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Remembering Hiroshima

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Remembering Hiroshima

BIO-POLITICS, POPOKI AND SENSUAL EXPRESSIONS OF WAR¹

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore the bio-politics of memory, focusing on intersections of gender, memory, peace/war and activism. The article rests on the belief that states use bio-politics to construct, manipulate and maintain national identity and collective memory and addresses, in particular, three myths that still influence the field of international relations: the myth of gender neutrality; the notion that verbal representations should be privileged over physical and/or sensual expressions; and the myth of objectivity and the need to distance the study of IR theory from the practice of social activism. The article begins with a discussion of bio-politics and collective memory in general and then focuses on ways of remembering the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It concludes with some examples of narratives by survivors which employ sensual memory that challenge the way we think about expressions and representations of war. These examples were gathered by the Popoki Peace Project, a grass roots peace organization. The article suggests that theories of bodily and sensual expressions of memory can be useful in peace activism and can provide different understandings of war experiences. It suggests that making visible some of the differences obscured in the formation of the collective memory of national trauma can be a way to begin to acknowledge the precarity of life and to prepare the way for forgiveness.

Keywords

atomic bomb, bio-politics, gender, memory, sensual expressions

When Popoki was a kitten, he loved to play with water. When he grew up, his friends told him that cats are not supposed to like water, and he stopped playing with it. Is peace being able to feel free to be different? (Alexander 2007: 40)

Much of what we know and remember is based on our bodily and sensual experiences, yet particularly in the West, what we recognize collectively as knowledge in the context of national identity, culture or expertise often rejects such experience in favor of more 'rational' and 'objective' realities. These realities are supported by myths or 'stories . . . that are so familiar they are taken for granted' (Weber 2010: 2). The belief that cats do not like water is one such myth, although Popoki² actually did enjoy playing in it. How do we reconcile his joyful antics and our belief in feline aversion to water? Does Popoki even remember his pleasure? Can his sensual memory be used to challenge the conventional understanding of the relationship of cats to water?

In the following pages, we will consider this question of sensual memory and collective memory/remembrance in the context of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We begin with a short introduction to situate the discussion within the framework of international relations (IR) theory. Then, using lenses of bio-politics and gender, we clarify the ways that remembering Hiroshima can encourage a politics of protection based on militarization and fear of nuclear holocaust, and suggest that sensual memory might be a way to help to create an alternative politics based on forgiveness. Examples of the work of a grass roots peace organization, the Popoki Peace Project, will be used to illustrate this idea.

Cynthia Weber (2010: 2) uses the idea of myths in defining IR theory, which she says is 'a collection of stories about international politics that in order to appear to be true relies on IR myths'. In particular, three such myths concern us here: the myth of gender neutrality in IR; the myth of the sufficiency of verbal representations for understanding the experience/positions of individuals; and the myth of objectivity and the need to distance the study of IR theory from the practice of social activism.

The myth of gender neutrality in IR has been successfully challenged by feminist scholars beginning with work in the 1980s by Cynthia Enloe (1989) and others who asked, 'Where are the women?' and brought the voices of women into the study of IR. Post-structuralist feminists suggest that as experience is mediated by narrative discourse, these voices can be an important source of critical insight and can stimulate and enrich political thought (Stone-Mediatore 2003: 5).³ In addition, in challenging myths about state power, post-structuralist feminist theorists have focused on identity and subjectivity, examining the ways in which the 'mechanisms of normalization, technologization and depoliticization can be seen in the practices of international relations' (Edkins 1999: 52). Of particular relevance to the discussions of war and remembering, Judith Butler (2004, 2009) has raised the issue of 'grievability', pointing out that after traumatic events, there are always some who are grieved and others who are not.

The introduction of gender as an empirical category has enabled scholars to use it as a variable for investigating, for example, the ways women and men are affected by, or participate in, post-conflict policy decisions or development projects. At the same time, the understanding of gender as an analytical

category allows us to observe how 'gender pervades language and culture, systematically shaping not only who we are but also how we think and what we do' (Peterson 2010: 18). Peterson (2010: 18, emphasis in original) suggests that gender is also relational, so that '*privileging what is masculinized is inextricable from devaluing who and what is feminized*'. Not only subjects but also cultural expressions (art, music) and ways of knowing can be feminized, which results in the lessening of their perceived legitimacy, status and value (Peterson 2010: 19).

This hierarchal devalorization of feminized practices can be seen in the ways we think about ways of knowing and expression in the field of international relations. We can see the prioritizing of the masculinized in, for example, the emphasis on positivist, empirical research rather than normative work. While identity and subjectivity have come to be identified as important in feminist international relations scholarship, these expressions are primarily conveyed in terms of speech acts or, in some cases, silence and/or the absence of speech (Hansen 2000; Parpart 2010).⁴ One form of speech, narrative or 'ways of seeing' is a powerful medium for the expression of political thought (Stone-Mediatore 2003: 38). These 'ways of seeing' presented by narrative make us more sensitive to our world, and can lead to understanding which, according to Arendt (1953: 377), is the 'specifically human way of being alive'. Narrative is different from objective truth, but can also be distinguished from stories, or 'experience-rooted but creatively reproduced narrative texts whose meaning is realized by specific communities' (Stone-Mediatore 2003: 5).

Erin Manning challenges the idea that our understanding of politics must be limited to speech, suggesting the importance of bodily and sensual expressions. A politics of touch, for example, invites 'us to think politics through its potential for expression rather than representation' (Manning 2007: 111). This is a politics in motion and of motion; touch, for example, is not a one-way act but rather a relationship between the one who touches and the one who is touched and it is the motion that gives touch its meaning (Manning 2007: xiii–xvi). The idea of focusing on non-verbal expressions in a field where our primary means of communication is writing seems at first contradictory and is certainly challenging. Yet if Manning is correct, focusing on the body and sensual expressions can allow us access to expressions of experience that differ from the representations found in narratives or testimonies. Moreover, here we suggest that combining the theory of the need for physical and sensual expression with the practice of peace activism might help to create the physical and mental/emotional space for making such expressions possible.

BIO-POLITICS AND MEMORY

Bio-politics,⁵ or what Foucault terms 'bio-power', refers to the way in which natural life (the biological) began to be incorporated into the mechanisms of

state power (the political). Modernity, he explains, began when ‘the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death’ (Foucault 1976: 138; emphasis in original).⁶ Wars, he says, ‘are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital’ (Foucault 1976: 137). Hiroshima, as a city destroyed by an atomic bomb and as a symbol of peace, is an excellent example of this technology of government invoking mass destruction in the name of life and peace.

Bio-politics is gendered, spatial and temporal. It is fundamental to how we describe ourselves and our history, how we understand and relive the massacres that have been carried out against us or in our name. When we describe those experiences, we invoke memory which, ‘whether public or private, is contextual, anchored in the present and oriented toward the future. What we remember, and how, depends on where we are and where we are going’ (Suleiman 1999: vi). At the same time, since what our bodies remember is not always the same as what we recognize as our conscious memory, we are sometimes surprised when a sensation brings back memories of experiences we had forgotten. Memory is thus important in how we understand and experience life and living.

In her discussion of bio-politics and power over life, Judith Butler (2009: 1) begins with the idea that ‘specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living’. We grieve only certain lives and losses; determinations of who deserves to be grieved and in what ways, and who does not deserve such recognition reveals aspects of power over life and death. Needless to say, the reproduction of this understanding of some lives/deaths as more significant than others in cultural/national identity and collective memory makes forgiveness at best difficult. In response to this, Butler (2009: 25) discusses the precariousness and precarity of life, where the former refers to the vulnerability of all life and the latter to the politically created circumstances under which certain lives are put at risk. Here she is dealing with not only power over life, but also power of life which includes the power to survive and to forgive.

Collective memory is an important tool of bio-politics which can be used not only for the determination and/or perception of risk but also to celebrate the ‘grievable’ and to castigate others. This understanding helps in the creation and manipulation of national identity and affects the ways in which populations can be mobilized to support and participate in mass destruction.

Memory, and the way we describe it, thus plays an essential part in who we are and who we want to be. While our representations of memory are verbal, memory begins with, and belongs to, our bodies; even a trace of a particular scent or flavor can bring back a rush of experiences long-forgotten. IR tends to ignore these bodily and sensual memories, yet they are important in how we tell and re-tell our experience through narrative and stories.

Narrative and stories are methods for sharing those bodily experiences, containing elements not only of what we remember or what we believe to have happened, but also what we have forgotten. Sometimes stories are spoken, other times potential story-tellers opt for silence.⁷ The transformation of personal memory into narrative or silence can be a political act, one that is greatly influenced by the audience, intentional or otherwise. Collective memory becomes depoliticized, however, as we are encouraged, and more importantly, encourage ourselves, to describe our experiences in particular ways, emphasizing some details and omitting others. While our personal memories never cease to be our own, they are often pushed aside in the process of the creation of collective memory, particularly when they relate to situations of war and/or national trauma. Moreover, while narrative often includes descriptions of feelings and sensations, words alone are rarely enough to convey the experience in its entirety.

In that memory is an account of the past, rather than the past itself, it is always constructed and incomplete. According to Jeffrey Alexander (2004: 1), cultural trauma occurs 'when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways'. The intersection of individual and collective experience in the telling/re-telling of history is difficult, especially in situations of national, cultural and/or collective trauma (Suleiman 1999: vi). It is further complicated by the post-war and post-colonial reality in which we, as both creator and recipient of narrative, locate ourselves and our interpretations of what we tell/learn. In cases of national/cultural trauma, the process of forming collective memory is often conjoined with the formation of national identity; the telling/re-telling of the facts/fiction of history is often discussed in the context of contested memory or alternative narratives.

One of the most well-known examples of cultural trauma and contested memory concerns the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel on the one hand, and the Nakba, or tragedy of the displacement of the Palestinian people, on the other. In the sixty years since this event of joy/tragedy occurred, children and grandchildren have learned their history through the individual and collective mourning and memory of their parents and grandparents. They are removed in time and space from the decimated world of their forebears, but are directly connected to the experience. Writing about the children of Holocaust survivors, Marianne Hirsch (1996: 662; Jennison 2009) uses the term postmemory to describe 'the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created'. Hirsch suggests that a characteristic of postmemory is that the condition of exile from the space of identity is based both on the destruction of the original space and on the experience of banishment/diaspora. Current/future generations can never know or return to that place which serves such an

important role in their identities because it no longer exists. Postmemory thus helps to set and reinforce the boundaries for grievability, denying acknowledgement of, and forgiveness for, the destruction of lives outside of those boundaries.

Postmemory assumes the original trauma has come to at least a physical, if not psychological, end. While World War II is long over, the trauma of the atomic bombs continues, due to the long-term and still to some extent unknown effects of radiation on the bodies of not only survivors, but those of their children and future generations as well. Postmemory is especially important in the context of Hiroshima and Nagasaki because it made mass contamination and nuclear holocaust a reality. It changed forever the meaning of war and peace, ushering in ‘a new age of relativity and virtuality, an age in which powers of terror are indistinguishable from powers of “deterrence,” and technologies of war indissociable from practices of peace’ (Chow 2006: 32). Postmemory reminds us of a time before nuclear weapons and helps us to see their horrific destructive power. If humankind were to share postmemory in longing for a world free from the threat of nuclear holocaust, then perhaps the re-creation of a nuclear-free world might be possible. If, however, postmemory encourages a bio-politics of protection based on militarization and nuclear advantage, then we will continue to live with the possibility of nuclear holocaust and nuclear power over life.

WAR AND MEMORY: HIROSHIMA/NAGASAKI AND THE MEANING OF THE BOMB

On 6 August 1945, a uranium bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, killing an estimated 140,000 people. Three days later, a plutonium bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing about 70,000 people (Anzai 2005: 42).⁸ For people in Tokyo and other locations away from the two cities, details were not immediately available. The dearth of information was compounded by the fact that about a month after the bombing, Allied occupation forces imposed censorship in the form of a Press Code, which banned publication of anything describing the damage caused by the atomic bombs. Accordingly, with the exception of those who were directly affected or had access to the cities, few people knew about the actual effects of the bomb until the Press Code was lifted in 1952.

Given the extent of the damage, Hiroshima might easily have become a focus for Japanese nationalism and anger at having lost the war. In fact, due in part to the effectiveness of the Press Code in limiting the spread and scope of available information, the early public narrative of the atomic bomb separated the Hiroshima experience from the construction of the Japanese national trauma of the war. The survivors or *hibakusha*⁹ were commemorated along with the dead as those whose lives had been ‘claimed, thrown away and lost’ (see, for example, Yoneyama 1999; Saito 2006: 361–2). In this portrayal, they were

shown as victims not of a bomb dropped by a hated enemy, but rather of a weapon that took on almost life-like characteristics, almost as if it were an actor in and of itself. Separated from the rest of Japan, the *hibakusha* were transformed from Japanese into 'supra-Japanese human others', and Hiroshima became a transnational symbol for world peace. At the same time, as the most advanced technological invention known to humanity, the bomb became a symbol for the future, its power acknowledged in the numbers of victims it was capable of producing rather than in what it did to individual bodies and lives (Chow 2006: 27).

The othering of the *hibakusha* opened the door for discriminative attitudes toward them. These were based not only on the visible evidence of exposure which took the form of physical disfigurement (keloids in particular), but also on the invisible effects. People were afraid that contact with those who had been exposed to radiation would result in contamination, and that exposure to the bombs would lead to illness and/or disabilities in the offspring of survivors. The same fears about intergenerational effects helped to make the slogan 'No more Hiroshimas!'¹⁰ into a rallying cry for the global anti-nuclear movement that arose in the 1950s. At the root of this portrayal of Hiroshima as a symbol of nuclear destruction, however, lay the separation of the bomb, as a modern apparatus of terror, and the United States, the country that chose to use it. In making the bomb itself into the perpetrator of this horrendous destruction, attention was deferred from the country that made and ordered its use. As a result, the USA was able to avoid having to face accusations of inhumanity for having used the bomb, and could instead promote itself as a benign liberator of an oppressed nation which had been dominated by blood-thirsty war mongers. At the same time, it allowed Japan to portray itself as an 'innocent' victim of atomic destruction, thereby avoiding discussion of Japan's aggressions in Asia and the Pacific.

When the Press Code was lifted and photographs and stories of the *hibakusha* became publicly available for the first time, people responded with horror, fear and pity. This was the beginning of the transformation of Hiroshima from a transnational symbol of peace to one of national trauma. This identity of 'Japan as nuclear victim' was greatly reinforced in March 1954, when the trawler 'Lucky Dragon No. 5' was contaminated by radioactive fallout from a US hydrogen bomb test in Micronesia. In fact, as many as 1,000 Japanese fishing boats are believed to have been affected, but attention was completely focused on the fate of this one boat, its twenty-three crew members and its contaminated tuna catch which was at first unknowingly sold at the Tsukiji fish market.¹¹ In response to the Lucky Dragon incident, local communities in Hiroshima and throughout Japan adopted measures calling for an international ban on nuclear weapons and launched signature campaigns to support the cause. Perhaps the best known of these initiatives was that begun in May of 1954 by a group of women in Sugunami Ward, Tokyo. By the end of the year, the so-called Sugunami Appeal had been signed by 20 million people, and by the following August, the number had

soared past 30 million. This outpouring of local support led to the formation of a national coalition, which played an important role in the growing anti-nuclear weapons movement.¹²

The public outcry that occurred after this 'third radioactive contamination' gave further credence to the national/nationalist identity of 'Japan as nuclear victim', and portrayed to the world an image of the Japanese people as unified in their opposition to nuclear weapons.¹³ At the same time, in asserting the existence of a unique Japanese state and nation, the only country/people to have been victimized by nuclear weapons, Japan was able not only to deny the non-Japanese victims of the bomb, largely from Japan's colonies in Korea and China, but also to disassociate the bomb from the realities of Japan's colonialism and war of aggression.¹⁴

While both women and men were involved in Japan's war of aggression and colonization, these were seen as activities in which men played the leading role. Gender roles and gendered expectations for women and men are different in times of war and of peace, and the stories they tell of their war/peace experiences reflect these differences. After a war, masculinized/feminized hierarchies combined with binaries such as male/female or combatant/non-combatant affect whose stories are considered important, and whose are not. 'Since memory is a very important factor in struggle ... if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles' (Foucault 1989: 124). IR myths about war assume that wars are temporary and transient, that wars have distinctive beginnings and endings and that after wars, life goes back to normal, yet the experience of the atomic bomb belies this myth. The dropping of the atomic bomb and the possibility of global nuclear holocaust meant that populations could never be free from the possibility of war, and so brought preparation for war and defense into the midst of 'normal' life (Chow 2006: 34). As terrifying as the bomb was, it was also a symbol of American scientific prowess and the potential of science for the future. Unable to militarize and blaming its defeat on deficiency in science and technology, Japan set out to promote science and technology for peace (Dower 1999: 494). This entailed, among other things, transforming the militarized masculinity and femininity of the war to fit the new tasks at hand. For men, it meant overcoming the emasculation of defeat, but for women, it also meant access to a new array of rights and privileges guaranteed under the new post-war constitution.

In post-war Japan, poverty and hunger were rampant and the focus of the population had to be shifted from war fighting to hard work for economic development. Unlike most men who, as soldiers and 'public' members of society, engaged in collective self-criticism for their role in the war, the new 'Japanese Women' were instead "victims" who were liberated at the expense of the national defeat'. In their new public role, rather than experiencing remorse at Japan's defeat, women were seen to feel 'joy in hopes for the future' and a 'sense of liberation', while being absolved from 'repentance for the past' and 'self-criticism' (Yoneyama 1999: 188–9).

The experience of the atomic bomb cast a shadow on this supposed joy for the future, and added a different twist to gendered memory of the bomb. Hiroshima and its survivors were viewed as an anachronism, tragic victims of a past event which was in contrast to the invigorated and liberated Japan trying to forget the pain of the war and work toward prosperity in the future. The everyday experiences of *hibakusha* women – deformity, illness, the inability to bear children, anxiety over potential genetic effects of contamination, discrimination and difficulties in finding marriage partners – contrasted greatly with the now politically active new ‘Japanese Women’. The young women who had survived the atomic bomb tragedy were, on the one hand, personified to the general public by the ‘A-Bomb Maidens’ (also known as ‘Hiroshima Maidens’), twenty-five young women whose faces and bodies had been disfigured by the bomb and who were sent to the USA in 1955 for plastic surgery and other treatment. These ‘Maidens’ ‘constituted a specular image of the oedipal relation between Japan and the United States, the dominant images of these women – pure, virgin daughters – loyally figured the nation in its relations to the paternalized America, at least in popular discourse’ (Yoneyama 1999: 202–3).

A second, contrasting image of women was that of Hiroshima mothers, part of a universal image of the atomic bomb as evil, and the importance of universal humanism as the antithesis of nuclear war. Here, gendered memory conjures images of exhausted, self-sacrificial mothers devoting themselves to the care of their ill, deformed or dying children. These mothers, ‘who by their nature desire to create, protect, and nurture lives, are understood to oppose war and the use of nuclear bombs, anytime, anywhere’ (Yoneyama 1999: 196). In this configuration, ‘difference’ is supplanted by ‘Motherhood’; national and/or ideological disparities become insignificant before the ideal of woman as mother/reproducer. In contrast to the memory invoked by the A-Bomb Maidens, here gendered memory served to emphasize and conjoin discourses of motherhood, femininity and national identity, creating the Japanese/Japan as victims of US and western nuclearism and colonialism.

The image of Hiroshima mothers was used by a group of Tokyo women, including those working on the Sugunami Appeal. Emphasizing their role as wives and mothers, and taking advantage of their new political mobility, these women worked hard to promote the nascent anti-nuclear movement in Japan. They described their goals of protecting children, women’s lives/rights and peace as being inseparable from basic, universal maternal instincts (Yoneyama 1999: 192–3).¹⁵ An appeal by Hiratsuka Raichō to the World Mothers’ Conference and other organizations after the contamination of the Lucky Dragon became the basis for the Japan Mothers’ Conference (*Nihon Hahaoya Taikai*). The organization sought to unify women of all classes through discussion of the demands of mothers from around the world, following Raichō’s appeal in October 1954 for the establishment of an organization of mothers who would overcome differences in ideology, belief or race and join hands to protect children from nuclear war (Mackie 2003: 135). The Japan

Mothers' Conference organized its first meeting around this theme in 1955, and featured a speech by Kuboyama Suzu entitled, 'The Hydrogen Bomb Took Away My Husband.' Her husband, Kuboyama Aikichi, had been a crew member of the ill-fated Lucky Dragon and died of radiation poisoning. Using similar arguments, women's organizations in Hiroshima such as the Hiroshima Women's Coalition (*Hiroshima Fujin Rengo Kai*) joined together to host an anti-nuclear conference which later grew into the annual Gensuikin World Conference. Throughout all of these activities, 'Motherhood' was used as a universal theme to gloss over controversy around Japan's relationship with the United States, particularly with regard to security, and garner support from politically disparate groups.¹⁶ As such, it is an interesting example not only of the intersections of gender and bio-politics but also of the dynamic relationship between collective memory and activism. In this example, activism helped to construct collective memory of the bomb, and at the same time, memory of the bomb was used to create a movement against nuclear weapons based on gendered notions of motherhood. This use of motherhood as a universal symbol helped to garner widespread support for the movement by reinforcing traditional roles and gender binaries, and in so doing countered possible opposition to the new political activism on the part of women.

The emphasis on universal themes of motherhood and uniqueness of the Japanese nuclear experience also obfuscated the role of Japanese women in colonial and military endeavors, and obliterated all memory of the colonial subjects who, having been brought by coercion, poverty and/or force to Japan, also became victims of the bomb. This narrative legitimized the now democratic and peaceful Japan to claim partnership with the USA, a claim which materialized through the establishment of the Japan-US Security Treaty and continues to be visible through the US military presence in Japan, particularly Okinawa, today. In not challenging militarism, patriarchy and racism, the post-war narrative of a peaceful and repentant Japan leaves the door open for repetition of precisely what it claims to be trying to erase. In other words, it leaves the possibility that the State will again engage in mass destruction in the name of life.

Today, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been completely rebuilt, and US President Obama's call for a ban on nuclear weapons has provoked renewed efforts on the part of the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to promote the role of their cities as universal symbols for peace.¹⁷ For the *hibakusha*, however, the war has not ended; the conflict continues through fear for their own health and/or the health of their loved ones and in the perpetual fear of nuclear holocaust. For the children and grandchildren of the *hibakusha*, the cities described by their forebears no longer exist. Modern constructions of Hiroshima/Nagasaki must rely on postmemory to re-construct the place of identity that has been totally destroyed. At the same time, the trauma of nuclear war continues, not only mentally but also physically on the bodies of the offspring of *hibakusha*, as they must face the possibility of genetic effects of the bomb on themselves and their children.

Due to the real and potential intergenerational effects of nuclear weapons, memory of the national trauma of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is of not only the past and the present, but also of a future shadowed by the threat of nuclear holocaust. In continuing to portray Hiroshima/Nagasaki as a depoliticized lesson in universal humanity/inhumanity, motherhood and life, the foundations are laid for its repetition; increasingly in Japan as elsewhere, militarization is presented as the only viable response to the threat of 'terrorism' and global violence. Bio-politics continues to provide the justification for the militarization of life.

JOINING THEORY AND PRACTICE: THE POPOKI PEACE PROJECT

It has been suggested here that bio-politics manipulates our beliefs about who we are, how we should live and whom we identify as friends and enemies. Education plays a vital role in the construction and maintenance of these beliefs. Because children who have no direct experience with war find the events difficult to imagine, peace educators often use narrative to foster empathy and to sustain the collective understanding of the war experience. In Japan, peace education has relied heavily on the stories of the *hibakusha* to share and keep alive the experience of the atomic bomb and to help students to understand the horror of nuclear weapons. As more than sixty years have passed since the bombing, the people who have actually experienced it are quite elderly. Many who are willing to talk about their experiences are no longer physically able to do so. Educators, critical scholars and activists are confronted with two kinds of problems: how to keep the memories alive without living witnesses, and how to challenge mainstream discourses of collective memory and discover alternative voices, if in fact they exist.

The Popoki Peace Project is a grass roots organization which is grappling with these issues, seeking to understand the experience of World War II while it is still possible to hear stories firsthand and also working to challenge mainstream discourses about the war and nuclear weapons. The Project engages in many different activities for peace education and action with the goal of social transformation and peace. The Project was begun by the author in 2006, with the initial objective of publishing the picture book, *Popoki, What Color Is Peace? Popoki's Peace Book 1*, and then using the book to encourage critical thinking and action for peace. The Project features a cat named Popoki, and activities center on workshops where participants are asked to use their entire range of physical and emotional capabilities in creating bodily and sensual expressions of peace (see note 2). The theoretical basis for this work lies, for example, in work on performance by Boal (2000) and the politics of touch mentioned earlier (Manning 2007). Originally the Project focused almost exclusively on the future, focusing on how bodily and sensual memory can contribute to the creation of peace. This is based on the belief that often physical expressions of bodily memory present different

aspects of remembered experience, and that these alternative views can contribute to our understanding of the past and help to change attitudes toward the future. In the process of exploring ways to express bodily and sensual memory for peace, the efficacy of Popoki's methodology for conveying alternative narratives and stories of war became clear. It is hoped that the following examples from the work of the Project will help to illustrate this point.

The work of the Popoki Peace Project, focusing on sensual expressions of experience, begins by asking the color, taste, texture, smell and sound of peace or war. As most of the time language is used to convey sensual experiences and memories, this work remains dependent on verbal representations of experience. In spite of this, we have found that emphasizing bodily and sensual expressions of war experience allow for a range of content and audience reactions not generally achieved with other forms of narrative and/or story telling.

When, for example, *hibakusha* are asked to tell of their atomic bomb experiences, they generally give a description of their activities on the day the bomb was dropped. Interestingly, when they are instead asked the color of the atomic bomb, they quite often go chronologically backwards, beginning with a time after the experience when they felt at ease and then describing how it differs from the experience of the bomb itself. Yoshida Kazuto, for example, spoke first of the blue of the ocean which he saw after he escaped the conflagration in Nagasaki, and then described how it differed from what he had seen before his escape.¹⁸ Tokyo fire-bomb survivor Shiozuki Tomoko and many others also give colors, generally white or blue, to the experience of having arrived home, but say that the experience of fleeing is devoid of color, or colorless.¹⁹ In reversing the chronological order and beginning with peace rather than war, these descriptions focus on life rather than death. They provide a good way to begin discussions of grievability, perhaps enabling critical examinations of identity and the precarity of life.

When asked about the taste of war, respondents give different responses from those they give when asked what they ate during the war, even though the questions are basically the same. Responses to the latter question are generally short and to the point with statements such as, 'There was very little food and we ate what we could.' In contrast, asking about the taste of war always invokes lively discussion. In Japan, there is total agreement that what people ate during and after the war was sweet potatoes, but the experience of procuring, preparing and consuming them varies greatly. Differences in gender, age and class become apparent in these discussions, as well as local and regional differences. For example, one group of women found that the strategies used for flavoring the potatoes differed according to where they had lived. Those who had access to the sea used salt water, while those in the mountains had no salt and had to make do without. In these examples, expressions of the experience of taste led to discussion of a whole range of activities representative of everyday life in wartime Japan.

Accessing sensual memories can also produce unexpected or counter-intuitive results. For example, in response to questions about the sound of

the bomb, many *hibakusha* say that the explosion was followed by complete silence. If it were possible to know the objective reality of the aftermath of nuclear attack, it no doubt would involve a variety of sounds, yet the subjective reality is silence. Memories such as these can provide opportunities for discussions of the meaning of silence as something more than just the absence of sound.

Another important aspect of sensual experience is that it sometimes allows expressions by people who might otherwise have remained silent. Yoshida, the *hibakusha* from Nagasaki mentioned earlier, said that he had been otherwise reluctant to talk about his experiences because he was not injured. He confessed that talking about his personal sensual experiences made him feel less concerned about his legitimacy as a voice for the *hibakusha* (Yoshida 2007).

The retelling of memories of sensual experience can give access to content which might otherwise be omitted from wartime narratives. For example, as was suggested earlier, immediately after the war, Hiroshima and Nagasaki became transnational symbols for peace. Post-war descriptions of the cities served to focus attention on nuclear destruction and contamination while at the same time obscuring the experience of Japanese colonialism and US responsibility for the bombing. The following examples of sensual memory are not from Hiroshima, but they show how sensual expressions give access to topics that might otherwise be omitted from Japanese collective expressions of war. The first example is the experience of a person from one of the outer islands of Okinawa who described the sound of war as that of women screaming in a language he did not understand. The island was on the route between the Korean Peninsula and Japan used by transport ships. When the ships were hit by enemy fire, the captains would ride them up on the beaches in order to avoid sinking. The frightened voices were those of the women as they ran off the sinking ships. Follow-up questions revealed that the women were Korean, so-called 'comfort women', women who were enslaved by the Japanese military to provide sexual services to soldiers. Numerous 'comfort stations' were established in Okinawa and the Japanese occupied territories. In this example, the memory of the 'comfort women' enables discussion of sexual slavery, something that might not otherwise be possible in the conservative climate of today's Japanese schools. Another example would be of a man who described the smell of war to be 'blood'. He then spoke of being 8 years old and seeing a Chinese man killed in cold blood by a Japanese soldier, saying afterwards that he had never told this story before. This story belies current attempts in Japan to erase/revise memory by writing such acts by the Japanese Imperial Army out of the history textbooks.

The responses to questions about sensual memory outlined above help to challenge the IR myths introduced at the beginning of this article and reflect gendered understandings about the relative value of life experiences and memories. They also challenge issues of legitimacy; exploring sensual memories is a way to access personal memories which might, for a variety of reasons, be considered less legitimate than those which reflect collective

memory and/or mainstream discourse. For example, the story of the person from Okinawa mentioned above reflects issues of legitimacy based on both where he was at the time and on his age. Moreover, viewed in the context of hierarchal masculinized/feminized activities, the idea of sensual expressions is in itself feminized and, as such, devalorized. Similarly, as masculinized military experiences take precedence over feminized experiences such as food preparation, such mundane examples of everyday life are not included in most representations of life during the war. Using sensual memory not only allows us to learn about experiences to which we might otherwise not have had access, but also provides opportunities to engage students in critical thinking about gendered memory and history.

The story of Numata Suzuko, a *hibakusha* from Hiroshima, illustrates the importance of life. Numata was 21 and engaged to be married when she lost her leg in the Hiroshima bombing. She found out later that her fiancé, a soldier, had been killed in action right about the time she was injured. Disfigured, diseased and in great pain, she fought anger and despair. Looking out of her hospital window, she discovered a Chinese parasol tree which had been severely damaged by the bomb but was beginning to have new growth.²⁰ The inspiration she took from the tree gradually grew into a feeling of synergy. Today, Numata tells of her experiences to many different groups, but prefers to talk with children, urging them to know and express all of their feelings. A cat lover, she is also one of Popoki's most staunch supporters. Recently, when asked why she was able to be so cheerful in spite of all of her difficulty, she replied as follows:

For about two years I was totally filled with hatred. It ate away at my soul. Eventually I realized that I had to let go of the hate, and gradually I began to forgive . . . A lot of people on both sides died. I think peace is about forgiveness, trust and respect for life.²¹

Numata maintained silence for many years, and only began to talk about her experiences in the early 1980s. She went from talking only about her own experiences to linking her personal tragedy with that of others. For example, she visited China and offered apologies for atrocities conducted by Japanese there during the war. For Numata, the synergy she felt with the parasol tree and her expression of sensual memory helped her to overcome her own anger and later to focus on the precarity of life.

Numata says that the color of the atomic bomb is yellow; not the color of the flash or the light but because yellow is the color of hope. The meaning of the atomic bomb, she says, is that we must all learn to overcome our differences, work together and have hope.²² Numata, like many other *hibakusha*, focuses not on the horror of the bomb but instead on the desire for peace or, in some cases, on the contrast between the horror of the atomic bomb and peace, real and/or imagined. In some ways, this reflects the success of biopolitics and collective memory: even in expressions of bodily memory, the

atomic bomb becomes a depoliticized symbol for both nuclear holocaust and for universal life. At the same time, it suggests something else: rather than a bio-politics of militarization, prevention and strength, perhaps, what is necessary is understanding based on forgiveness and synergy.

Numata has experienced both the precariousness and the precarity of life. She has also experienced the power of life, as she emerged along with her tree from the depths of nuclear despair. Her bodily and sensual memories helped her to confront the trauma and to re-create it as life and forgiveness. Her story reflects the importance of one more aspect of bio-politics, memory and peace: forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

Bio-politics is central to both who we believe ourselves to be and to how we remember and describe our experiences. Focusing on the experience of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this article has looked from the perspective of bio-politics and emphasized the importance of gender as both a variable and an analytic tool in the creation of collective memory and national identity. In particular, it has shown how gendered depictions of women and universal 'Motherhood' were used to construct the identity of 'Japan as nuclear victim' and to promote opposition to nuclear weapons. In that these constructions of identity do not challenge militarization, the collective memory of the horror of Hiroshima is subject to use in the promotion of a politics of protection and destruction in the name of life.

Bodily and sensual expressions of memory are important in that they can be used to challenge narratives and stories of war experience. In this article, examples from the work of the Popoki Peace Project were used to illustrate this point. Seeking alternative modes of expression is one way in which theory and practice can be used together to contribute to scholarly work, social activism and to the work of peace educators.

The conclusions outlined above serve to challenge the three IR myths mentioned at the outset of this article: gender neutrality; privileging of verbal expressions; and the separation of IR theory and social activism. In addition to showing how theory and practice can work to make both research and activism more dynamic, the short examples from the work of the Popoki Peace Project mentioned above suggest ways in which sensual expressions of war experience can contribute to our understanding and help us to critically analyze the contemporary framing of memory of past events. This can help us to reconsider the relationships among states, national identity/nationalism, militarization and gender and redefine the subjects of grievability, allowing grief not only for 'us', but also for 'them'. They suggest peace educators and scholars seeking to create transformative peace movements must not only be critical of the processes of collective memory and national trauma, but must also be able to critically remember ... and forgive.

Notes

- 1 This article was written before the earthquake and tsunami disaster which hit Japan on 11 March 2011. The 'anti-nuclear' identity referred to in these pages focuses only on nuclear weapons; construction of the belief in the necessity for, and safety of, nuclear power in Japan began around the same time this 'anti-nuclear Japan' came to the fore.
- 2 Popoki, the Hawaiian word for 'cat', was the name of the author's cat. He is the central character in *Popoki's Peace Book 1 and 2* (Alexander 2007, 2009b) and is the mascot for the Popoki Peace Project described in this article. While there is no particular connection between the cat and peace as such, Popoki is useful as a symbol of non-human life and as a friend to people participating in our programs. The project uses the books in workshops and other activities to address issues of peace and violence. The methodology involves use of the senses, emotions and the entire body. Most programs include the making of a group creative project. The project emphasizes not only critical thinking but also critical imagination and expression in work for peace and peace education. Also see Alexander (2008, 2009a) and <http://popoki.cruisejapan.com>.
- 3 Stone-Mediatore (2003: 98) is particularly interested in marginal narratives and shows the importance of recognizing them in spite of criticism that in using the 'experience' of oppressed people to counter ideological representations of the world often leads to reproduction of the same ideological mechanisms that structured that 'experience' in the first place.
- 4 Foucault (1989: 123) suggests that even when silence is enforced, people find ways to record, remember and use history.
- 5 Bio-politics can be defined as:
a politics concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations . . . It is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental, and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population. (Dean 1999: 99)
- 6 Dean (1999: 108) explains this further: government of the living and of life will 'find its own limit in the endangering of the processes that produce the resources that support life' through population.
- 7 Often those who have experienced the worst horrors of war choose to remain silent. This may be a conscious choice out of fear, desire to forget, desire to protect loved ones, feelings of guilt about having survived when others did not and so on. Rapadas

- (2007) applies the 'conspiracy of silence', used to describe one category of Holocaust survivors (Danieli 1985: 298), to Chamoru victims of Japanese occupation in Guam. Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki often remained silent to protect their children and grandchildren from discrimination. Yamaguchi Tsutomu, a survivor of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, chose silence because his family was afraid his survival would be taken as a sign that it is possible to survive nuclear war, and thus lead to more use of nuclear weapons (*Twice Bombed* 2011).
- 8 At the time of the bombing, the population of Hiroshima was approximately 340,000–350,000 and that of Nagasaki was 250,000–270,000 persons. It is impossible to know the exact number of victims and/or survivors. In a census conducted in 1950, about 280,000 people said that they had been 'exposed' in Hiroshima or Nagasaki (RERF 2007).
 - 9 Written Japanese uses Chinese characters (*kanji*) and many words that sound the same have different meanings based on the Chinese characters used. There are two ways to write the Japanese term *hibakusha*, 被爆者 and 被曝者. Both are pronounced the same way, and both refer to people exposed to nuclear radiation. The former, however, is used to refer to those exposed to the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while the latter refers to those exposed to nuclear radiation from other sources (nuclear tests, power plant accidents, etc.). This allows for distinction to be made between the 'unique' experience of the bombs as opposed to other experiences of contamination.
 - 10 The first use of the phrase 'No More Hiroshimas' is generally attributed to Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, who is said to have used it in an article published in a British newspaper called the *Daily Express* about a month after the bombing, but this is incorrect. In fact, the first known reference to the idea of a campaign to ensure there would be 'no more Hiroshimas' was made in 1948 by Reverend Tanimoto Kiyoshi of the Nagarekawa Church in Hiroshima. It is cited in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* (5 March 1948). (*Chugoku Newspaper* 2005).
 - 11 The US tests in the Pacific, especially the Bravo shot, also contaminated many Pacific Islanders, but their situation did not become an issue in Japan until later. See, for example, Toyosaki (2005).
 - 12 In the context of this article, it should be noted that the coalition, the National Council for a Petition Movement to End Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, was headed by two men: Yamada Saburo, head of Japan's Academy of Arts and Scientists, and Nobel prize-winning physicist Yukawa Hideki (see Orr 2001: 48–51). The Suginami Appeal obtained 32 million signatures in Japan and more than 6 billion signatures worldwide (Maruhama 2007: 1).
 - 13 Ironically, it was just at this same time that Japan embarked on an ambitious plan to develop nuclear power (Toyosaki 2005: 377–9; Sagara 2009: 13–15). One of the results of this plan was the Fukushima Nuclear Plant.
 - 14 A particularly strong example of the liberal version of this nationalism was expressed by Ōe Kenzaburo (1965: 147). In discussing the meaning of the first Chinese nuclear test, for example, he acknowledges the symbolism of the Chinese test in terms of Chinese development, but calls for a new type of nation-

alism which recognizes Hiroshima as a symbol of nuclear destruction rather than national pride. Also see Yoneyama (1999).

- 15 The Japan Mothers' Conference remains active today. For example, in 2009 the organization issued a statement in support of US President Obama's call for total nuclear disarmament.
- 16 The first Japan–US Security Treaty went into effect in 1951, and a second Mutual Security Assistance Pact was adopted in 1954. The Security Treaty was revised and went into effect in 1960 in the face of very strong opposition from the Japanese left. This treaty, still in effect today, allows for the stationing of US military in Japan and for the potential use of nuclear weapons in defense of Japan.
- 17 In 2009, for example, a proposal was made that Hiroshima and Nagasaki jointly host the summer Olympics. In 2010 the two cities hosted a conference of Nobel Peace Prize laureates.
- 18 Essay by Yoshida in 'Popoki News' 2007, No. 22 (Yoshida 2007).
- 19 Interview with Shiozuki Tomoko at her home in Tokyo, August 2010. Shiozuki was describing her experiences during the firebombing of Tokyo.
- 20 *Aogiri* in Japanese. It was believed at the time that nothing would grow in Hiroshima for seventy-five years. Numata's tree has been transplanted into Peace Park, where it now grows with two offspring. The tree has commemorative poems and a song, and seedlings are distributed to schools throughout Japan.
- 21 Numata, Suzuko. From a conversation at her home in Hiroshima in July 2009.
- 22 Numata, Suzuko. From a conversation at her home in Hiroshima in November 2010. Numata died on 12 July 2011.

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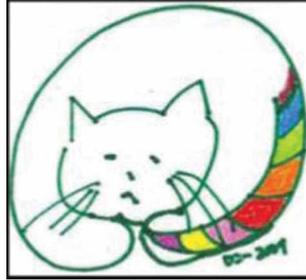
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APPENDIX

Popoki's Message on the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake

17 January 2010 05:46

It has been 15 years since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.



Popoki remembers natural disasters, and human ones.



Popoki prays, and offers flowers for the earthquake victims, and victims of human disasters everywhere.



Popoki will do what he can. Won't you join him?