DIVIDED LENSES

Screen Memories of War in East Asia

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CHAPTER 9

War and Nationalism in Recent Japanese Cinema

Yamato, Kamikaze, Trauma, and Forgetting the Postwar

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New Films about War

The recent spate of Japanese films dealing with World War II or with Japan fighting modern wars raises questions about what kind of histories are being narrated, both wartime and postwar, what they say about Japanese responsibility for World War II, and how they relate to current trends in nationalism.[1] The fear is that such movies resonate with other phenomena, from the comments of Japanese officials, recently exemplified by the speeches and writings of General Tamogami Toshio, Japan's Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) chief of staff, to popular manga like Kobayashi Yoshinori's work, that seem to legitimize Japan's pursuit of war in East Asia and deny that it committed any atrocities.[2] I have already argued elsewhere—with regard to two cinematic imaginations of Japan at war, the alternative World War II history *Lorelei: The Witch of the Pacific Ocean* (*Rōrerai,* 2005) and the Maritime Self-Defense Forces mutiny movie, *Aegis* (*Bōkoku no ījisu,* 2005)—that such fears of rising revisionist nationalism in cinema are not always justified.[3] Both works attempt to revive a Japanese cinema long under the shadow of Hollywood by rendering the spectacle of war entertaining. They present a "victorious" Japan, populated by young people willing to sacrifice themselves for their community, and thus a more "healthy nationalism" (*kenzenna nashonarizumu*) founding a "normal country" (*futsūna kuni*) led by father figures returned to authority. That healthiness is, however, in entertainment films aimed at mass consumption, predicated upon an often con-

flicted effort to avoid offense, projecting strong nationalism on problematic characters, hiding obvious symbols of the nation such as the flag or the emperor, openly advocating "living," not dying for the nation, and making the aim of battle more the defense of specific individuals (in *Lorelei,* a German girl) than of the abstract nation. It is as if the filmmakers are so conscious of a consumer base with conflicting opinions about the war and nationalism that they attempt to construct a hegemonic vision of the nation that appeals to all sides, only to end up writing about a Japan that is an empty sign that can mean anything to anyone.

One could claim that this emptiness is due to these two films' fictional status and may be less evident in works that must struggle with real historical events, such as the fraught narrative of World War II and its aftermath. Other films released around the same time took up actual historical moments and figures, particularly ones centered on kamikaze pilots or other suicidal missions. *Yamato* (*Otokotachi no Yamato,* 2005), for instance, about the final days of the famed battleship, was a significant box-office success, grossing 5.1 billion yen in ticket sales (approximately $46 million at the 2005 exchange rate), the sixth-best-selling Japanese film in a year when Japanese movies outgrossed foreign films for the first time since 1985 (it was also the most successful Japanese war film in decades). *For Those We Love* (*Ore wa, kimi no tame ni koso shini ni iku,* 2007), focusing on the real-life woman who ran an eatery frequented by kamikaze pilots and became popularly known as the "mother of the kamikaze," was the result of the right-wing Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintarō's effort to document and celebrate the sacrifices of those young men.[4] Ishihara supervised the production, wrote the script, and his associate, the Okinawan director Shinjō Taku, directed. Such films have been the focus of greater attention and controversy because of their connection to real historical events and the tendency among critics, scholars, and many viewers alike to privilege codes of realism. Because the question of Japan's responsibility for World War II has been the subject of such extended controversy, it has also served as the primary hermeneutic framework for interpreting myriad cinematic texts, including those not directly portraying the war. Such focal points threaten to obscure the emptiness of these films, which is found less in what they depict than in what they work to elide—an emptiness they create precisely to avoid another contentious if not traumatic history.

Yoshikuni Igarashi has noted that post-2000 kamikaze films such as *The Firefly* (*Hotaru,* 2001), responding to the end of the period of history

called the Shōwa era and the cold war, are increasingly moving away from previous narrative patterns that marked division between the war and the postwar period—and the significance of the war—by depicting the heroic deaths of the kamikaze, as if their demise signified the end of the war and its problems.[5] Newer films are considering the lingering traumatic effects of the war on postwar Japan in the form of surviving kamikaze. The focus is thus shifting from the war to the postwar, but even then, the effect of many of these films is to engage not what they are obviously depicting, the post-1989 present or even the wartime, but the problematic history in between. Igarashi argues that *The Firefly* ultimately avoids dealing with the trauma of the war by narrating a second set of deaths in the present, which cleanly concludes the postwar and divides it from today. *Yamato* and similar films, by contrast, which offer no such second deaths, re-enact wartime trauma in a vicarious fashion, using its disruptive effects so as to enable forgetting of what for the majority of the audience, born after the war ended, might be the greater trauma: the postwar era and its history of economic upheaval, U.S. military bases, cultural neocolonialism, student protest, and "democracy." That these films are also appearing at the time of the "Shōwa 30s" boom, featuring nostalgic narratives of Japan between 1955 and 1965 (Shōwa 30–40), such as the successful film series *Always—Sunset on Third Street,* is no coincidence. Some films ignore the war and the long history of postwar conflict to construct an idyllic postwar, while others "remember" wartime trauma in order to skip to a present when that trauma has been alleviated. Both, however, construct an empty postwar in order to avoid dealing with its traumatic and divisive history, primarily in order to establish the illusion of a more unified present.

The Battleship *Yamato*, Cinema, and Postwar History

Yamato was produced by Takaiwa Tan, the chairman of the movie studio Tōei, and Kadokawa Haruki, a maverick producer who in the 1970s and 1980s introduced new marketing strategies for big-budget spectaculars to the Japanese film industry. The film was Kadokawa's return to success after his cocaine bust in 1993 and reunited him with the director Satō Jun'ya, a regular of blockbuster movies who had helmed such early Kadokawa successes as *Proof of the Man* (*Ningen no shōmei,* 1976) after establishing himself with yakuza films and a kamikaze film titled *The Last Kamikaze* (*Saigo no tokkōtai,* 1970). Reportedly budgeted at 2.5 billion yen (approximately $23 million), quite high by Japanese standards, *Yamato* featured an all-star cast,

including Nakadai Tatsuya, Sorimachi Takashi, Nakamura Shidō, Matsuyama Ken'ichi, Okuda Eiji, Suzuki Kyōka, Aoi Yū, Terajima Shinobu, and Watari Tetsuya, and a colossal set: a life-size reproduction of the front half of the battleship *Yamato,* the largest battleship ever constructed.

Yamato narrates the last days of the famous ship, which was sunk off Japan on April 7, 1945, with a loss of 2,740 lives during a suicidal mission to defend Okinawa. It does this using two structuring devices. The first focuses on several young recruits who board the ship at age fifteen, experience the problems of military life and, at age seventeen, willingly take part in the final battle. The second is a framing narrative in which one of those recruits, Kamio Katsumi, is asked sixty years later by Makiko, the daughter of a former shipmate named Uchida Mamoru, to take her to the site of the sinking. Both devices are central to articulating the film's ambiguous, if not contradictory, politics. By concentrating on the young men, the film, which was based on an award-winning book by Henmi Jun (Kadokawa Haruki's sister), is able to narrate a tale of innocent, promising spirits needlessly sent to a grisly death by a naval command to which even the fleet commander, Itō Seiichi, registered objections.[6] Although the older, adult trio of Uchida, Moriwaki Shōhachi, and Karaki Masao, who are directly in charge of these young recruits, can convincingly voice their desire to sail to their deaths because of their love for *Yamato* (and, correspondingly, the nation its name also refers to) and their hope of defending their families at home, the greenhorns' similar statements lack such force and are even questioned by Moriwaki. Quite a number of voices, including that of the director, claimed this was an antiwar film, one revealing the horrible waste of life caused by reckless leaders.[7] Yet right-wing commentators could also point to the same chaste sailors or related texts like the lyrics to Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi's honorific ending song, and claim that the film offered an example of selfless patriotism for all Japan to follow.[8]

The framing structure only reinforces these possible contradictory readings. Kamio's narration of what happened after *Yamato*'s loss, especially the deaths of his girlfriend Taeko and Uchida's lover Fumiko in the atom bomb attack on Hiroshima, prompts him to declare that even the hope of dying to save their families came to naught. Wakakuwa Midori has noted a change in kamikaze films from wartime works showing young men dying for the emperor, in which women are only an obstacle to that goal, to films like *Yamato,* in which the women are what the men die for.[9] But these men fail to do that. Kamio, in particular, is presented as a victim of trauma after the war,

unproductive (without wife or children) and reclusive (he did not even know that Uchida had survived the *Yamato* sinking), whose problematic relation to memory is exemplified by both his refusal to take part in *Yamato* memorials and a physical debilitation (a heart ailment) that worsens as the site of his traumatic experience nears. Coupled with Uchida, who was presumably rendered sterile by the war (his children are all adopted), Kamio represents the loss of the masculine bravura that Moriwaki and Uchida exemplified with almost violent physicality during the war.

The inclusion of scenes from the present is a significant difference between *Yamato* and previous cinematic accounts of the sinking and thus proves central to its orchestration of trauma. The first postwar film version was *The Battleship Yamato* (*Senkan Yamato*), a 1953 movie directed by Abe Yutaka, who is famous for being trained in Hollywood in the 1920s but also for his wartime propaganda film *Dawn of Freedom* (*Ano hata o ute,* 1944) and his 1954 memorial to the officers who resisted Japan's surrender in August 1945, *Japan Undefeated* (*Nihon yaburezu*). Another major cinematic adaptation was the 1981 blockbuster *The Imperial Navy* (*Rengō kantai*), which covered the history of the imperial fleet from before the attack on Pearl Harbor but focused especially on the carrier *Zuikaku* and the *Yamato.* It was directed by Matsubayashi Shūe, a naval officer during World War II who ended up specializing in *salaryman* comedies and war films, including the influential *The Human Torpedoes* (*Ningen gyorai kaiten,* 1955), about the pilots on suicidal submarine missions.[10] Although *The Battleship Yamato* was narrated from the perspective of an intellectual junior officer, Yoshimura, who survived the sinking, his voiceover emerges from the present, abstract and bodiless, and thus is not too different from the anonymous, third-person, omniscient narration found in the voiceover and explanatory titles of *The Imperial Navy.* In both, the point of narration is from a present secure not only in the knowledge of a history defined by a basic break between war and postwar but also in a subjectivity that is unaffected by the violent past.

Their differences inform their divergent worldviews, not unrelated to their varying historical contexts. *The Battleship Yamato* personalizes narration in a figure who is the most liberal and humanistic on board (Yoshimura does not even slap his underperforming charges but lets them slap him) and thus offers the audiences assurances that present-day authority is more enlightened. The concluding thrust of the film is thus relatively future oriented in that, while it laments the loss of individual lives during the war and shows conflicts between the junior officers (one is in fact an American Nisei who

is subject to discrimination), its emphasis is on the technical skill of the crew, abilities clearly needed for the economic revival begun with the Korean War. As Isolde Standish notes of many kamikaze films, divisions between the men are ultimately dissolved when all subsume their individual desires to the collective,[11] but their reasons for doing so here stem less from the desire to protect family or the homeland than from, in the words of a senior officer, their orders and the fact that their "training will not die."[12]

The Imperial Navy could be said to express that managerial Japan, in which individuals are shaped and defined by institutional practices, is on the eve of its decline. Characters are of two types: officers at the top echelons of the Navy who make the decisions, and a select set of junior officers and their families who must carry them out. If the latter are melodramatic subjects, with the men doing their duty and the women suffering the consequences, the former are ostensibly political subjects, debating and then deciding the course of the war. If the film has an antiwar stance, it is in presenting the views of commanders like Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, who questioned the wisdom of forming the Three-Power Alliance between Japan, Germany, and Italy, or pursuing war with the United States. Yet just as the cinematic narration tends to cut away before a decision is made on a matter, leaving the spectators to deal with the results in the next scene as if they were faits accomplis, so the film narrates the history of war as inevitable. Some officers, such as Ozawa Jisaburō, express displeasure at this overwhelming sense of inevitability, but in the end even he goes along with what has been decided. Matsubayashi is frequently described as bringing a Buddhist worldview to his films, but *The Imperial Navy* shares as much with his *salaryman* movies in celebrating the dedication and skill of mid- to upper-level management whose lot is to perform to their utmost the tasks determined elsewhere. Although this may locate the failure to assume responsibility for the war in Japan's institutional (and perhaps also cinematic) structures, the film offers little critique of this situation. In fact, in contrast to the still hopeful *The Battleship Yamato, The Imperial Navy,* with all its battles and special effects, or even its brief postwar scene showing the small son of one of the dead officers, is a claustrophobic film, suffocating under its own inevitability.

Both films take pains to separate the time of narration from the problems of war, but this is not so as to dig an impassible barrier between the war and the postwar. Rather, the effects of the war are elided precisely to enable the postwar to assume a superior position, capable of reconstructing wartime events like the sinking of the *Yamato* in accordance with postwar

needs. Thus, although neither film takes on the myriad problems of postwar Japan, they are as much about that era as the wartime. Yet by not depicting the postwar other than as an authoritative purveyor of knowledge, projecting various visions of the stages of postwar institutional competency on past communities, such as that of the *Yamato,* these works assume a better postwar by default. Paradoxically, by evading the postwar and dwelling in the military past, such war films create a more perfect image of the postwar.

Yamato and Trauma Cinema

Yamato, in contrast, by framing its narration using present-day episodes, focuses more on the effects of the war on what came afterward. Yet we must focus on how temporalities are related and negotiated through cinematic narration. The original script for *Yamato,* for instance, which was penned by Nogami Tatsuo,[13] also begins with Kamio in the present, but instead of being a reclusive victim of trauma, he is a silent veteran taking part in a special expedition with other *Yamato* survivors to view the wreck on television via a remote-controlled submersible. What triggers a vision of the past is not his troubled memory but, rather, first his assertion that today's youth cannot understand what war was like and then the dredging up of some relics by the submersible. In fact, unlike the film, the flashback is not motivated by any one character's memory. Nogami's script is more conventional historiography, not only filling its pages with obscure details about the structure and daily routine of the *Yamato* but also presenting itself as an objective narration instigated by the unearthing of historical traces. Nogami's film was, then, to presuppose a temporal gap between past and present that can be bridged only by cinematic historiography. The narration itself is never questioned; in fact, cinema is subject to praise because the representative of ignorant youth at the beginning is a television reporter. What she and her crew learn by the end is not just the actual history of the *Yamato* but also the inadequacy of television practice: the inferiority of words obtained in interviews compared to a more cinematic long take of Kamio's back as he stares out to sea. The original script's direct depiction of the postwar period may thus problematize the postwar as a space in which history has been lost, but it does so only to the extent that it celebrates its own (postwar) ability to reconstruct history as a series of periods in which the distinctions between past and present, war and peace, memory and actuality, trace and presence are clear.

Yamato ostensibly transforms these dynamics by having the war seep into the postwar through presenting subjects suffering from trauma. The

postwar is no longer the unseen source of authoritative knowledge, as Kamio, the film's main on-screen narrator, is severely debilitated. One can initially hypothesize that, just as the previous two films utilized the *Yamato* to express a postwar moment, this is an indication of yet another historical stage, one that follows *The Imperial Navy*'s evocation of the managed society (*kanri shakai*) of the high-growth era at its saturated limit. The narration is, in fact, split: Kamio's narration is often personal, triggered by his gaze and not by his words, and thus presumably occurring more in his head than expressed to others; in parallel, however, is the depersonalized narration of the explanatory titles and voiceover. Thus, although the film, in a continuation from Nogami's script, still attempts to maintain authority over history, it also frames a narrative problem to be investigated. The way in which this problem is defined as trauma, as well as the way in which the film frames and "alleviates" this trauma, is central to the way in which the film depicts both the war and the postwar.

The present-day narrative is supposed to show how Kamio overcomes his trauma and, like films in a similar vein, such as *Titanic* and *Saving Private Ryan,* makes *Yamato* a film that combines ostensibly accurate spectacles of past events with the work of processing memory for contemporary purposes. Perhaps it belongs to the category of "trauma cinema" that E. Ann Kaplan, Joshua Hirsch, Janet Walker, and others have discussed.[14] Initially, however, one might not think so. Given that mental trauma is usually theorized as coming from an experience so shocking and forceful that normal psychological structures are unable to process it, thus leaving the traumatic memory in the mind unprocessed and occasionally able to wreak havoc, many have regarded trauma cinema as films that deal with experiences so overwhelming that normal modes of cinema, particularly the classical realism of Hollywood, cannot properly deal with it. Trauma in film is essentially a problem of representation, with the symptoms of that experience being manifested in the body of the film, especially in its form. Prominent examples of trauma cinema include Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard,* 1955)—films that are modernist in form, evincing in their disjunctive cinematic structures both the rupturing effects of trauma and innovative methods of representing experiences that are inherently difficult to represent.

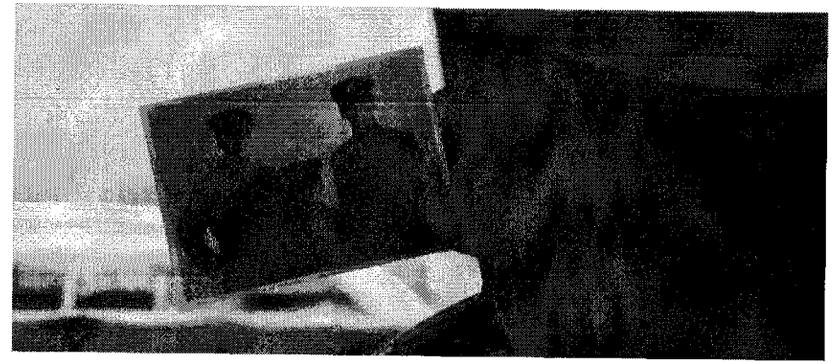
Yamato, however, as many critics noted, even when judging it favorably, uses a style that is largely conventional, if not cliché. The form on which it relies is not just the war film but the television history program, since it features both the familiar voice of the TV Asahi announcer Watanabe

Noritsugu as the narrator and the explanatory titles common to Japanese television documentaries and historical dramas. Actually it begins with documentary footage and images of the Yamato Museum in Kure (though eventually tied to the perspective of Makiko, who is visiting there in the first scene). *Yamato* depicts a loss that is not hard to represent and that has already been memorialized in conventional ways. In some ways, it is simply a reminder for those who have not gone to the museum.

That, however, does not account for either the film's pretensions or its effects and popularity. Uchida's daughter goes to the Yamato Museum at the beginning but must go farther, to the spot where the *Yamato* sank. Yet this is a place where there is nothing, no trace of either the ship or the event. The film must fill in these blanks. Nakamura Hideyuki has argued, with regard to both kamikaze films in general and *Yamato* in particular, that such works function as ceremonial courtesy, representing those on such suicide missions as essentially divine.[15] Makiko, Kamio, and even the fifteen-year-old deckhand Atsushi thus must travel to this place of nothingness because the journey itself ceremoniously honors the dead. The fishing boat's journey certainly has such a ritual dimension, yet it is also ostensibly therapeutic, because it is directed not just at the honored dead but also at the troubled living—not just at a heroic past but at a crippled present.

In order to grasp the crucial difference between recent films, such as *Yamato* and *For Those We Love,* and many past kamikaze films, we must detail how the trip is represented and the functions that film is supposed to play, both temporally and cinematically. Narratively, the voyage to this location is the occasion for Kamio's remembrances, with the authentic geography working to double their veracity. Like Nogami's script, it is an occasion for historiography. What specifically triggers his recollections, however, is not the lack of knowledge that Nogami specified but the presence of photography (a portrait of Moriwaki, Uchida, and Karaki that Makiko shows him).

And just as the photo sparks his voyage into the past, so *Yamato* the film similarly offers itself to the audience as a privileged means of not only accompanying them on this authentic journey but also obtaining unique access to the truth of the traumatic event. A homology between Kamio and the audience is being established, one that structurally emphasizes the photographic/cinematic narration of history (many of Kamio's flashbacks commence with his internal visions—not his recounting of events to others—and thus it is not entirely clear whether the past is being viewed by anyone but the audience). Yet if the trip helps to cure Kamio, so should it—and the movie—presumably help Japanese audiences manage a problematic history.



Yamato (2005): A photograph of Karaki, Uchida, and Moriwaki summons the past

Before considering how it does that, we must ask of what the film ostensibly cures them. One can debate whether the trauma of World War II and Japan's defeat is still felt, over sixty years after the fact, by an audience that mostly had not yet been born at the time and, we are repeatedly told, has not been fully educated about those events. What is more important is that the film itself cites no such problem for the average Japanese. Even their representatives on the boat, Makiko and the deckhand Atsushi, fail to speak of haunting memories that need to be addressed. World War II as trauma is definitely constructed as a generational issue within the film. Unlike Kamio, perhaps theirs is not a narrative of trauma but of coming of age: through Atsushi, the adolescents who boarded the *Yamato* (and were the same age as Atsushi) but who could not grow up, due to war and the loss of a masculine father figure, can finally become adults, largely, like Makiko, by discovering the identity of their absent father.

Nakamura, however, tries to bring this narrative back to the issue of World War II by reading Atsushi's determined steering of the boat in the last scene, complete with a towel wrapped around his forehead, as a resurrection of the kamikaze in modern times. Wakakuwa Midori more strongly declares that Atsushi is the generation of the future that the film, as a "film for revising the constitution and remilitarizing" Japan, is recommending go to war.[16] These are certainly possible interpretations, ones that firmly place *Yamato* in an ideological position that affirms Japan's actions in World

War II and call for a present that relives the past. The problem with these assured readings, however, is that they not only assume that the past is the best framework for reading the present (when the opposite might be the case) but also valorize a dominant reading; however, the problem the young face in this film—and in the audience—lies largely in the absence of a dominant or even common reading, an issue that the coming-of-age narrative must face. Even if some do read the film—either positively or critically—in the way that Nakamura or Wakakuwa outline, how can we argue that these interpretations are in fact shared by a national audience? My own view is that a film like *Yamato* attempts to resurrect a common reading by utilizing trauma to render the postwar void and envelop spectators in a self-confirming, circular, but ultimately empty mode of historical interpretation.

The Malaise of Interpretation

Discussing *Yamato* as a whole, Fukuma Yoshiaki argues that its realism is a result less of its ability to truly evoke the absurdity and meaningless of death in war than of its effect in containing that within such safe narratives as "the bonds of male camaraderie," which give them meaning.[17] Although this is definitely a factor in the film, it presumes that audiences can safely read the film in terms of those narratives. Observers, however, have recognized the problem of interpretation even since World War II. As I have written elsewhere,[18] the issue of audience reception was of great concern to wartime commentators. They recognized that spectators, both at home and in the occupied territories, help make the film and thus could bolster or undermine any national film production. That was why there was talk of training spectators to read films properly as well as of exemplary audiences, who managed their movie interpretations as they did their behavior when waiting in lines to obtain rationed goods. This task became more difficult in the postwar, when there was less certainty over what the films were supposed to mean in the first place. When the first spate of war movies was released around 1953—after the San Francisco Treaty, which formally concluded the Pacific War and realigned relations between Japan and the United States, had been signed in 1951 and the end of Occupation-era film censorship in 1952—the film magazine *Kinema junpō* (Movie Times) expressed enough concern over the potential meaning of these films, for instance, noting audiences cheering a Japanese attack in an American war movie, that it conducted audience surveys. Realizing that some who saw *The Battleship Yamato* were nostalgic for wartime despite the producer's intention to "pray for world peace," the magazine's

editors gave the last word in the article to the critic Ishigaki Ayako, who argued that "it makes you realize, regardless of the intentions of the producers of war films, how difficult and dangerous it is in this sense to make war films in today's Japanese society."[19] Reception, it seemed, could not be trusted to provide consistent readings either for or against war, so some believed that the occasion for reception—the film itself—should not be produced.

Some of this confusion over the cinematic textuality and reception of war films may relate to the nature of genre, which, as Rick Altman argues,[20] is much more divided and mixed than most would have it. The majority of popular film genres are produced by studios that have a vested interest in increasing their potential audiences (e.g., by appealing to those on both the left and right with regard to war). Yet there also exists an argument, evident in some of the films, that the inability to properly read narratives of the war is a particularly postwar malaise, one linked to censorship. The film *For Those We Love* is, in many ways, a film less about the kamikaze fighters themselves than about the obstacles faced by their narratives in being told. One of the major subplots of the movie relates the efforts of the heroine, Torihama Tome, the "mother of the kamikaze," to send letters composed by the men directly to their families in contravention of censorship regulations. She is stopped and even abused by the Kempeitai (the military police). Although, on the surface, this moment in the film is critical of wartime Japan, Tome's inability to transmit the voices of the kamikaze must also be read in conjunction with the film's advertising, which both quotes Ishihara declaring the movie to represent "the true voices of the kamikaze that [Torihama Tome] heard" and proclaims that "the shocking truth of the kamikaze that has been covered up [*fūin*] will now be revealed."[21] The movie thus equates itself with the censored letters of the kamikaze, texts that supposedly are a better form of communication because they were not self-censored and were addressed only to a familiar (familial) audience, which should have no problem in understanding the message.

For Those We Love proposes such an audience for itself, with the nation replacing the family while still being familiar. The censorship to which its promotional materials refer, however, is no longer by the Kempeitai but a postwar phenomena—presumably including the political left, Ishihara's opponents, who, instead of seeing the supposed "truth" of these brave young men sacrificing their lives for "those they love," offer according to neonationalists, only a self-defeating (*jigyakuteki*) history of Japan. But there is a sense here that a larger discursive illness has plagued the country, making it

difficult for even surviving kamikaze pilots to tell the "truth" about their bravery.[22] *For Those We Love* also has its suffering survivor, Lieutenant Nakanishi, who, like Kamio, is riddled with guilt over living on after all his buddies died. Ishihara's film, however, makes the argument that the aphasia of such men is caused by trauma that occurred not during the war—since Ishihara, wanting "to leave behind [for posterity] the figure of beautiful Japanese who lived through such hard times,"[23] declares that their wartime behavior is nothing to be ashamed of—but after it, as the postwar climate would not allow them to proudly narrate the actions of their buddies. Instead, both Kamio and Nakanishi are essentially reduced to being spectators in the postwar, with *Yamato* essentially being the film of the vision that Kamio, beginning with his point-of-view shot looking into the past at the bow of the *Yamato,* sees while on his fishing boat in the present.

What is supposed to cure this malaise is the realization that there is no reason for suppressing these stories, that they should be told and then consumed with a reverence that, like Tome's letters of the kamikaze, sees them only as intimate and truthful—and thus impossible to misinterpret. In the narratives, this is often accomplished by utilizing a circular temporality to alleviate the trauma, justify the narration of wartime stories, and effectively insulate that narrative's reception from the problem of consensus and mediation. One common element in *Yamato, For Those We Love,* and *Sea without Exit* (*Deguchi no nai umi,* 2006)—Sasabe Kiyoshi's film about the human torpedo squadron (Kaiten)—is a declaration that the story of the kamikaze is so meaningful that it should be repeatedly read or viewed by future generations.[24] Such a realization, in fact, is what ostensibly cures Kamio and Nishitani of their survivor's guilt: their reason for living, it is argued, is precisely to relate to others the truth about those who died. This truth could be ideologically variable, showing either the cruelty of war or the heroism of the young men, but it often, under the rationale of refusing to make their deaths meaningless, could function as a foundation for contemporary Japan. Thus, the well-known actress Kishi Keiko, who plays Torihama Tome, could proclaim in an ad for the film her "anger at a war that killed the young kamikaze pilots who were under orders that were disguised as volunteering" and yet, at the same time, declare, "I would like to see even a few more people think about how the peace we have today is founded on their sacrificing their precious lives."[25] This may appear to be a post-facto attempt to overcome the trauma of defeat, but these narratives can go so far as to claim the existence of such ideas before the deaths occur. This involves not just

For Those We Love, in which Vice Admiral Ōnishi Takijirō, as he is helping to formulate the kamikaze policy, declares that if Japan is to lose, it must do so by showing the true spirit of the nation (*kokutai*) beforehand but also in *Yamato,* in the now-legendary statement by Lieutenant Usubuchi Iwao[26] on the ship the day before its final battle: that Japan can progress only through defeat and that the *Yamato*'s demise was necessary for the rebirth or awakening of Japan.[27] The need for the narration of death is projected back in time, before even the deaths occur.

This can appear to be a postwar reconstruction of wartime events for postwar needs. Yoshikuni Igarashi has interpreted stories that rewrite the war defeat as a sacrifice necessary for the betterment of Japan as a part of what he terms the foundational narrative for postwar Japan.[28] However, although narratives like *The Battleship Yamato* are mostly linear, the circularity and self-referentiality of this logic in recent films is crucial. This is most evident in the case of Namiki Kōji, the talented college baseball pitcher in *Sea without Exit* who volunteers for the human torpedo squad. His reasons for volunteering remain unclear for much of the film until he is asked by one of his mechanics, an admirer who also played baseball. Namiki's response is essentially that he is going to die simply to show that the human torpedoes existed.[29] This kind of almost tautological explanation for kamikaze actions is also the most inoffensive, because it largely isolates the dead from history. However, it also depends on the narration, as if kamikaze existed in order to be narrated as existing. As in *For Those We Love,* this effectively functions as self-justification for these movies themselves, reducing the kamikaze to a textual operation, as if their suicidal missions were essentially themselves acts of narration but only about themselves. Perhaps this makes these films "ceremonious" in Nakamura's sense, holy texts owed the same reverence as the last letters and poems of the kamikaze. Yet the fact that these narratives aim to imbricate the act of narration (the films, the internal storytellers), the subject of narration (the kamikaze sailors or pilots), and the reception of narration (the film audience or the survivors of the war) all in the same circular, unmediated textual process, purports to circumvent alternative interpretations. Note that this does not attempt to enforce certain readings by relying on a dominant interpretive context (e.g., a consensus of opinion about war and the nation) but, rather, attempts to avoid the problem of consensus by divorcing the text from the larger context and narrowing the textual operation to essentially one of self-reference: we can all agree on the importance of the kamikaze because they were important for

this text. The media text need not be mediated through acts of reading or other texts because it purportedly exists in unmediated relation to itself.

Yamato and Vicarious Trauma

Yet as if acknowledging that such narrative strategies are insufficient to ensure a national unity of spectatorship, these films pursue in parallel other approaches to bring the viewer into the purview of the text. *For Those We Love,* for instance, attempts to utilize pronouns to place the spectator in the subject position of the pilots (e.g., *ore* [I] in the Japanese title; the English-language title unabashedly joins the two in a communal "we"). This is epitomized in the film's official home page, which is designed as the cockpit of a kamikaze fighter, literally placing the viewer in the position of a man seeking to die for his country. There are problems in these efforts, not least of which is the question of gender. Women in the audience are left behind in *For Those We Love,* as *ore* in the Japanese title refers to men; women are relegated at best to the pronoun *kimi,* the general group that includes girlfriends, mothers, siblings, and even possibly the emperor for whom they are fighting. An equally vexing problem is the difficulty of linking the individual narratives presented in these films to the collective nation. Most American war films attempt to do this by providing a variety of grunts of different backgrounds and ethnicities, ostensibly representing the melting pot of the United States as a whole. These Japanese films do that to some extent as well, with even *For Those We Love* throwing in one pilot who seemingly commits suicide rather than go ahead with a meaningless strategy as well as a Korean pilot.

Yet one problem in attempting to link the present to wartime by skipping the postwar is the huge gap created for structures of identification to cross. How are today's youth in their teens and twenties supposed to identify with figures long since dead who lived in utterly different circumstances? Some fantasy narratives, such as the versions of "The Winds of God," have tried to do that by literally sending representative contemporary youth back in time to 1945.[30] *Yamato* attempts to place a delegate of today's young people in the narrative in the person of Atsushi, who can also be said to exemplify the audience within the film. But *For Those We Love* exhibits particular difficulty in linking through filmic form the individual and the collective. On the one hand, much of the film is shot in medium-long to long shots, a peculiar choice if the film is attempting to encourage audience identification. Perhaps the movie is attempting to resurrect the kind of "monumental style" that

Darrell Davis has identified in wartime cinema, which attempted to represent the nation not just through propagandistic content but also in reconstructing an inherent Japanese aesthetic in a film style that is overly staid and pictorial.[31] But in order to work, a monumental style, as I have argued elsewhere, requires both a clear aesthetic context and an engaged audience, neither of which is always evident in *For Those We Love.*[32] The film at last has an emotional close-up two-thirds of the way through and includes more in an attempt to build up to the melodramatic climax of Nishitani's spiritual reunion with his dead buddies, but the movie remains fissured and divided over how to represent the nation.

Yamato also has this problem but attempts to overcome it—as well as solve the problem of postwar history—through vicarious trauma. *Yamato* was in some ways a traumatic film for spectators, too. In comments on Yahoo Japan and other sites, viewers often describe feeling speechless after seeing the film. What tends to be so shocking is less the general narrative of the loss of the *Yamato* than the way in which the innocent young recruits are killed in such a graphic mode of cinematic representation.

The gore exceeds narrative necessity, and while it might be somewhat justified thematically if the film is antiwar, it is a brutal form of filmmaking that can be cruel to both its characters and its audience.

Perhaps that filmic barbarity is a symptom of another repressed loss, but it is important to understand that simply showing violence does not guarantee a particular meaning, antiwar or not. What is important is how it is manifested in this film at this juncture. First, the violence toward multiple characters can function to collectivize Kamio's individual trauma, to

Yamato (2005): A vicariously traumatic depiction of young deaths

form a national experience that is epitomized within the narrative by the salute of three generations to the honored dead at the end of the film.

As a disruptive phenomenon, however, trauma helps to disguise the inherent differences between these experiences. Although Kamio's trauma is rooted not just in the meaningless loss of young lives but also in his survivor's guilt and powerlessness to alter this history—his problem is linear, based in an inability to turn back the clock—the spectator's trauma is circular because it refers to itself and allows for revisiting. Because the film touts its ability to represent the violent source of Kamio's trauma, the audience's own trauma can refer as much to the film they have watched as to the loss of young lives. This form of vicarious trauma is different from the one described by Joshua Hirsch, who valorizes some cinema as "a traumatic relay," actually transmitting, sometimes in analogous form, aspects of the original traumatic experience.[33] There might be an element of this in *Yamato,* but here the vicariousness functions more as an indirect substitute than as an empathic identification—one that allows spectators to experience trauma in a safe, detached circularity. This is confirmed at the end of the film, which, after giving audiences a strong emotional experience, allows them to remember and memorialize it only minutes later through slow-motion flashbacks of the same brutal battle scenes under the credits—shots that are appropriately coupled with images of Makiko laying flowers at a *Yamato* memorial—and a circular return to some of the underwater footage of the *Yamato* that began the film. Just as trauma reflects back on the film itself, the process of remembering that experience is itself directed toward the movie. It is thus

Yamato (2005): Makiko, Kamio, and Atsushi salute the nation's dead

fitting that when *Yamato* became a hit, the set of the movie became a tourist attraction in the six months after the film's release for over one million people interested in reliving their movie or *Yamato* experience.[34]

Kamio's problem is solved by becoming similarly circular: the assertion that he has survived in order to remember and memorialize the dead. That, however, does not answer the traumatic question of why these young men died in a film that minutes before questioned the meaning of their sacrifice. If Kamio survived so that he could memorialize the dead, did they die only so that they could be memorialized? How this cause is supposed to bring about the effect is uncertain, but the paradoxical victory of Japan through defeat clearly depends on the constant reiteration of that defeat. This may be the justification for the film *Yamato* at a time of political and economic stagnation in Japan, but it writes a peculiar history, because linear progress can be based only on a repeated return to the past if part of that history is ruptured, dismembered, and forgotten.

In *Yamato,* it is again the history of postwar Japan that is forgotten. That is practically stated by Kamio, who, at his moment of resolution, declares that for him the Shōwa era is finally over. He has overcome his problem with history by recalling what happened sixty years before, as if that alone is sufficient to deal with the entire problem of the Shōwa era, which continued until 1989. Gone is the long-standing narrative of the postwar as a return to prewar democracy, as the formation of a new international economic power. The historical break between wartime and postwar is now seemingly less important because the linearity of Nogami's story has been replaced by a circularity in which the postwar itself has been elided, in which the past is now easily accessible because the ravages of postwar time have healed. This does not necessarily create a historical equation between wartime and contemporary Japan, because the two are operationally unified less by positive characteristics than by their both *not* being the postwar. One can postulate that this became possible only through the process of trauma—which by definition is often an unprocessed and unmediated experience.

The erasure of the postwar is evident in how *Yamato* rewrites one of the emblematic moments in postwar Japanese cinema: the scene in Kurosawa Akira's 1947 film *No Regrets for Our Youth* (*Waga seishun ni kui nashi*) in which Yukie, played by Hara Setsuko, sets out during the war to tend the rice paddies belonging to her mother-in-law, despite the public approbation sparked by her husband's execution as a political traitor. It shows her moral determination, the democratic core that will help Japan change after

the war. *Yamato* shifts this into the immediate postwar, as Kamio tends the paddies of his dead buddy Nishi's mother not out of determination to maintain his values or to change society but out of guilt that he survived, not Nishi. Memorable postwar transformations morph into forgettable postwar paralysis that supposedly lasts for the rest of the Shōwa era and becomes the focus of male melodrama—until they are forgotten. Next to shock, tears were the most common response reported by *Yamato*'s audiences, and, as Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto has argued, melodrama was also a crucial narrative in immediate postwar cinema.[35] But whereas cinema in the 1950s used the melodrama of postwar suffering as a means of forgetting wartime atrocities, *Yamato,* if not other recent kamikaze films as well, uses wartime suffering to forget not only Japanese war responsibility but also a postwar increasingly defined, especially in contemporary popular culture, by emasculation and hypocrisy or ahistorical idealization. The latter is evident in the rise of cultural nostalgia for the "Shōwa 30s," which peaked around 2005. In cinema, this was exemplified by the two successful "Always" films, both tales set in the late 1950s of a *gemeinschaft* community in a lower-class section of Tokyo, apparently free of the political or cultural strife that helped define those years.[36] Such nostalgia for the postwar, however, should be seen as the other side of the coin of an attempt to forget or bypass the postwar, since both forgetting the postwar and celebrating the Shōwa 30s reveal a fundamental aversion to confronting the historical transformations and sociopolitical divisions that occurred in that era.

If *Yamato* deals with or reflects historical trauma, it is less that of the war than that of the postwar; this is the history that its audience had really experienced and desired to see erased through the shock of defeat and the tearful eyes of Japanese masculinity. This is the trauma that the film cannot really face except through displacement, and so the postwar can directly appear in the film only through plot inconsistencies (how could Kamio not know that Uchida had survived?) and the inability to acknowledge contemporary political reality (i.e., showing Maritime Self-Defense Force ships returning from a "refueling mission in the Indian Ocean" without daring to mention that this is part of Japan's support for the Iraq War). This displacement, at least in *Yamato,* is made possible through the use of vicarious trauma. Trauma, an experience that has not been properly processed, repeatedly returns (because it remains undigested) in ways that can seem as direct as the original experience, even if they do not necessarily truly reflect that event. Vicarious trauma

in *Yamato* allows spectators to share in the experience presented in the story while also enabling the movie to jump between the past and the present, in the story and in Japanese history, while avoiding the mediations and digestive processes of linear narration and linear postwar history.

War films like *Yamato* certainly seek a consensus by positing a direct link between wartime and present-day Japan that skips the postwar, but in the end that consensus differs little from the empty national one on which their more fantastic brethren rely. Postwar trauma should be avoided—or displaced using such techniques as vicarious trauma—precisely because of the intense divisions and turmoil created during that period; these films can imagine a unified audience only if they render the disputes of the postwar null and void, creating an imagined community only if such an empty postwar is equally imagined.[37] The danger of these films lies in their doing precisely that, but accomplishing it can also be said to be a symptom of the very postwar trauma and turmoil that the films try to elide. A new history that severs and skips the postwar (just as previous histories skipped the wartime) and re-members a cycle of return between the present and the memorialized wartime is problematic, especially for a film like *Yamato* that has at least some antiwar pretensions. This is part of the source of its contradictory nationalism: hoping to recover a lost masculinity in war while also fearing its excesses;[38] celebrating life and survival like many other contemporary war films, yet also depending on death and defeat for its reworking of postwar history; imagining an adult Japan in the new millennium, but without being able to narrate either a linear history of Japan's economic recovery and growth (its becoming adult?) or its geopolitical dependency on the United States (or its lingering infantile capitalism, to borrow Asada Akira's term).[39] *Yamato* strategically uses the ruptures of trauma to try to efface these aporia, all the while reassuring its shocked audiences with a familiar, conventional film style. Remembering is here re-membering, but with the dismembered parts of the nation, cinema, and history still poorly connected after their rearrangement.[40]

Notes

1 The first version of this paper was originally presented at a conference at Stanford in 2008. I would like to thank the organizers and other participants for their helpful comments and questions.

2 In October 2008, in a contest sponsored by a construction company whose CEO has espoused right-wing views, General Toshio Tamogami won a lucrative prize for an essay titled "Was Japan an Aggressor Nation?" His main arguments were that Japan was manipulated into participating in World War II by China and the United States under the influence of the Communist International (Comintern) and that Japan's reliance on the United States for military defense is destroying its national culture. In the ensuing controversy, he was eventually relieved of his post and pressed into retirement. Kobayashi's manga, beginning with the notorious *Sensōron* (On War) (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1998), have aggressively attempted to rewrite Japan's history of war and colonization and advocate a nationalism that abandons the selfishness of today's youth and emulates the sacrifices of the *kamikaze* pilots.

3 Aaron Gerow, "Fantasies of War and Nation in Recent Japanese Cinema," *Japan Focus,* February 20, 2006, http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/1707/.

4 Ishihara's film was not that successful. It came in twenty-ninth on a list of best-grossing Japanese films in 2007, with 1.08 billion yen (about $9.2 million in 2007) in total box office receipts, but with a budget of 1.8 billion yen (about $15 million), and with producers normally only getting a fraction of each yen paid at the ticket window, the movie probably lost money. It, however, was the third highest grossing film of the year for Tōei, one of the major studios.

5 Igarashi Yoshikuni, "Kamikaze Today: The Search for National Heroes in Contemporary Japan," in *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia,* ed. Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 99–121.

6 As if emphasizing this innocence, the concept that these young recruits became more adult was expunged from the film. The earlier script had them not only visiting bordellos and rising in rank but also doling out the same violence on younger sailors that they had experienced when they first boarded the ship.

7 See the discussion between the activist reporter and film director Mori Tatsuya and Satō Jun'ya, in Satō Jun'ya and Mori Tatsuya, "*Otokotachi no Yamato* wa hansen eiga ka!?" (Is *Yamato* an Anti-war Film?) *Shūkan kinyōbi* 588 (January 6, 2006). See also comments by Kadokawa and Satō in Julian Ryall, "Raising the Yamato," *Number One Shimbun* 38, no. 2 (February 2006).

8 See, for instance, the rightwing blog http://red.ap.teacup.com/sunvister/134.html, accessed December 15, 2013.

9 Wakakuwa Midori, "Jendā no shiten de yomitoku sengo eiga: *Otokotachi no Yamato* o chūshin ni" (Reading Postwar War Films from a Gender Perspective, Focusing on *Yamato*), *Tōzai nanboku* (2007).

10 While I emphasize the historical differences between many of these films, their continuities should not be ignored. Most of these films were made at Tōhō, Tōei, and earlier Shintōhō (a Tōhō spin-off), studios for which war films were a profitable proprietary genre. That helps explain the connections in terms of personnel. Matsubayashi was a "supporting director" on *The Battleship Yamato* (a Shintōhō film), which starred actors such as Fujita Susumu (famous for Tōhō's war films during the war), who later appeared in *The Imperial Navy* (Tōhō). That film also featured actors such as Nagashima Toshiyuki and Kotegawa Yūko, who appeared in *Sea without Exit* (a Shōchiku film); Naraoka Tomoko, who played the "kamikaze mother" in *The Firefly* (Tōei); and Nagato Hiroyuki, who joined the cast of *For Those We Love* (which was distributed by Tōei). The assistant director on *The Firefly,* Sasabe Kiyoshi, ended up becoming the director of *Sea without Exit,* and the producer of the former, Takaiwa Tan, also produced *Yamato* (again distributed by Tōei). Some overlaps are inevitable given the limited size of Japan's actor pool, but they also show that war cinema in Japan was shaped not just by personal ideology but also by studio identities, genre, and star personas.

11 Isolde Standish, *Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2000).

12 This is actually spoken by Lieutenant Usubuchi, during the same narrative situation—a fight between junior officers questioning their suicidal mission and those praising it—that *Yamato* uses to present a different but now more famous Usubuchi speech about Japan's need to lose in order to progress. *The Battleship Yamato*'s version is more befitting a moment one decade before the start of high-economic growth.

13 Nogami has said that he was originally asked to write the script before Kadokawa or Satō came on board. His version was later rewritten without his knowledge by Satō, while still keeping much of what Nogami introduced, such as the focus on the young sailors and characters such as Kamio. After fighting with the producers, he eventually asked for his name to be removed from the credits. See Nogami Tatsuo, "Watashi ga *Otokotachi no Yamato* no kyakuhonka o orita riyū," (The Reasons I Withdrew My Name as the Screenwriter of *Yamato*) *Shinario* 62, no. 1 (2006).

14 E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

15 Nakamura Hideyuki, "Tokkōtai hyōshōron," (Representing the Kamikaze) in *Iwanami kōza: Ajia, Taiheiyō sensō,* vol. 5: *Senjō no shosō* (Iwanami Lecture

Series: The Asian Pacific War, vol. 5: Various Aspects of the Battlefield), ed. Kurasawa Aiko, et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006); idem, "Girei toshite no tokkō eiga: *Otokotachi no Yamato/Yamato* no baai," (Kamikaze Films as Ceremonial Courtesy: The Case of *Yamato*) *Zen'ya* 7 (Spring 2006).

16 Nakamura, "Girei toshite no tokkō eiga"; Wakakuwa, "Jendā no shiten de yomitoku sengo eiga," 12.

17 Fukuma Yoshiaki, "*Otokotachi no Yamato* to 'kandō' no poritikusu," (Yamato and the Politics of Emotion) in *Media bunka o shakaigaku suru,* (Sociologically Analyzing Media Culture) ed. Takai Masashi and Tanimoto Naho (Kyoto: Shakai Shisōsha, 2009).

18 Aaron Gerow, "Narrating the Nationality of a Cinema: The Case of Japanese Prewar Film," in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism,* ed. Alan Tansman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); idem, "*Miyamoto Musashi* to senjichū no kankyaku," (Miyamoto Musashi and Wartime Spectators) in *Eiga kantoku Mizoguchi Kenji,* (Film Director Mizoguchi Kenji) ed. Yomota Inuhiko (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1999).

19 "Hansen ka hanBei ka?—Senki eiga no tadotte iru michi," (Anti-war or Anti-American? The Road War Films Have Taken) *Kinema junpō* 39 (August 1, 1953), reprinted in *Besuto obu Kinema junpō,* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kinema Junpōsha, 1994): 225–229.

20 Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999).

21 *Ore wa, kimi no tame ni koso shini ni iku,* at www.chiran1945.jp.

22 The former kamikaze Itazu Tadamasa was part of the film's publicity efforts, and he stressed his long inability to tell others, even his family, of his wartime experiences. See Itazu Tadamasa, "Itazu Tadamasa ni tōji o kiku," (Asking Itazu Tadamasa about the Times Then) *Kinema junpō* 1483 (May 15, 2007).

23 See note 20.

24 Yoshikuni Igarashi has interpreted stories that reimagine the war defeat as a necessary sacrifice for the betterment of Japan as an element in what he terms the foundational narrative for postwar Japan. See Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945–1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). I argue that more recent films, while echoing such a function, deviate from it by being more self-referential and creating a more circular history.

25 From an ad in the evening edition of *Asahi shinbun,* April 25, 2007, cited in Amano Keiichi, "'Utsukushii kuni' no 'utsukushii shi,'" (The "Beautiful Death" of a "Beautiful Country") *Inpakushon* 158 (July 2007).

26 Played by Nagashima Kazushige, son of the baseball legend Nagashima Shigeo.

27 While there are doubts about the authenticity of this statement, it was popularized by Yoshida Mitsuru's *Requiem for Battleship Yamato.* The same sentiment is expressed in *Lorelei* as well.

28 Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory.*

29 His ultimate death may then be ironic, since he dies not in an attack but from suffocation after his sub gets stuck in a rock formation underwater during practice.

30 Originally a stage play written by the actor Imai Masayuki (the English title was used in Japan), this story has been made into a theatrical film twice, in 1995 and in 2006, and as a television movie in 2005. It has also been novelized.

31 Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

32 Gerow, "*Miyamoto Musashi* to senjichū no kankyaku."

33 Hirsch, *Afterimage.*

34 "Onomichi fan kakutoku ni kōken," (Contributing to Acquiring Fans of Onomichi) *Chūgoku shinbun,* May 8, 2006.

35 Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro, "Melodrama, Postmodernism, and Japanese Cinema," *East West Film Journal* 5, no. 1 (1991).

36 *Always—Sunset on Third Street* (*Always—sanchōme no yūhi*) was released in 2005, and *Always—Sunset on Third Street 2* (*Always—zoku sanchōme no yūhi*) hit theaters in 2007. Both were based on the manga by Saigan Ryōhei and directed by Yamazaki Takashi. The first film was the seventh-highest-grossing Japanese film of 2005, and its sequel the third highest of 2007.

37 One could interpret the efforts of the second Abe cabinet to "escape the postwar regime" by working to change Japan's constitution and security apparatus as the political equivalent of the project of forgetting the postwar.

38 Represented in the film by the corporal punishment onboard ship, which are shown to be quite brutal but never fully problematized as it was in older Japanese war films.

39 Asada Akira, "Infantile Capitalism and Japan's Postmodernism," in *Postmodernism and Japan,* eds. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

40 This article was completed before the kamikaze film *The Eternal Zero* (*Eien no 0,* 2013) became a major hit. Further analysis is needed to judge whether it functions in the way *Yamato* does, or how conditions of reception for war films may have changed under the second Abe cabinet, but the movie does share much with previous kamikaze films: a narration that begins in the present with young people ignorant of the wartime past; important roles given to those who value life over death; and a critical attitude toward the postwar. In fact, one can hypothesize that the film does not only work to forget the postwar, it urges that forgetting by depicting a present—the product of that postwar—that features not only morally lax and ignorant young people, but also fundamentally incorrect information about wartime heroes.