) (Takeda 2016), while another recalled begging his elder sister to take him to the theater again and again (Hashimoto 2016). In his final report on the Occupation, General MacArthur noted that, “The prefectural team, SCAP, approached the Japanese people through a variety of channels; these included newspapers, motion pictures, street shows (kamishibai), radio programs, courses of instruction . . .” (MacArthur et. al. 1994, 203). The list goes on, but only two cited channels are child-oriented, and study participants clearly stated their preference for the cinema over street shows. In this sense, the cinema provided a young and impressionable audience for SCAP’s carefully crafted and censored film content.

This content focused on communicating SCAP’s key reform priorities to mass

audiences. In October 1945, MacArthur included equal rights for female citizens in five priority reforms ranging from democratization to demilitarization. Universal suffrage, female admission to national universities, and the elimination of the prewar adultery law were ratified, and the Land Reform Law of October 1946 allowed female descendants to inherit family property for the first time. By May 1947, support for gender equality had been included in Article 24 of the postwar Constitution, while Article 14 outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex. The legal protection of gender equality was conceived as a means to democratize postwar Japan, and so filmmakers were advised to include gender-equal characters and narratives in cinema productions.

It should be noted that while the larger number of legal articles, SCAP directives, and GHQ memos dealing with the question of gender use the term "woman" to denote the target demographic of the reforms under discussion, the texts themselves clearly link "women" and "children" as the intended audience for education about the new rights and freedoms available to these groups, referring to schools as well as women's groups, which suggests the inclusion of minors in the target demographic. For example, SCAP (1946-1949) Record "000.076 Women's Affairs" includes the transcript of a speech given by E. Lee at a number of social education conferences in many prefectures in Japan which identifies the "relationships that are changing with democracy," including relationships between children and their parents, teachers and pupils, and romantic partners (1). The speaker counsels against gender segregation at all levels of society and specifically identifies the need for "mixed young people's clubs" and the socialization of children in a gender-equal manner (1).

Occupation authorities emphasized the need for women, children, and students, as well as adult men, to educate themselves about what gender equality could mean for female citizens (Mayo 1984, 282). A "Political Information-Education Program" prepared by the CIE in June 1948 called for all media branches to coordinate in an effort to make Japanese

audiences aware of the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizens (Tsuchiya 2002, 196). The program advised liaising directly with Japanese film producers to persuade them to include material and themes related to the political education of the Japanese populace. In November, the program was developed into a 158-page book titled Information Programs, designed as reference material for all CIE officers (SCAP 1948). A CIE proposal for "instituting gender democracy" further suggested that politically informed film content could complement the political education conducted through community organizations, clubs, and education programs (Koikari 2002, 35). In the early postwar era and into the 1950s, as many Japanese citizens "embraced the overwhelmingly popular rhetoric of democracy" (Seraphim 2006, 45), girls were encouraged to participate confidently in public democratic life by taking a variety of public stages, including those of the beauty contest (Aoyama 2008, 289), and even the film studio, as competitions for new film stars—such as the New Faces search—gained popularity. Yet Occupation authorities and cinema industry personnel alike appear to have largely relied on the general popularity of film to bring young female viewers to the pro-democracy postwar cinema.

The Occupation-Era Audience: Demographics and Disadvantaged Viewers

There is some indication that individual producers and distributors attempted to ensure that young female citizens participated in postwar cinema culture. The Central Motion Picture Exchange (hereafter CMPE), which managed the distribution of US films, targeted features explicitly at a young female audience. This was exemplified by a postwar remake of Little Women (LeRoy 1949); promotional events included "four-sisters contests" to which girls with four sisters could attend for free (H. Kitamura 2010, 102). Yet young female viewers at cinema theaters remained in the minority due to concerns about personal safety and reputation at the cinema, as well as competing demands on girl's time made by family members and by school teachers.

The Sunday Audience Survey conducted by the Six Domestic Film Company Production Materials Survey Group (Hōga rokusha seisaku shiryo chōsa kai no nichiyō kankyaku chōsa), which sampled the audience demographics on selected Sundays at cinemas around the country, indicates that the total postwar female audience peaked in 1956 with a turnout of 37.4 percent (Uryū 1967, 89). Between 1955 and 1957, female viewers younger than nineteen averaged 10.7 percent of the total national cinema audience (Uryū 1967, 89). Wartime surveys also show the general female audience to have been on average significantly less than fifty percent of the total (Hori 2018, 88). Studies of particular theaters show some outlying data; for example, a poll taken in the Shibuya and Ginza districts of Tokyo in late 1941 recorded a turnout of 41.1 percent female viewers, but this was considered "an absolute predominance" (*danzen yūsei*) at the time (Eiga junpō 1941, 54). In light of these figures, Hikari Hori (2018) argues that "it is safe to assume that women viewers were in the minority," and moreover, "immediate postwar statistics do show that more men saw movies than women in the late 1940s and early 1950s" (88).

Survey takers found that female viewers were generally students and working women, both with disposable incomes (Hori 2002, 55). An audience survey from 1946 estimates the nationwide audience between the age of ten and twenty years old at 10 percent, viewers between twenty and thirty years old at 70 percent, viewers in their thirties at 12 percent, and viewers in their forties at only 3 percent (Eiga geijutsu nenkan 1947, 118). While I have not been able to find comprehensive figures for the gender demographics of the audience during the Occupation period, taking the 1956 gender demographics together with wartime surveys as well as anecdotal evidence from my ethnographic study, it seems reasonable to suggest that young female viewers may have been even less than five percent of the general commercial film theater audience during the Occupation.

Young female viewers were disproportionately underrepresented in cinema audiences

compared to their numbers in the general postwar population. In 1945, the population was 47.1 percent male and 52.9 percent female, with four million more female citizens than male; by 1950, female citizens outnumbered men by one million, or 51 percent to 49 percent, a demographic trend that continues today (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2017). People under nineteen years of age made up 47.6 percent of the total population of Japan in 1945, with girls at 23.7 percent, falling slightly to 45.7 percent in 1950, with girls at 22.5 percent. Young people under the age of nineteen were almost half the total registered population of Japan during the Occupation. Kitamura Kyōhei's (2017) study of audience responses to Kurosawa Akira's No Regrets for Our Youth (Waga seishun ni kuinashi, 1946) demonstrates a significant gap between the attitudes of older and younger audiences to SCAP-approved cinema content. Exploring the memories of young female viewers of the Occupation-censored cinema can reveal much about communication and miscommunication between the era's largest and least powerful group, children and teenagers, and the smallest yet most powerful, Occupation personnel. This method also provides a counter-narrative to that established by the elite male viewers who authored the majority of the cinema reviews of the period, such as the university-educated critics published in The Movie Times (Kinema j*unpō*) and Film Art (Eiga geijutsu).

Girls and young women attended the cinema in significantly smaller numbers than male viewers, particularly when we consider their representation in the Occupation-era population as a whole. This pattern is borne out by nation-wide studies of fan activities: for example, annual surveys conducted by the film magazine Film Friend (Eiga no tomo) registered the gender of respondents as two-thirds male (H. Kitamura 2010, 165). Female children and teenagers did participate in writing to fan columns, and a number of the magazine's advertisements were for female-oriented products such as lipstick (165). Yet editorial staff suggested that the lesser participation of female film fans indicated the

continuation of "traditional" social norms (Eiga no tomo 1951, 37), including the muting of female voices in the public sphere, particularly those of the young, less independent, and less well off.

Given the thriving girls' magazine and manga industries documented in scholarship on *shōjo* magazines (Aoyama 2008; Bae 2008), it seems significant that young female voices were muted in popular cinema discourse. When we compare girls' participation in popular cinema discourse with the number of correspondents writing to *Girl's Friend* (*Shōjo no* tomo), it seems clear that young women were not opting out of participation in cinema culture due to a general disinclination towards—or lack of precedent for–contributing to popular culture discourse. Of course, there are significant differences between the predominantly masculine film industry and the stories and letters "written for and by *shōjo*" (Bae 2008, 356) that were published in *shōjo* magazines. Nonetheless, it seems odd that neither the Occupation authorities who oversaw gender-egalitarian film content targeted at girls, women, and younger viewers nor the studio personnel that actively marketed films to girls and young women with an eye on the studio's economic future—nor even the advertising agencies employing film stars in order to target young female consumers—appear to have given much thought to how many female children and teenagers were actually in the cinema audience. From a commercial perspective, perhaps studios considered children a negligible audience demographic, as they did not control the spending of household income on cinema tickets. Yet a number of interviewees recalled being offered reduced prices or free entry at certain cinema theaters for being under the age of seven or ten (Koyama 2016; Kobayashi 2016), and so it would appear that individual theater management personnel recognized the value of recruiting children, who would often bring a full-fee-paying adult or older child with them.

The memories of the era related by viewers discussed below suggest that a number of factors prevented young female viewers from attending the cinema in the same numbers as boys. The next section presents an account of the cinema spaces of postwar Japan alongside viewers' memories of how they accessed those spaces in their youth, raising key issues regarding young female viewers' engagement with the cinema and its narratives. Analyzing this material gives us a more nuanced sense of the impact of Occupation-approved film content on the everyday lives of young female citizens, and makes clear the significant physical barriers to accessing these censored cinema narratives. Taking such a grassroots view of Occupation communications complicates the top-down narratives preserved in SCAP documentation and the reports and memoirs of Occupation personnel (for example, MacArthur 1994) to demonstrate the limits of SCAP influence, and reminds us to assess such narratives as statements of intent rather than concrete achievement.

Organizing the Audience: Cinema Theaters as Structuring Devices

Cinema theaters in early postwar Japan were organized into three tiers: first-tier cinemas were the most expensive and showed the most recent films. Second- and third-tier cinemas showed older films, often in shabbier surroundings and using older prints and equipment. These theaters were cheaper and were popular with children and young families. In the Kansai region, first-run "roadshow" theaters were few: the Yasaka Kaikan in Kyoto, the ABC in Kobe, and the Sennichimae in Osaka (Terasawa 2010, 164). A number of cinemas had been destroyed or badly damaged by wartime bombing and fires. Yet Kyoto alone had as many as sixty film theaters between 1947 and 1956 (Katō 1996), so choice was not limited except by the time and money available to the viewer. These factors correlate with age, gender, and social class, as well as geographical location. The choices on offer ranged from the modern and well-designed film theaters advertising heating and cooling technologies to the basic theaters located in less stylish parts of town or in the suburbs.

Family trips to the film theater involving children as young as four were generally limited to the second- and third-tier theaters, while the only questionnaire respondent whose first cinema encounter occurred in an up-market city center cinema was also the oldest, aged nineteen on her first visit.

Attempts to improve and modernize film theaters were charted by local Kansai newspapers, which individual theaters used to communicate with their audiences about renovations and new rules. For example, in 1947 the Asahi Kaikan in Kyoto announced in the Kyoto shinbun that from May of the same year the "stuffing system" (tsumekomi shiki) that had seen popular screenings filled to standing capacity would be replaced by a "capacity limit, one showing" system, in which the theater would be closed for entry after all seats were filled and audience members would be asked to leave the theater at the end of the film (Katō 1996). Due to audience dissatisfaction, this was replaced the following year with a substitution system whereby a viewer leaving before the end of the screening gave the empty seat to an arriving viewer, who could remain in the theater for the next screening of the same film.

Female study participants in particular reported feeling uncomfortable and unsafe in packed theaters in their younger years. While the "*ojōsan*" (young ladies) of wealthy families had no difficulty accessing elite cinemas, girls from poorer backgrounds struggled to afford the safer first-tier cinemas, yet hesitated to enter the rowdy and dirty second- and third-tier theaters. The question of class is generally a tricky one in today's Japan, with the largest number of the population identifying as middle class. By noting parents' occupations, family levels of education, and other factors such as connections to nobility and the royal family, however, I was able to ascertain that around one quarter of my study participants were from elite backgrounds. Access to ready funds appears to have been a more significant factor in cinema attendance than class, as female study participants from elite families recall attending

second- and third-tier cinema theaters (Yamashita 2016). Interviewees from elite families recalled some discussion of the impact of lower-tier cinema-going on one's reputation, but many remember being too young to take these issues very seriously (Otsuka 2016; Yamashita 2016).

While elite (largely male) critics publishing their accounts of Occupation-era cinema culture in popular magazines and journals like The Movie Times were more likely to attend the first-tier theaters screening new releases, younger viewers were generally restricted by cost and opportunity to the second- and third tier-cinemas. As discussed in more detail below, female study participants recalled being instructed by parents and teachers to view these spaces as dirty and dangerous. By contrast, male study respondents generally remembered the smoky, noisy atmosphere of the cinema theater as exciting and even glamorous, providing an opportunity to watch older male teenagers and men smoking through double-bill programs (Kishida 2016). The very physical organization of the cinema theater therefore contributed to female study participants' sense of being disproportionately restricted in their cinema-going compared to male study participants.

Even when explicitly encouraged to go to the cinema, young female viewers met various obstacles to spending time freely there. Of those who recalled being asked to take very young children to the cinema, many female study participants remembered being forced to leave the theater or becoming distracted from the film onscreen by the behaviors and demands of younger siblings. A significant number of younger viewers, both male and female, recall forcing an older sister to leave the cinema theater or miss key moments of a film by crying, shouting, or otherwise behaving in a manner requiring intervention. For example, interviewee Hashimoto-san (2016) remembered his elder sister complaining that he caused her "some amount of trouble" by crying in the cinema during a screening of Boyhood (*Shōnenki*, Kinoshita 1951).

The cinema could also be a rude awakening for young female viewers seduced by the glamour of film culture. While elegant first-tier cinemas advertised theater cooling techniques, including enormous blocks of ice with flowers frozen inside, the majority of female interviewees and questionnaire respondents recalled the dirt and stench of second- and third-tier theaters. Many noted the change in cinema culture from the Occupation era to the present. An anonymous questionnaire respondent born in 1943, who began attending the cinema in 1948 at the age of five, wrote, "In those days the film theaters weren't so beautiful (utsukushikunai). Now they look like hotels!" A significant number of female interviewees and questionnaire respondents also mentioned the unpleasant smell of the cheap seats near the toilets. Yamashita-san (2016), born in 1946 recalled, "The smell was terrible!" (nioi ga kusai!). For children and younger viewers, these were the most affordable seats, though the stench could give the movie-viewing experience a sense of sufferance. Female study participants note these distractions more often than male participants, suggesting, at least, a discourse of female viewers being more sensitive to these considerations, if not an actual practice of such issues further dissuading girls from attending. Male participants did not discuss the conditions of the cinema theaters, except to note the prevalence of smoking. A number regretted that it is no longer possible to smoke, eat, and drink in film theaters. Only one male respondent remembered bringing a younger child to the cinema, whereas the rest remembered being brought to the theater by elder sisters or mothers.

Younger girls were therefore limited in their access to cinema narratives by several factors, including the availability and willingness of an elder relative to bring them to the cinema. Expense further limited girls' ability to access the elegant first-tier cinemas where audience members could sit with friends and family, untroubled by the "*man'in*" (packed) atmosphere of the cheaper theaters, per an anonymous questionnaire respondent in 2016. In the early postwar years, superior cinemas in Kyoto charged twenty-five or thirty yen, in

comparison to the twenty-yen tickets available at the second-tier cinemas. Several interviewees remembered visiting the cheaper Cineplex-style buildings where a number of small third-tier venues were crowded together inside a single structure. Many male interviewees recall entering the cinema without paying by claiming to have an urgent message for a friend inside the theater (Kishida 2016). In contrast, female study participants' memories of accessing the cinema as children and teenagers in the early postwar era tend to feature warnings against visiting certain areas of town at certain times and reminders to remain with friends or family members, prohibiting the free entry enjoyed by their male peers. As Bae demonstrated above, going to the cinema alone with a boy also opened the young female viewer to criticism from other girls as well as adult family members and teachers. While Conde (1965) argued for "the mission given to film to democratize Japan" (251) and Occupation personnel identified the cinema as a key tool for the re-education of the Japanese populace, a significant imbalance in the gender of the postwar cinema audience, as well as differing ideals of acceptable cinema-going behaviors for male and female children and teens, raises questions about the efficacy of using the cinema to educate young female citizens.

"Girls Reading Girls" Onscreen: Interpreting Occupation-era Film Narratives

The title of this section references Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley's edited volume Girl Reading Girl in Japan (2010), which examines the reading practices of real girls reading literary representations of girls in modern and contemporary Japan. It is my intention here to extend this approach to the film text, considering the impact of girl viewers "reading" the meanings of girl characters and their images and narratives on the democratic education of young female viewers under Occupation. Consideration of the varied modes of reading texts is crucial to understanding the limits of SCAP-approved cinema content for reforming everyday attitudes. Even when girls and young women could access the cinema, the reception

of film content designed to empower young female viewers was not consistent with the re-education processes imagined by SCAP GHQ.

Narratives that centered on female heroines taking their destinies into their own hands proliferated on the Japanese screen during the Occupation and its aftermath, both in Japanese film productions and in a large number of imported American and European films. SCAP controlled the import of foreign films to Japan with a heavy bias for American Hollywood productions, according to the "one-distributor-per-country rule" announced in December 1946 (Terasawa 2010, 55). In that year, thirty-nine American films, five foreign films of non-American origin (imported before the war), and sixty-seven Japanese films were screened in cinemas. The CMPE was inaugurated in May 1947 as a private enterprise to import and distribute Hollywood films. By 1950, foreign imports had risen to 185, 133 of which were American (55). A new quota system was introduced in the same year to cap foreign imports based on the number of films from a particular country shown over the previous ten years. Many imports specifically targeted young viewers, as schoolchildren were imagined as a new generation with fewer ties to wartime ideology and greater potential to become ideal postwar democratic capitalist citizens. Humanist narratives about schoolchildren, educational documentary films, and animated films were aimed at this demographic.

Yet the responses of young female viewers to film content selected for its democratic and gender-equal qualities could be significantly different from that imagined by censors and studio personnel. For example, Yamashita-san (born 1946) and Otsuka-san (born 1943) recalled their memories of Disney's Cinderella (Geronimi et al, 1950), which premiered in Japan on March 7, 1952, as less than favorable. The two visited the cinema separately to see the film, aged six and nine respectively. Both recalled a negative initial response to the film, which they elaborated upon during our conversation by mocking the narrative and its characters, encouraging each other in escalating their attacks on the film and its perceived

morals. In this respect the recollections analyzed here must be understood as living memories rather than objective record.

In Japanese advertising since 1952, Laura Miller (2008) notes, “Cinderella is used to denote individual agency to overcome obstacles or to achieve one’s dreams” (394). This is consistent with the Occupation policy of supporting the importation or creation of film texts that model democratic tropes such as independence, aspiration, and agency. By contrast, Yamashita-san and Otsuka-san (2017) remember understanding Cinderella as a “selfish” (wagamama) heroine making a silly fuss about a party. They questioned her choice to prioritize independence and romance over family, asking, “Why couldn’t she just stay at home?” Cinderella’s insistence that all single women had been invited to the ball was supposed to represent democratic reasoning, while her subsequent romance with Prince Charming emphasized young women’s rights to the independent pursuit of romantic love, as protected by the new Constitution. Both women did recall a childhood perception of new ideas of romance as the subject of much discussion, increasing as they entered their teenage years, and both subsequently made love matches in their early twenties rather than accepting arranged marriages. Furthermore, they recalled that local gossip disapproved of husbands and in-laws restricting young brides, and sympathized with young women oppressed by their families. These recollections, though mediated by the passage of time, would suggest some awareness of democratic treatment of women in romantic partnerships, if not gender-equal treatment exactly. In this sense, the values modeled by independent heroines like Cinderella are recalled as part of the discursive language of their childhood and teenage years. Yet Yamashita-san and Otsuka-san recalled their impressions of the heroine as needlessly forceful and dramatic, and joked that such passionate defense of one’s independence and romantic happiness read very differently in Japan than they imagined it would in the United States. Both consciously and unconsciously, girls were influenced by cinema content, but not

always in the prescriptive manner imagined by Occupation officials, industry personnel, and advertising strategists.

SCAP and the studios also attempted to reach young film viewers through the stars of the postwar studio systems in Japan and overseas. A number of American, European, and Japanese stars were marketed as emancipated female role models for young female viewers. Hara Setsuko (1920–2015), a wartime child star whose image was rehabilitated in the early postwar era by Kurosawa's humanist No Regrets for Our Youth, stood out among the popular Japanese actresses of the Occupation era for many study participants. Released on October 29, 1946, Kurosawa's film was a great success, but divided critics and audiences. Kitamura Kyōhei (2017) notes that audiences were generally divided by age, with those aged between ten and twenty years old supporting the film's representation of youth, while older viewers were critical (123). Readers of the two largest magazines for the ten to twenty age demographic, Film Fan (Eiga fan) and New Film (Shin eiga), voted Kurosawa's film the best of 1946 (131). Yet pubescent viewers from middle school age up to those in their early twenties record a very different experience of the film from that of older critics (131).

Yuka Kanno (2011) argues that we can understand Hara's nickname "the eternal virgin" in relation to "the national fantasy of the *shōjo* (the girl)" (298). Although Hara was in her mid-twenties during the Occupation, her star persona allowed for her to perform as a school-age girl in postwar films such as Kurosawa's. Yet even young female viewers who considered Hara a successful modern woman struggled to see her as a practical role model. One female interviewee born in 1943, who began attending the cinema in 1949, articulated this difficulty in these terms:

> Hara Setsuko was so beautiful, and she had so many male fans. I thought she certainly wasn't like other girls […] But I always felt, how would you put it, she was a bit above everything. Maybe there were people like that in real life,

> you know, well, kind of closing their hearts (kokoro ni shimatte) and living out their whole lives alone. I thought, "Well, I guess there is also that kind of way to live" (*sō iu ikikata mo arun da nā to omoimashita*). (Koyama 2016)

That "kind of way to live" would have been difficult to imagine for female viewers looking for role models in the Japanese studio system of the Occupation period. Hara publicly chided reporters for the gossip and industry presses who quizzed her on her romantic life, insisting on her independence, which led some to brand her "aloof" (*kokō*) (Kawahara 1947, 30). Hara's insistence on privacy was interpreted as secrecy, either hiding a non-heterosexual orientation (Kanno 2011), or as some speculate, covering a lifelong love for director Ozu Yasujirō, with whom she worked on some of her most famous films including the "Noriko trilogy," comprised of Late Spring (1949), Early Summer (*Bakushū*, 1951), and Tokyo Story (Tokyo monogatari, 1953). Hara retired after the director died in 1963 and became a reclusive figure in the Kamakura area outside Tokyo. While the independent Hara lived out many of the new freedoms female citizens had gained after the ratification of the postwar Constitution in 1947, it would nonetheless have been very difficult to live as she had, fiercely independent and without a recognized family structure. The relentless probing of the gossip and industry presses, as well as a number of unfavorable publications attacking Hara's character (Takada 1949, 31-33), demonstrated that such an independent way of living was not yet considered socially acceptable for young women. Female viewers such as Koyama-san seem to have recognized this, despite the SCAP propaganda embedded in popular film texts that encouraged young women to be independent and pursue their hearts' desires.

While Hara's independent lifestyle may have appeared new and progressive to Occupation personnel and others in the early postwar years, she was not an entirely unfamiliar figure in the cinematic landscape. Her postwar star persona borrowed heavily from her prewar work, while erasing her participation in wartime propaganda films by

emphasizing her strong will and independent mindset. Furthermore, I want to suggest that Hara's public persona may have been particularly readable for many female viewers due to her similarity to another key figure in popular culture aimed at girls and teenagers: Yoshiya Nobuko. Like Hara, Yoshiya never married, living with a female partner in "unconventional" circumstances (Dollase 2008, 331). Both Hara and Yoshiya participated in wartime propaganda productions, seduced by the greater career opportunities afforded young women who contributed to the war effort. While promoting nationalist sentiments during wartime, both women counter-intuitively maintained an affiliation with Western nations and cultures, during and after the war. Yoshiya publicly spoke about her admiration for the West and dressed in Western fashions in order to be "regarded as having the modern and advanced qualities she associated with the West" (331). Such public figures were instrumental in cementing the central place of imagined Western fashions, mannerisms, style, and consumer products in girls' culture (see Ting 2019, this issue). Dollase (2008) argues that "Dreaming about the Western world helped Yoshiya and her audience escape the patriarchal reality. Western culture was part of their culture" (332). Reference to and performances of mastery of Western culture was also a significant aspect of Hara's appeal for many young women watching her films in the postwar years.

Hara's star persona, championed by the Occupation-era film industry as tailor-made for characters and narratives that would "permit the industry to reflect the democratic aspirations of the Japanese people" (Allen 1945, 3), was built on the legacy of a different kind of young female independence—that permitted to young women during wartime, when a number of everyday social norms were suspended. In the early postwar, Hara's perceived Westernization and independent attitude were the target of a backlash from adult, educated, elite male film critics. Yet young female viewers remained attracted to her, finding in her Western dress and idiosyncratic mannerisms a model for their own behaviors.

One study participant who chose the English pseudonym Elizabeth and included English language material as well as Japanese in her questionnaire response recalled copying Hara's smile in the mirror as a young girl and attempting to mimic her laugh. Elizabeth's use of an Anglophone name and selected English phrases indicates an interest in or sense of affinity with Anglo-European culture. It therefore seems fitting that Elizabeth would indicate some identification with Hara's public persona, inflected with non-Japanese characteristics. Hara was expressly associated in postwar film discourse with Westernized fashions (Tsukamoto 1947, 44), and fans and critics often speculated that she had Russian or German ancestry. These associations were only heightened by her breakout role in the German-Japanese co-production The New Earth (Atarashiki tsuchi/The Daughter of the Samurai [Die Tochter des Samurai], Itami and Fanck, 1937). Hara's Westernized dress and independent manner may have read to Occupation authorities as exemplary of the new democratic (capitalist) ideals to be encouraged in the young postwar population, but at the same time she embodied the continuation of certain values central to girls' popular culture of the 1930s and early 1940s, such as a spirit of adventure and familiarity with Anglo-European dress and trends. Hara's appeal for young female viewers can be understood in this respect as an instance of miscommunication between film contents controllers and their young female audience.

Yet even Hara's persuasive star persona was limited in its re-educational value. While Elizabeth prized Hara's exoticism, she recalls reproducing only those behaviors understood as attractive in a highly traditional gendered sense, such as a graceful smile or laugh. She did not express any desire to copy Hara's iconoclastic approach to marriage and family. In this way, some film fans embraced female stars as role models, yet the impact of fan attractions on audiences' aspirations could not be controlled to the degree that SCAP and the studios appear to have imagined. Female fans latched on to Hara's Westernized appeal,

contextualized by a wider history of appreciation for Anglo-European tropes in prewar girls' culture but rejected her anti-romantic independent lifestyle just as strongly as others rejected Cinderella's all-consuming focus on heterosexual romance. According to the memories of young female viewers, film narratives and star personas appear to have been unwieldy tools for engineering democratic re-education through cinema attendance. Considering the unpredictable nature of girls reading girls at the cinema alongside the obstacles to entering the theater recalled by female study participants, Occupation efforts to exploit the attractions of the cinema for re-education purposes seem questionable.

Conclusion

The ethnographic materials analyzed in this article suggest that, counter to the popular media image of the girl as an avid consumer, the disproportionate difficulties that female viewers between the ages of five and seventeen faced in entering cinemas in certain areas and at certain times, along with the distractions posed by caring for others within the space of the cinema itself, may have impeded the free consumption of cinema narratives. As these narratives were often censored and produced with a young female audience in mind during the Occupation, the barriers that girls and young women faced in entering the cinema directly undermined attempts to transmit inspiring images and narratives of female emancipation to young female viewers.

The independent young female citizen may have been a prominent character in Japanese films of the postwar era, but she does not appear to have been in the cinema theater in the numbers that her fictional representations would lead us to assume. This ethnographic finding leads us back Marian Wright Edelman's famous phrase "You can't be what you can't see." Creating media content to inspire new ways of living and behaving is not enough; the example of Occupation-era Japanese cinema shows that such content does not always reach its intended audience. By paying attention to who can be in certain spaces and under what

conditions, we can better understand the structural forces governing access to film and, subsequently, shaping gender ideologies. Furthermore, we must allow for the possibility of audiences reading against the grain, channeling the hidden histories of particular images, characters, or tropes, and revisiting their own readings with new interpretations over the years to come.

Blending the testimonies of case studies and interviewees' memories with industry reports and sources from Japanese fan magazines and period publications, we can add nuance to our understanding of cinema-going culture and consider a new perspective on the gender dynamics of the Occupation era. Following the idealized and imagined girl as consumer, a significant trope in Japanese sociology and culture, this article has explored the lived experience of young female viewers' participation in film culture in postwar Japan, in order to better understand the complicated relation of young female audiences to the Occupation cinema and its censored content. Based on ethnographic evidence it would appear that "the mission given to film to democratize Japan" (Conde 1965, 251) fell short in some significant ways in reaching young female citizens during Occupation.

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