

(Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, embodied in General Douglas MacArthur) held the authority to pardon the guilty. Even before the penalizing of only a fraction of Japanese war criminals in the Tokyo War Crimes Trials (1946–1948), it was apparent that the Occupation needed to entrench the intelligentsia within the political, economic and bureaucratic systems, or in what remained of them. This milieu was favourable to the emergence of a narrative of redemption, which manifested as self-victimization, not as a resolute repentance; the aforementioned state of fragmentation prioritized accounts of suffering by Japanese civilians rather than of any savage acts committed during colonization or the war. This process was facilitated by the undeniable fact of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 as well as widespread postwar hardship. The redemption was self-redemption inasmuch as the Japanese media helped establish the requirements needed to attain salvation in an era in which ‘the victim became the hero for Japan’ (Orr 2001: 10).

The first chapter in Part I, Martínez’s analysis of *Ikiru* (among other films by Kurosawa), raises important questions about guilt and responsibility, complicity and redemption as well as the problem of memory and the legacy for the next generation. Her piece asks about the possibility of responsibility in a world that lacks certainty, and hence the very notion of guilt becomes an open question. Martínez relates this to a lost generation of leftist artistic liberals, who bowed their heads, cooperated with the establishment and, at the war’s end, had to decide not just how to or how not to assume responsibility for their inaction but what they would do about it as survivors. Given this context, Martínez understands Kurosawa’s work as a part of his personal redemption at a time when the feelings of guilt about the past were a source of continuous tension beneath the social fabric.

The issue of responsibility is also indirectly present in the chapter by Marcos P. Centeno Martín. In his analysis, Centeno documents how the films *Tokyo 1958* (by the creative group Shinema 1958, led by Hani Susumu) and *Furyō Shōnen* (‘Bad Boys’, Hani 1960) materialized the demands for a new type of documentary film after the crisis of realism and the ideological rupture within the Left took place from the second half of the 1950s onwards. These productions reclaimed the political sense that the term *avant-garde* had carried before the war and drew on the idea of subjectivity to attack the old objectivism while casting a critical gaze over the concurrent period.

Subjectivity is explored as well by Ferran de Vargas’ chapter through the analysis of the film *Kōshikei* (‘Death by Hanging’, 1968), in which the function of the characters’ subjectivity – as well as that of the audience and of the director Ōshima Nagisa – is continuously addressed. As one of the prime

representatives of the 1960s Japanese *Nūberu Bāgu* (New Wave), Ōshima was trying to develop a filmic text based on radical scepticism and subjectivism as opposed to humanist cinema, whose themes expressed a fear of Japan's premodern past and a trust in the structures of modernity. Within this intellectual and artistic context, different aesthetic movements appeared and, from their own standpoints, they attempted to foster the Japanese subject in terms of its autonomy. In light of this trend, De Vargas' work explores how the radical subjectivity advocated by the cinema of the *Nūberu Bāgu* acquires its full meaning as an aesthetic correlate of the Japanese New Left movement that reacted to the prevailing progressive thinking – heavily influenced by the Marxism of the Japanese Communist Party – that characterized the humanist cinema in the immediate postwar years.

The Past in the Present

As previously mentioned, the responsibility for the war was transferred to an ill-defined Other, an abstract idea of the militarist state or a vague entity called simply 'the system' (Orr 2001: 3), meaning a 'system of irresponsibilities' that had constituted Japan's fascist rule (Maruyama 1969 [1949]) and that was typified as an autonomous and self-contained body, a sort of single agent considered responsible for the war. Through this practice war actions were anonymized and abstracted from any historical or political context. Such a decontextualization of war memories led to an amnesia about the war era. The more that forgetting became the political hegemony's norm, the more possible it became for the past to be associated with the contemporaneous ideological interests of different political groups. Concurrently with this top-down amnesia, war memories emerged everywhere as a persistent and inevitable 'absent presence' (Igarashi 2000: 3, 10).

Mirroring the summary execution depicted in *Kōshikei*, Part II opens with Griseldis Kirsch's analysis of the TV drama *Watashi wa Kai ni Naritai* (I Want to Be a Shellfish) in which Shimizu, an ordinary man from a small town, is arrested on charges of being a war criminal after Japan's defeat. Kirsch explores the politics of identity in a production that has been the object of several remakes, considering especially the way in which the present reconstructs and shapes the past according to contemporary social demands and political intentions. It is particularly interesting how Kirsch reveals the narrative strategies that link the individual story of Shimizu, a good man sent to the war front, with an entire generation and how his particular victimization embodies the victimization of Japan as a whole.

The fragmentation of memory through the nostalgic reimagination of the past also constitutes a core issue in Laura Treglia's analysis of

myth-making and the reworking of cultural gender meanings in *yakuza eiga* (gangster movies) – one of the few early postwar genres in which Japanese men could be represented as both violent and heroic. Treglia explores the ambiguous impact of parodic inversions in women's representation in 'pinky violence' genre movies by observing the redefinition of their characters vis-à-vis a continuation of the masculine tragic hero ideal. It is significant that these reversed images, ultimately, reinforce as much as contest stereotypical gender representations, revealing the exploitation and reproduction of a trite feminine archetype that becomes significant not only in the reading of the past but mainly in the critical understanding of the present. The archaeology of *yakuza* movies traced in Treglia's chapter is especially illuminating, not just in its scope but also in tracing both a genealogy of outlaw characters and failed heroes drawn from past collective memory and the popular culture that is bequeathed to the future. In this sense, her analysis of the *yakuza* film genre eloquently demonstrates the extent to which past fictional narratives reveal much about present-day reality.

By analysing the media representations of the legendary 300 million yen robbery that occurred in 1968 in Tokyo, the account of the past takes a different spin in the chapter by Katsuyuki Hidaka, without departing from the issues of nostalgia for a postwar era that allowed contestation, idealism and the struggle for a progressive future. If memory is always a reconstruction of history through the gaze of the present, the nostalgic appeal of the failed heroes of the past – whether romantic white-collar criminals or idealist student radicals of the 1960s – reveals also the current discontentment with the present and has its roots in a Japanese tradition of appreciating nonconformist, tragic heroes (see Morris 2014). Hidaka explores how the media have represented that robbery both heroically, as an anti-authoritarian political offence associated with the New Left student movement, and critically, by denouncing the student activists' self-deception and their complicity in the development of Japan's full-scale consumer society.

The Persistence of Memory

Closing the collection, Part III, 'The Persistence of Memory', addresses the transnational presence of Japanese media productions in relation to the issues hitherto discussed. In the first chapter, Artur Lozano-Méndez underscores how the animation industry also adopts a multifaceted approach to memory that foregrounds the social arena as the hub where the past is negotiated to explain contemporary political realities. *Eden of the East* (2009–2010), the anime franchise analysed in his chapter, takes a

more unforgiving view of the Shōwa era's legacy than the films discussed by Hidaka. While older and powerful characters may feel responsible for their past actions (given Japan's current social and economic stagnation), they maintain that it is the younger generation that is morally obliged to come up with a solution to a crisis that they have not created.

Lozano-Méndez explores other issues of legacy with which the series deals: digital memory, rumours and memes, amnesia and alternative identities. Thus, the reified concept of historical fact is undermined, as is the notion of utopia as intrinsically unattainable. *Eden of the East* asks why is it 'mature' to temper current political aspirations with realism and who sets the limits as well as the historical *a priori* of realpolitik. Director Kamiyama Kenji and his team of writers are eminently worried about the perceived stagnation of the Japanese economy and social prospects, and they point to the idea that the same dominant cultural order that stifles memory is inhibiting the emergence of new paths out of the postmodern simulacra, be these akin to Disneyland or Watergate (Baudrillard 1978: 29, 36).

Focusing also on the animation industry, in the closing chapter, Tomohiro Morisawa poses a fundamental question regarding the weight of memory in the building of contemporary expectations. The animation industry has followed the path of other Japanese industries in cutting the cost of production and outsourcing links in the production chain, but as semiotic codes are embedded within the process of production, the question of how to keep Japanese anime 'Japanese' and, therefore, what makes Japanese animation 'Japanese' arises. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Filipino and Japanese studios, Morisawa explicates how the Japanese industry has tackled this and how it manages to do so in a situation that could only be labelled 'postcolonial', since the outsourcing is to former colonies of the Japanese Empire. His chapter provides an analysis that, ultimately, queries the meaning of 'national creative industries' – particularly that of Japan – in an era of transnational production and the global circulation of media culture.

This section showcases the recursivity of the previous chapters' concerns regarding responsibility, identity and the political direction of the country. The modalities of management and representation of these issues adopted in recent media reveal the continuity with roots in the emperor system, the Greater East Asia War and the Occupation. The dynamics observed in Part I – the decontextualization of victim and aggressor – and the lack of focus in the re-emerging media industry on the hundreds of thousands Japanese *nanmin* (refugees) returning to Japan from its former colonies is echoed in the use of the term *nanmin* in the 2000s to designate the Japanese victims of economic hardship or the working poor.

Japanese victimization, then, neglected the victims of the country's war aggression and now neglects the citizens from other countries who are fleeing persecution and life-threatening situations in a global context of periodical refugee crises that Japan's legislative majority has not felt compelled to address – the state's provisions for immigration and asylum remain amongst the most stringent in developed countries.⁹ The desultory repentance of prewar leaders, then, is mirrored in the half-hearted assumption of the responsibility by baby boomers employed in public administration and on the boards of major companies (including the media) apropos their role in Japan's listless economic recovery. They are also quick to 'share' the responsibility with younger generations, who they criticize on moral grounds – pointing to their supposed lack of entrepreneurship and work ethics. We posit that these are not mere coincidences or loosely drawn parallelisms. There is historical *a priori* at work that (re)articulates familiar performative rules that draw from pre-existing preferred readings and reinforce dominant-hegemonic positions.

While Part III is called 'The Persistence of Memory', we could have just as easily opted for a 'return of the repressed' epigraph, and the Conclusion tackles this aspect through a discussion of national trauma and suffering. Case studies such as the ones compiled here function as tangible entry points into narratives and worldviews that refuse to be reduced to a clear pattern and to a unique voice, although trauma might be seen as a unifying theme. As Kaplan and Wang argue, 'trauma consists in the unmaking of the world' (2008: 12), and the Japanese have long been trying to remake their nation, but no amount of image management has yet healed the fracturing of 1945. The chapters in this collection can only sketch out some of the ways in which this has been represented in a long postwar that seems to be Japan's state of being, but they also remind us that the Japanese case is not unique. Modern societies are all damaged; their citizens live with suffering marked by past traumas – whether as 'winners' or 'losers'. The fruits of this condition are cross-cultural: we live in uncertain times and desperately attempt to shore up our identities in the light of that ambiguity. Fragility may well be our postmodern default setting.

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Notes

1. For Marx's definition of 'social consciousness' see his 1859 'Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*' (Marx 1977 [1859]). Most famously he argued that: 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness,' pointing to the ideological dimensions of consciousness. Engels further developed Marx's concept of social consciousness in a letter to Franz Mehring (1893), coining the term 'false consciousness'. Here Engels clearly links consciousness with ideology: 'Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all'. Most important for our volume is Engel's (1893) assertion that 'The ideologist who deals with history (history is here simply meant to comprise all the spheres – political, juridical, philosophical, theological – belonging to society and not only to nature), the ideologist dealing with history then, possesses in every sphere of science material which has formed itself independently out of the thought of previous generations and has gone through an independent series of developments in the brains of these successive generations'.
2. Marcuse (1987 [1932]: 1) outlined the premises of this term: 'Historicity is what defines history and thus distinguishes it from "nature" or from the "economy"'. Historicity signifies the meaning we intend when we say of something that it is "historical". Historicity signifies the meaning of this "is", namely the meaning of the Being of the historical'. Stephen Bronner (2011: 14) provides a more synthetic definition: '... "historicity", or the phenomenological structures whereby social reality is experienced by the individual'.

3. See especially: Gordon 1993; Hui, Van Bremen and Ben-Ari 2005; Saaler and Schwentker 2008; Yoda and Harootunian 2006.
4. See: Barnard 2003; Buruma 1994; Dower 1999, 2012; Hein and Selden 2000; Hogan 1996; Nozaki 2008; Orr 2001; Saaler 2005; Seaton 2007, 2016; Seraphim 2006.
5. See: Bestor 1989; Ivy 1995, 1998; Kelly 1986; Martínez 1990; Morris-Suzuki 1998; Robertson 1991, 1997; Vlastos 1998; Yano 2002.
6. See: Cook and Cook 1992; Hashimoto 2015; Igarashi 2000; Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, 2006; Selden and Selden 1989; Tamanoi 2009; Trefalt 2003; Yoneyama 1999.
7. Some selected readings on this would include: Frühstück 2007; Ikeda 2014; Morris-Suzuki 2005; Stahl and Williams 2010; Tachibana 1998; Treat 1995.
8. While Weber discussed the state's monopoly on violence as the core of its internal control over its citizens bounded by the nation's territory, his argument applies equally to the state's attempts to defend its borders.
9. According to Dower (1999: 48–49): 'In the wake of defeat, approximately 6.5 million Japanese were stranded in Asia, Siberia, and the Pacific Ocean area', that includes both the military and the civilians (many of these were employed in the structure of the empire too). Regarding the contemporary use of the term *nanmin*, which preceded the introduction of *genpatsu nanmin* (nuclear refugees) to designate populations displaced from Tōhoku after the Triple Catastrophe of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor meltdown on 11 March 2011, see Allison 2013 and also Lozano-Méndez in this volume. The yearly report of the UNHCR for 2017, 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017', depicts the upward trend in the number of millions of people forcibly displaced during the previous decade, with the figure reaching a historical record high in 2017 (68.5 million forcibly displaced worldwide).

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