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Chapter 9

A Sense of a Memory: Prosthetic War Memories Among the Japanese Cinema Audience

Jennifer Coates

Engaging with the cinema has shaped many individuals' understandings of Japan's war history, demonstrating the major role that popular culture can play in evoking, embedding, and rearranging memories. This chapter explores how repeated engagements with film texts and cinema spaces can build prosthetic war memory among elderly audience members in Japan today. In the ethnographic materials analysed below, a sense of having war memories emerges from affectively charged recollections of going to the cinema, engaging with film culture, and sharing film spaces with others. While the basis of these perceived memories in fact (or otherwise) is hard to prove or disprove, cinema is discussed as evoking a closeness to wartime and to the generations who experienced Japan's wars before 1945.

The memories discussed in this chapter are not treated as factual historical accounts. Rather, this chapter approaches postwar cinema culture as "enabler of 'prosthetic memory'" (Keene 2010, 2; Landsberg 2004). Alison Landsberg coined the term "prosthetic memory" to describe "a new form of public cultural memory" located "at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or a museum" (2004, 2). In such encounters, Landsberg suggests that "the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live" (2004, 2). Exploring narratives about cinema-going in the early postwar period, this chapter posits engaging with war narratives on film as a means of bringing the cinema-goer closer to an understanding of Japan's war history, in light of the "enabling modalities" offered by cinema culture (Keene 2010, 10).

As such, this chapter does not deal with the narrative contents of war films themselves, but instead approaches the medium of film through ethnography and participant observation of viewership practices among elderly Japanese audience members. In the interviews and informal conversations discussed below, cinema emerges as a means of transporting the viewer back to wartime, affectively and evocatively. To date, the majority of scholarship on Japanese cinema and war memory has focused on defining war film genres and analysing war narratives on film (Salomon 2014; Seaton 2007; Standish 2005; Stegewerns 2014; Watanabe 2001; Wilson 2013), or on related issues like nationalism (Sugimoto 2008). Studies of wartime film productions tend to focus on propaganda efforts and effects, including censorship practices and dissenting audiences (Dower 1987, 2000; High 2003). By contrast, this chapter uses interview and survey materials as well as ethnographic detail from participant observation at retrospective film programmes to consider how an individual's perception of having war memories, or prosthetic memory, can be formed by repeated and on-going engagement with cinema culture and content related to war and occupation. The oral histories of cinema watching discussed below are complemented in the broader literary field in Japan by accounts of cinema memory and cinema-going in personal histories (*jibunshi*) and other forms of autobiographical writing. While outside the scope of the current chapter, discussion of these materials can be found in my *Film Viewing in Postwar Japan, 1945-1968: An Ethnographic Study* (2022), which includes analysis of interviewee-generated materials such as notes, maps, and diaries, as well as published *jibunshi*-style materials like the series *Watashi no rirekisho* (My Personal History) published in *Nihon keizai shinbun* (Japan Economics Newspaper).

Based on four years of fieldwork in the Kansai region of western Japan, the study on which this chapter is based is comprised of interviews with viewers who regularly attended the cinema from 1945 to 1968; a large-scale questionnaire project with participants born

between 1925 and 1955; and participant observation at retrospective film screenings and film clubs specializing in Shōwa era (1926-1989) cinema. The memories shared by now-elderly viewers suggest the value of an ethnographic approach for understanding how cinema culture plays a part in developing prosthetic memory, in this case fostering a sense of having war memories among generations born at the end of Japan's various wars.

War and Occupation at the Cinema

The Asia-Pacific War, also known as the Fifteen Years War or the Sino-Japanese War and Pacific War, is variously dated from 19 September 1931 on the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, 1 July 1937 on the declaration of the second Sino-Japanese war, or 7 and 8 December 1941 with the Japanese invasion of Thailand and the bombing of Pearl Harbour. This chapter deals with memories (or perceived memories) of the Asia Pacific or Fifteen Years war, understood as dating from 1931–1945. Following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, at the end of a protracted and widespread military campaign of fifteen years in East Asia and the Pacific region, historians such as John Dower have argued that the citizens of postwar Japan embraced defeat (2000). Japan was then occupied by US-led Allied forces from 1945-1952.

Beginning the Occupation of Japan on 2 September 1945, the offices of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP) circulated a "Memorandum Concerning Elimination of Japanese Government Control of the Motion Picture Industry" on 16 October 1945 (Hirano 1992, 39), indicating that from the earliest stages of the Occupation, cinema was imagined as a means to "educate" and "reorient" Japanese viewers (Kitamura 2010, 42). The emerging memory narratives of the recently ended war were key targets of Occupation oversight of film production, which focused on removing glorifying narratives about war and aggression in general, and direct references to the recent war and occupation in particular.

Cinema was thought to be an ideal mode of engaging citizens of all ages, from returning soldiers to housewives, school children, and even those of pre-school age. While I agree with Akiko Hashimoto's argument that "there is no "collective" memory in Japan; rather, multiple memories of war and defeat with different moral frames coexist" (2015, 4), SCAP's use of cinema and other public media entertainment and news products to shape memories of the recent war ensured that, as Hashimoto observes, "Japan's war memories are… deeply encoded in the everyday culture" (2015, 4). Landsberg suggests that "the role that mass cultural technologies might play in mediating an individual's memory" are closely connected to the "plastic" and "visual" nature of childhood memory identified by Sigmund Freud, as well as the "physical trace of how the body acted under past stimulations" noted by Henri Bergson as core to memory formation (2004, 16). Landsberg argues that both this visuality and the "thrill and 'attraction' of cinema" render the medium a "catalyst" for memory (2004, 16). The memories of cinema-going and related war memory narratives discussed in this chapter are understood within this polarized framework of enculturation and individual attraction.

Cinema theatres offered significant access to the attention and memory formation of a large number of Japanese citizens. Audience attendance was calculated at 733 million (rounded to the nearest million) in 1946, increasing by 3.2 per cent in 1947, 1.7 per cent in 1948 and 3.7 per cent in 1949 (Izbicki 1997, 46). The popularity of film grew rapidly, culminating in a peak admissions rate of 1,127,452,000 viewers in 1958 (Eiren). In interviews, many viewers recall the era as one "without many entertainments" (Koyama, personal communication) and the cinema is remembered as the major attraction for young children in particular, in comparison to radio broadcasts and reading materials. If, as Landsberg suggests, "mass culture technologies make it possible for large numbers of people from a wide range of ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds to create memories of

events through which they did not live," the cinema theatres of postwar Japan are a prime example of "the conditions for a new, prosthetic form of memory" (Landsberg 2004, 16).

Engaging with Retrospective Film Cultures

The ethnographic material analysed in this chapter 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 neighbouring areas also travelled to Kyoto to participate in the study. I conducted a large-scale questionnaire project with eighty-seven 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 theatre of the museum, two independent film-viewing clubs in Kyoto, and a cinema in Osaka specializing in Shōwa period cinema (see Coates 2018a). I recorded interviews with twelve 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 the 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. As the major film companies' secondary studios specializing in period dramas were located in Kansai, there is a significant degree of interest and even insider knowledge of cinema 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 cinemagoers. The average first cinema visit of participants in the study was at six years old, and so these

memories largely relate to participants' early childhood and teenage years. All data has been anonymized using pseudonyms.

The voices included in this chapter are those of the study participants who specifically focused on communicating their senses of war memories during our encounters. Other study participants focused on postwar social change, or the ideological or political legacies of the immediate postwar period on their generation, which yet others discussed the role of cinema-going in their attitudes to family, gender, the natural world, and global histories. While almost every participant mentioned Japan's defeat in 1945 at some point in our communications, the use of cinema memory to explore a sense of war memory in depth was limited to the participants whose memories are discussed in the following sections.

Wartime Narratives on Postwar Screens

After the end of Occupation in 1952, a rush of films revisited the wartime, Occupation, and pre-modern eras, covering themes as diverse as the revival of the popular *47 Loyal Retainers* (*Chūshingura*) tale, wartime events, (*The Human Condition/ Ningen no jōken*, Kobayashi Masaki, 1959-1961), Occupation politics and everyday encounters, including Occupation-related sex work (*Gate of Hell/ Nikutai no mon*, 1964), and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their aftermath (*Children of the Bomb/ Genbaku no ko*, Shindō Kaneto, 1952; *Hiroshima,* Sekigawa Hideo, 1953; *Twenty Four Eyes/ Nijūshi no hitomi*, Kinoshita Keisuke, 1954). Much post-Occupation cinema was in this sense already period film, dealing with issues that had occurred almost a decade ago, but which would have been difficult to produce under the strict censorship of the early years of Occupation.

We may expect war films, and films featuring war-related narratives, to have had limited popularity in the first decades after the war, given the mass loss of life, structural devastation, and shock of the atomic bombings which Japan had so recently suffered.

However, contemporary reviews which mention the "attractive" (*miryoku*) and "enjoyable" (*tanoshimi*) qualities of such films attest to their popular reception (Ogawa 1960, 83). In the case of the "war-retro" genre film, made in the 1950s and 1960s but set during wartime, Isolde Standish has argued that commercial cinema logic rearranges traumatic war memories and events "into ordered evidence of empirical historical facts through the imposition of teleological sequences of time and an all-knowing omniscient narration style" (2011, 52). For many study participants, post-Occupation films set during the war or Occupation presented a means of contextualizing and exploring their early childhood memories in a retrospective mode and were therefore remembered as popular and enjoyable. Standish argues that this popularity, which extended into the repetition and franchising of well-received themes and stories, has meant that "these films, and by extension the war-retro genre of the second half of the 1950s and 1960s, have stayed fixed within the generational memories of people who experienced the war as a 'collective memory'" (Standish 2011, 54).

As the ethnographic material below illustrates, these generational memories or collective memories are also offered by people who only very tangentially have what we might think of as experience-related war memory. In fact, many people with whom I spoke had been born in the later years of the war, and it would be reasonable to doubt that they had concrete personal memories of wartime events. However, the collective memory to which Standish alludes has been so powerfully represented by popular cinema that regular film fans describe a sense of a memory of wartime, whether or not that could be proven to be factually based. Before analysing these recollections to trace how this prosthetic memory develops through cinema-going, I will introduce some historical context by looking at how war-related narratives and themes on film were received between 1945-1965, according to archival materials and records.

Paul Virilio has written of the "wave of cinema palaces" that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century as a "historical necessity" (1989, 31), positing the cinema as a means of making sense of the two major wars which bookend its peak period of popularity. Between and briefly on either side of these wars, Virilio argues that "the speed effects of light created another form of collective memory in these new temples" (1989, 31). By contrast, Judith Keene locates the memory-building affordances of the cinema not its visual effects, but in narrative and plot, which "can serve as the container that gives shape to fragmentary, and often inchoate, public and private recollection, while providing the templates of meaning and the language with which to evaluate the wartime past" (2010, 2). While the relation between popular film and collective, or social, memory is complex (Harper 1997, 163), Sue Harper argues for a "relationship between commercially successful films and the mass audience's sense of national identity and interest" (1997, 164-166).

Films relating to war were certainly commercially successful in early postwar Japan. *The Tower of Lilies* (*Himeyuri no tō*, Imai Tadashi, 1953), which told the story of a group of young female students in Okinawa forced to serve as nurses at the battlefront at the end of the war, broke box office records by taking 180 million yen (Shimazu 2003, 112). By 1957, it had been overtaken by *The Emperor Meiji and the Russo-Japanese War* (*Meiji tennō to nichiro sensō*, Watanabe Kunio, 1957) which made 542 million yen in its first seven months (Shimazu 2003, 111-112). Critics were not all supportive of the film, which featured a reimagined Emperor shedding tears for his fallen soldiers (Kitagawa 1957, 41). However, ticket sales indicate that critical reviews did not dampen the audience's enthusiasm. 40 per cent of those surveyed recorded a favourable impression of the film's version of "old Japan," whereas 24 per cent complained that the film glorified the Emperor and his role (Kinema Junpō 1957, 114-115). Postwar nostalgia for wartime Japan extended beyond the recent wars,

and in fact we might expect that film narratives about the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, which Japan won, would be more popular than stories ending with the defeat of 1945.

However, Sandra Wilson notes that, "the Second World War was one of the most prominent of all cinematic themes in the 1950s" (2013, 538). This conflict featured in 175 fiction films released between 1945 and 1963 (Miyagi 1991, 4). Wilson suggests that war-related films "had a particular appeal for men, who might be seeking to revisit their wartime experiences, or to understand what their older relatives and friends had endured and they themselves might only narrowly have escaped" (2013, 539). At the same time, she argues that war films also informed "what had actually happened at the battlefronts" (2013, 539), given the limited information available to soldiers, who had only their own experiences to draw from, and civilians, whose information had been heavily censored.

Representatives of these audience demographics recorded their impressions of early postwar cinema narratives related to the recent wartime in the popular publications of the period. For example, the weekly magazine *Shūkan Asahi* devoted the 16 September 1956 cover story to the popular reception of war-related cinema. The story indicates that viewing war-related films was understood as an occasion to revisit and reshape postwar understandings of wartime conduct. For example, a former soldier cited footage of suicide pilots in *Record of the Pacific War: How Japan Fought* (*Taiheiyō sensō no kiroku: Nihon kaku tatakaeri*, 1956) as evidence of the bravery and determination of Japanese soldiers, despite their eventual defeat (1956, 4). Wilson similarly quotes an audience member viewing the US film *Task Force* (Delmer Daves, 1949, released in Japan as *Kidō butai*) who reported that, "newsreel footage from earlier stages of the conflict showed that Japanese forces had once been strong" and a "housewife [who] told a journalist that seeing the film had made her proud of what her country had been" (2013, 542). Based on these testimonies, Wilson argues

that “Unlikely as it may seem, the war even became something to remember with fondness” (2013, 543).

This fondness is often characterised as “nostalgia” (*kyōshū*) (Minami 1957, 76; Wilson 2013, 543), a term that reappears frequently in the memories of cinema culture shared by my own interviewees. By the late 1950s, this nostalgia was apparently evident in certain cinema theatres, as audience members applauded images of Japanese soldiers, pilots, and fleets (Wilson 2013, 543), as well as dialogue containing words such as “kamikaze” and “Zerosen” (*Shūkan Asahi* 1953, 14). The happy affect of this nostalgia was described by Tsurumi Shunsuke (1970, 49–52) who later wrote that hearing wartime songs was a positive experience in the postwar era due to their associations with shared experiences and self-sacrifice (1959). By this point, Wilson argues, “Nostalgia for certain aspects of the war, in other words, had become a commercial proposition” (2013, 543).

While war films made money at the box office, and audiences appear to have recorded broadly positive experiences with war narratives at the cinema in the first decades after defeat, the critical reception was mixed. A significant number of films discussing, depicting, or set in the war years were made in Japan between 1946 and 2001. Using the *Pia Cinema Club: Japanese Film Database Book 2003-4*, Philip Seaton estimates 235 in total, or 4 per year, with the greatest number dating from the 1950s and 1960s (2007, 138). Despite the large number, cross-referencing *Postwar Kinema Junpō’s Best Ten* and the Pia Cinema Club database, Seaton notes only 30 war films in the critics’ choice of the top ten films (2007, 139). Seaton found 18 war films in the top ten box office high-grossing films of the same period, and 11 films in both categories (2007, 139). Wilson similarly characterises critics as “generally unenthusiastic” about postwar war narratives (2013, 554). While *Eagle of the Pacific* (*Taiheiyō no washi*, Honda Ishirō, 1953) took third place in box office grossing, the *Kinema Junpō* Top Ten, chosen by 33 critics, did not feature the film.

It should also be noted that the critics and audiences surveyed in national publications were highly gendered. The postwar cinema audience was disproportionately male in many areas of Japan (Coates 2018c). The audience for war narratives seems to have been further polarised. Hikari Hori argues that "it is safe to assume that women viewers were in the minority" during the pre-war and wartime eras, and that "immediate postwar statistics do show that more men saw movies than women in the late 1940s and early 1950s" (2018, 88). A standard estimate for late 1950s audiences falls between 56 per cent male and 44 per cent female (Minami 1957, 76), yet 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 audience demographics on selected Sundays, indicates that the total postwar female audience peaked in 1956 with a turnout of 37.4 percent (Uryū 1967, 89). Survey takers found that female viewers were generally students and working women, both with disposable incomes (Hori 2002, 55). Participant observers at war film screenings reported that 80 per cent or more of the viewers were men. For example, Tsurumi reported that he saw *The War Hero Admiral Yamamoto and the Combined Fleet* (*Rengō kantai shirei chōkan: Yamamoto Isoroku,* Maruyama Seiji, 1968) in a full house that was all male (1970, 49–52). Yet in the interview and survey materials discussed below, a significant number of women report "prosthetic memories" of wartime enabled by cinema culture and film content, suggesting that this was by no means a topic of interest only to men.

Reimagining Wartime And its Aftermath Through Cinema

> Let's see. Well, around the time of the Korean War, conditions in Japan suddenly improved, as if overnight. In the five years before that, the streets were full of injured soldiers, people who had returned from the war playing accordions and

> shining shoes… In that impoverished Japan, I saw this kind of thing all the time when I went out. I was only a child, and of course I couldn't see how conditions were everywhere, but when I looked at the state of Japan, well, it just seemed so poor… When I see those stories from my childhood in films, the memories all come back, and I feel nostalgic.
>
> (Koyama san, born 1944)

This excerpt from a recorded interview recalls the opening section of Akiko Hashimoto's *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan,* which introduces the same image of "amputated middle-aged men wearing tattered cotton military uniforms" lining the streets near Shinjuku station in Tokyo in the 1960s (2015, 1). The visual imagery of the suffering of the post-defeat era, reiterated by popular media images in cinema and photography, echoed across my interviewee's memories of a diverse range of places and times in postwar Kansai, and continues to echo through contemporary writing on the era. Hashimoto argues for such predominant images or narratives in "memory culture products" such as film (2015, 65) as offering multiple paths to "moral recovery" through the construction of a coherent collective identity (2015, 140-141). As Koyama san's recollection quoted above indicates, many of the participants in my study understood their engagements with cinema as a way to connect with or re-organize such memories. This second part of this chapter will explore how engagement with war narratives on film can be understood as a means of developing Landsberg's "prosthetic memory" for both the generation who grew up during the war and Occupation, and for the later generations born after Occupation who wished to establish some connection to that period.

Many of the cinemas and screening events recalled by participants in my study are no longer in existence. In this sense, their memories of early postwar cinema-going are sealed in

the past, and re-awakened in the encounter of the interview. Yet my interlocutors continued their life-long encounters with cinema culture, in fact, their participation in this study was one example of their continued engagement with film. By participating in this study, and attending screenings at the Kyoto Culture Museum, or film clubs and monthly screening groups, participants in my study continued to make new memories of viewership. I therefore position their perceptions of their memories of wartime and the early postwar era in relation to their continued engagement with cinema as an on-going experience rather than a memory sealed in the past.

In framing study participants' accounts of their experiences at the cinema as processes of memory-building, or prosthetic memory building, I borrow Laura Marks' description of "film viewing as an exchange between two bodies – that of the viewer and that of the film" (2000, 149). Marks argues that "perception is not an infinite return to the buffet table of lived experiences but a walk through the minefield of embodied memory" (2000, 152). In this respect, the memories related below are not presented as factual accounts of lived experience, but rather as memory building discourses, in which the embodied memories of cinema viewing blend with the changing narratives of personal history. Jan Campbell suggests that "film ethnography" can reveal the operations of "film spectatorship as a phenomenological and retrospective screen memory" (2005, 164). This chapter frames the testimonies of film viewers in this light, understanding these discursive performances as suggestive of the role of film viewership in evoking memories, fostering a sense of a memory, and extending perception into prosthetic memory. As Annette Kuhn has argued,

> …memory texts may create, rework, repeat, and re-contextualise the stories people tell each other about the kinds of lives they have led; and these memory-stories can assume a timeless, even a mythic quality which may be enhanced with every re-telling. Such everyday myth-making works at the levels of both personal

> and collective memory and is key, in the production, through memory, of shared identities (2002, 11).

"I would have thought it wasn't possible to have such strong memories from the age of only two or three." (Hashimoto san, born 1943)

A significant majority of participants in my study used speaking about the cinema as a way of situating their experiences in a particular time. As a large number were born between 1940 and 1945, with a concentration around 1943, many had a sense of this turning point in Japanese history as an uncertain memory. Several interviewees mentioned viewing films either made or retrospectively set during the war as a means of confirming hazy memories. Many had heard family stories passed down through generations for so long that they were unsure which memories were really their own, if there can be such a thing. For example, Hashimoto san spoke of confirming his memories of air raids with both his older brother and his father, as well as by watching film texts depicting similar scenes. In the excerpt from our interview below, living memory keepers like family members are placed on a par with the memory-building, or prosthetic memory forming role played by fictional cinema narratives and documentary films alike.

> As I was born in Shōwa 18 [1943], well, after that I listened to my older brother, and I confirmed that these things really happened. For example, of course we were out in the countryside, but we often had air raid warnings, the siren would sound, and we'd have to run for the bomb shelter. I remember one time falling over on the way – the bomb shelter was at the house next door. Well, I remember that. And on the nights Nagoya was bombed, I remember my father saying "Ah, tonight Nagoya's being bombed again, I guess." I saw that the front face of the mountain was all red. Of course, I also remember my father telling me all about

it, and later when I saw films about it, I thought "They really did that well (*umai*)." (Hashimoto, personal communication 2016)

Assuming that he wouldn't have clear memories from his early childhood years, I had asked Hashimoto san whether he thought that watching films set during the war helped him to understand the memories of the wartime generation. I was surprised when his answer focused on his own early memories rather than the experiences of his elder family members. He mentioned his father and brother and recalled them telling him about the events of wartime, but he seemed most keen to weave together his family members' testimonies and the narratives and imagery of certain films, not as a means of reconstructing a past in which he was not present, but as a means of confirming his own early memories, or his sense of those memories existing. In this respect, Hashimoto san's recollections appeared to be close to those "privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person's own archive of experience" observed by Landsberg (2004, 19). Hashimoto san appeared to identify himself as a member of the "wartime generation" (*sensō jidai*), rather than a postwar child, in part by using popular cinema content to "confirm" his sense of his own personal early childhood memories. In this way, cinema content could present a means of temporal emplacement for the generations born in the liminal years at the end of the war, who are not quite the war generation but also not quite the *apure* (*après*) or postwar generation.

Temporal and geographical emplacements are not distinct, but rather intimately connected. Here it is important to note the geographical specificity of wartime and postwar experiences across Japan. Okinawa and Tokyo had very different roles in the war effort, for example, and consequently people in those cities had very different experiences, from the firebombing of central Tokyo to the cave- and beach-based war on the islands of Okinawa. Western Japan and the Kansai area, as a region comprised of very different major cities with

rural areas in between, similarly has a diverse range of war experiences. While rural agricultural areas such as Gifu were relatively safe from bombing, food scarcity was a major issue. The port areas of Osaka and Kobe were vulnerable to attack, while Kyoto experienced minimal bombing in comparison to Tokyo, yet was bombed later into wartime in the western area north of Nijō castle. Local residents in the northwest Nishijin area of the city maintain that the city government used the war as a convenient excuse to dismantle *buraku* areas under the guise of fire breaking. Not only are the wartime experiences of older residents in Western Japan quite different according to local area, but the perpetrators of wartime violence also range from Allied forces to discriminatory city bureaucrats.

Western Japan and the Kansai region also have distinctive migration patterns, as travel between rural areas and the city is today very convenient. It is perfectly possible to work in Kyoto and live in Kobe or Osaka, as many people do. Many participants in my study moved from one area to another for work or marriage, such as Hashimoto san quoted above, who moved to Kobe later in life, bringing his childhood memories of Nagoya. Despite the relatively small geographical distance of such a move, participants nonetheless had to familiarize themselves with the particularities of their new hometowns, including specialized dialect, produce, cooking, and hospitality styles. A part of this familiarization in the postwar period involved making oneself aware of what kind of war experiences were particular to one's new region, as opposed to those distinct to one's hometown. Cinema content helped to situate many study participants both geographically and temporally in the years after the war, as they explored Western Japan's diverse range of war memories through film viewing.

Like many of my interviewees, Koyama san brought a range of photographs and film materials to each meeting. Unlike others who brought favourite film magazines, star photographs, postcards, and programme handbills from films they had seen however, she also brought large printouts of her favourite film posters, and photographs of her local area taken

before she was born. Showing me black and white photographs taken in 1942, two years before her birth, she pointed out historical details such as the common practice of writing shop signs from right to left, as opposed to today's fashion for writing from left to right. She mixed together the photographs and film posters, laying them out in her lap, and the two sets of materials together prompted her recollections of the everyday life of wartime and early postwar Japan.

> Ah, you know this one! Everyone loved that star back then. Of course, in those days there were no baths in the houses, but there were plenty of big family homes around. Everyone listened to the radio at home and then talked about it at the bathhouse. It was that kind of thing. I hardly saw it, but later at the Bunpaku I could see it [on film]" (Koyama, personal communication, 2016).

Koyama san wove together the aspirational, in stories of stars and nation-wide fame, with the extremely banal, in her recollections of bathhouse conversations, prompted by her collection of film materials. She contextualized her story after its telling by acknowledging that she had only slight memories of this era – "I hardly saw it." Yet her experience of seeing films set in this period appeared to give her a feeling of ownership over this memory of historical and national change, at least to the extent that she felt comfortable educating a foreign researcher about the era.

She also brought photographs of everyday postwar life taken outside her hometown of Kōshien, in Osaka city centre, and in Kobe. Pointing to a picture of returnee soldiers begging in the street, dressed in the distinctive white clothing of the war injured, she recalled, "They were always in Osaka city, and in Sannomiya in Kobe… You could see them for around ten years after the war. After the Korean war you didn't really see them anymore though. Of course, they're the people who came back after defeat in the Second World War" (Koyama, personal communication, 2016). Though Koyama san grew up in a smaller town which did

not have returnees begging in the street, her brief experiences visiting the centres of Osaka and Kobe, and her identification with the era itself as a period in living memory contributed to her desire to incorporate these more iconic aspects of postwar life into her personal story.

Koyama san used the photographs that she brought to our interview in a similar mode to the way that all interviewees used their recollections of cinema narratives – as outside confirmation of scenes and events vaguely remembered, or not remembered, but believed to be of historical importance. Producing photographs taken by others of the years immediately before her birth was a means of claiming legitimacy for her role as memory keeper, shoring up Koyama san's effort to impart a sense of a historical period which neither of us had directly experienced. Her possession of and fluency in reading these photographs established the Japanese Koyama san, though born slightly later than the period under discussion, as a legitimate transmitter of the story of the era for a younger, non-Japanese audience such as myself. The photographs became a physical manifestation of the same pattern in our discussions on cinema narratives, serving as confirmation of knowledge about an earlier time, as well as a handy illustration, or appeal to a shared visual language, which eased the communication of these half-remembered events or prosthetic memories. In Koyama san's spoken memories, cinema and everyday life were tied together, one explaining and contextualizing the other. She saw nothing strange in mixing together photographs from her own life, from the time before her birth, and promotional material for films dealing with similar eras and themes.

It is important to note that throughout my project these visual aids were used to communicate complicated feelings about the war and its aftermath to 'outsider' or non-Japanese audiences, in myself and the imagined readers of my future work. Koyama san's father did not go to war, but she recalled strong memories of seeing images of American soldiers riding through occupied Japan in their Jeeps, giving out chocolate. She was at pains

to point out that her memories do not include any sense of bitterness or hatred directed towards the occupiers from the adults and children around her. “There was absolutely no sense of having lost, I mean, among the children, and we didn’t have any people close to us who had died, so a lot of people felt that that they [the American soldiers] were here to give help. Because we were children, there was absolutely no sense of enmity” (Koyama, personal communication 2016). Instead, she remembered her mother making new clothes from old scraps based on the designs they had seen in Hollywood movies. While the imagery of the photographs that she brought communicated a visual sense of the hardship of the end of the war, Koyama san’s stories about imported films and friendships with Americans borrowed from the uplifting affect of much mainstream cinema to present a prosthetic war memory palatable to a non-Japanese audience. While Landsberg imagined prosthetic memory as reaching out across generations and bridging the gap between those who have experienced and event and those who have not, we must also consider its transnational impact, extending across places as well as time to build a memory that works for many sides of a past conflict.

“When I watch films from just before I was born, I feel respect and honour”

(Inoue san, born 1958)

The use of prosthetic memory to build connections across generations was a common theme throughout my study, and particularly in the testimonies of younger study participants. For many, postwar film content presented a means to connect to the memories of older generations. This was the case both for those who were children during the postwar era, and for those born significantly after the war, such as Inoue san quoted above. In some cases, film was conceptualized as a bridge between generations of a family, echoing Wilson’s argument that war narratives on film allowed viewers “to understand what their older relatives and friends had endured and they themselves might only narrowly have escaped” (2013, 539).

Hashimoto san, whose best friend lost his father in the war, approached war films as a means to understand his older friends and acquaintances' experiences. "Well, of course there were people in my close circle of friends who had lost their fathers in the war, and we had many friends who died, so of course I felt very sorry for them. But at the same time, I didn't really know anything about the actual experience of war" (Hashimoto, personal communication, 2016).

From his high school years onward, Hashimoto san felt that he was strongly influenced by the content of pacifist postwar war-retro films such as the box office success *Tower of Lilies*. At the time of our interview, he also expressed vehement support for the pacifist goals of Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution of Japan. Throughout my project, many participants attributed their contemporary political ideologies to the content of specific films made in the postwar years. The generational and family connections in accounts of such viewership experiences seem key to their emotional impact, which has implications for their role in memory formation, or the development of prosthetic memory. While Hashimoto san imagined viewing war films as a means of attaining greater understanding of the experiences of the elder generations with whom he grew up, his recollections of such movies, and his own emotional response was strongly tied to his memories of his own family.

Hashimoto san remembered his elder brothers and sisters teasing him about his emotional reactions to particular war films.

> As there were many siblings in my family, my elder brother and sister often took me to the cinema. I remember one time, I must have been around eight years old (I've checked this with my older sister), and my sister took me to a film with Ishihama Akira playing a character who gets sent to war around high school age. The soldiers have to get up so early and suffer physically. There was that song, I forget the name… (sings) *tan tan tan ta ta tan ta ta tan*. That music appeared

> when the soldiers marched out, and when I saw it, I cried a lot. When we got back home, I remember that my sister told everyone "Yo-chan caused me some amount of trouble!" (Hashimoto, personal communication, 2016)

In Hashimoto san's accounts, he emphasized his own emotional reaction to war narratives on film, while contextualizing his response as unusual in comparison to his elder relatives' own responses and expectations. His sister joked that his emotional reaction had caused trouble for her, as viewers were disturbed or annoyed by the child, she was escorting crying. At the same time, he also described certain war-related films, such as the teacher's union sponsored *Hiroshima* as "crying films" (*nakeru eiga*), suggesting that others in the theatre may have been doing the same. In such accounts of viewing war films, crying or otherwise engaging emotionally with the narrative appeared to be a way of coming closer to the elder generation and their experiences.

Several study participants recalled feeling a similar sense of emotional pity and admiration for those who suffered through the extreme poverty of the wartime and postwar eras in Japan. Almost every survey respondent noted the poverty (*mazushii*) of the era, and several expressed gratitude to the elder generations including their own parents, for working through this difficult time. Kobayashi san argued that film was an important tool for learning about this era and continues to be so today. Watching war films and films made during wartime, "you can understand the feeling not only of those who died in the war, but also those women who became widows" and that the cumulative effect is something like a "national experience" (*kokuminteki keiken*) shown on film (Kobayashi, personal communication, 2016). Despite the differences in regional and geographical experience sketched above, Kobayashi san, who lived all his life in Kobe excepting his university years spent in Tokyo, conceptualized the time period of the war and Occupation as kind of national experience, or communal experience (*kyōtsu keiken*) (Kobayashi, personal communication,

2016). Yet he worried that not many people were going to see the films that depict this overarching temporal experience.

> After the period of high economic growth, Japan's poverty problem didn't exactly disappear, but things certainly changed. People who had been really poor could now have a middle-class lifestyle. At the same time, as years passed since the end of the war, those experiences quickly faded from film, and were replaced by stuff like violent yakuza films… It's unfortunate, but there aren't any really excellent people shown on film anymore. (Kobayashi, personal communication, 2016)

Kobayashi san connected his respect for the older generation, whose suffering he believed that he understood and contextualized by watching films about the wartime and postwar periods, with a higher standard of film making. The idea of excellence in relation to human qualities is extrapolated to excellence in filmmaking. Inoue san, who approached war and postwar films as a means of historical understanding, similarly expressed as much respect for the craft of filmmaking displayed in the Occupation era as for the character types depicted struggling through difficult historical circumstances, and for their real-life equivalents.

> In that period of cinema, there were so many people gathered together in the theatres, and there were so many really great films too. No matter how many times you watch those films, they're still interesting. I don't really know, because these are films from a little before I was born, so I don't really know about the social situation, but I love these films, I think they're really great, and when I watch them, I feel so much respect and appreciation. (Inoue, personal communication, 2016)

Like Kobayashi san, Inoue san's respect for those elder generations living in a different "social situation" was conflated with his admiration for the craft and technical innovations of postwar Japanese cinema.

This conflation was evident in the way a number of participants discussed their memories of watching Kinoshita Keisuke's *Twenty-Four Eyes* (*Nijūshi no hitomi*, 1954), an explicitly anti-war film. Almost everyone who went to school in the 1950s was shown this film either in class or on school trips to the cinema. The suffering of the characters during militarization and war made a great impact on participants in my study. At the same time, many expressed admiration not only for the ideological content of the film, but for the innovations in filmmaking that it showcases. The twelve pupils of the title grew from five-year-olds to adults over the course of the film, which spans more than twenty years. Kinoshita Keisuke cast non-professional child actors living on the island on which the film is set, with one particular proviso. Only families of siblings were cast, so that younger and elder siblings could play the same character at different moments in the character's narrative. Inoue san recalled, "At first, I thought the six-year-olds and the twelve-year-olds were the same person, just a few years apart. When I read that they were siblings, I was so surprised! I thought that idea was really interesting" (Inoue, personal communication, 2016). In coming closer to the elder generations, and a different period in time through watching postwar films, study participants' statements suggested that they felt that they were not only learning about wartime and Occupation experiences, but also coming closer to a golden age of cinematic artistry and invention.

In its ability to transport the viewer back to an earlier period of their life, the encounter with cinema appeared to have some time-travel-like qualities for many participants in my study. Several recounted pleasurable feelings of nostalgia when watching films from their younger years. Viewers in the post-1955 generation also spoke of nostalgia in relation to

watching film text made before they were born, echoing Landsberg's argument above, that engagement with film, or other mass cultural technologies, can cause the viewer "to create memories of events through which they did not live" (Landsberg 2004, 14). In these instances, the idea of nostalgia appeared to be more of an imagined national concept than a personal one. These viewers were not only attempting to understand earlier periods of Japanese history, and the experiences of older generations through cinema, but they were also attempting to connect to some kind of imagined national sentiment in regard to the difficult wartime and postwar years.

Mediating Memory Through the Cinema

In attempting to understand the relation of memory and cinema, we must be wary, as Judith Keene has argued, of "slippage from a discussion about the themes within a film's content into any straightforward conclusion about the incorporation of these themes into collective memory" (2010, 15-16). Alison Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory has been used here to distinguish perceived memories of war and its aftermath prompted or supported by experiences of film viewership from personal memories based on actual lived experience of wartime. Landsberg argues that "through an act of prosthesis enabled by cinematic identification" the memories of events that we did not personally live through "become part of our archive of memory" (2003, 155). In the memories shared by my study participants above, we can see how favourite films and fond recollections of cinema going can ease even unpleasant narratives such as war and defeat into the "archive of memory" kept by those with no direct personal experience of the events in question.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly consider what the activities discussed above seem to mean to my study participants. My own presence as a non-Japanese researcher from a different generation perhaps shaped our encounters significantly, as the majority of

participants adopted the role of memory keepers of Japan's troubled history with an emphasis on smoothing over historic bad feeling. Insistence of a lack of negative feelings towards Allied forces during and after the Occupation was combined with expression of an ardent love for Hollywood cinema, weaving the negative narratives of defeat and Occupation together with a romantic longing for the modes of living glimpsed through imported films. In this way, the prosthetic memories extended through engagement with cinema narratives of war and Occupation appeared to be a kind of bridge building, eliding national and cultural differences in a shared nostalgic love of Hollywood.

Yet the most significant aspect of the prosthetic memory work of cinema attendance and recollections of film narratives for my study participants seems to be an effort to bring themselves closer to previous generations of their own families. Almost all participants in the study spoke of their parents at length, attributing a love of cinema to the passion of a mother or father who brought them to film theatres regularly. In their later life commitment to re-telling, reworking, and ameliorating the negative emotional valence of war narratives, study participants may be reclaiming their parents' life stories, removing those parts that may wear less well over time, and substituting wartime politics, ideologies, and suffering for a happier nostalgic image of shared enrapturement at the cinema.

While Landsberg is at pains to disavow "anything *inherently* positive or progressive" about prosthetic memory enabled by technology (2003, 157), she does argue for prosthetic memory as able "to affect people in profound ways – both intellectually and emotionally – in ways that might ultimately change the way they think, and how they act, in the world" (2003, 158). The majority of the participants in my study demonstrated a commitment to anti-war political principles, and explicitly connected this political orientation to the power of cinema to communicate difficult truths and sentiments about Japan's war and occupation. As Koyama san suggested,

> Japan's history and its postwar recovery can be felt though stories on film. It can be a good way to study, and I think that if children can watch good films that touch their hearts, they can become people capable of being moved emotionally (Koyama, personal communication, 2016).

Koyama san clearly associates learning from Japan's past with becoming a person who can be moved emotionally, whose heart can be touched by others' suffering, and situates cinema as a technology which can develop these feelings. In this respect, her hope converges with Landsberg's understanding of prosthetic memory fostered by technologies such as cinema as "a utopian dream," which challenges us to "take seriously these technologies" as a means to construct new political alliances and positions based on "collective social responsibility" (2003, 158). Engagement with war narratives in cinema may offer a means to move away from wartime ideologies while coming closer to a sense of a memory of wartime experience.

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