Children we have lost

Diaries, memoirs, and museum displays of childhood and youth in wartime Japan

Children We Have Lost:

Diaries, Memoirs, and Museum Displays of Childhood and Youth in Wartime Japan

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In a short form memoir of his experience as a Tokyo schoolboy evacuee during WWII, Nishi Toshio drew an important distinction between 'memory' and 'remembering':

> I said I have no memory (*kioku*) of my evacuation, but when I recalled things piecemeal, I wrote them down bit by bit (*danpenteki ni omoidashite kakidashitara*) … when I did this, I realised that those student days had left some memories inside me after all. I suppose that year as a student evacuee was an extremely important experience in my life.

Toshio's recollections are a confusing pastiche of recorded experiences from the war years: the unfamiliarity of the rural landscape, calling out for 'mother' in his sleep, doing heavy labour in the countryside, visits from family members bearing gifts, sighting enemy aircraft, and snippets of post-war conversations such as 'this kid was meant to be a kamikaze pilot'—and the difficulty of expressing these memories hovers over it all.[1] Toshio's memories of his childhood experiences were a construction, but they are also an opportunity to engage with a 'lost youth'—not only for those who did not experience the war in Japan, but also for Toshio himself in his search for the 'lost' Toshio-qua-schoolboy. Children of the past are not simply lost to historians, but also to the memoirists themselves.

Children and youth are often lost as historical subjects, especially outside of Europe and North America, which is perplexing given the large amount of personal documents and objects that they have left behind in places like Japan. As Sabine Frühstuck demonstrated in

the case of modern Japan, WWII was hardly the first, or last, time adults would use representations of childhood to evoke strong feelings both for and against war, situating them as passive placeholders for both pacifism and militarism.[2] Scholars of modern Japan have rarely paid attention to the history of childhood and youth, but where they have done so, they have generally affirmed historiographical criticisms from other subject areas about the constructed nature of childhood per Ariès, the importance of education as a form of Foucauldian social discipline, and 'childlike childhood' as a discursive re-inscription of middle class cultural hegemony.[3] Not all children are lost equally: despite a new body of scholarship by Japanologists who examine materials left behind by children and youth,[4] with some exceptions[5] scholars outside of East Asian studies still privilege Western European and North American case studies as essential knowledge. This creates a distorted view of wartime youth: debates over how young people should factor into mobilisation were a transnational phenomenon in the early twentieth century, and not just across Western Europe and North America, but also the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire.[6] Adult debates usually did not include children's voices; in those cases, historians can only employ 'empathic inference' when describing historical childhood and youth.[7] To place children and youth in every affected country, including those outside of Europe and North America, at the centre of the history of WWII, it is necessary to engage with their remnants, both as wartime children and post-war adults.[8]

Nevertheless, any attempt to do so must confront the twin problems of the reliability of wartime materials and the selectivity of post-war memorialisation. In the case of modern Japan, the post-war trope of the 'lost youth' reflects the 'childlike child' discourse of the war years, and it has been recapitulated, inscribed, and reified through the media of published diaries, mass media images, and museum representations. Whether texts or material objects, the preservation of youth accounts is an essential ingredient for engaging with the history of

WWII, even if it exposes sacred, delicate, and private spheres—which in any case are sometimes spaces of social and cultural oppression.[9] Adult survivors (and historians) address the loss of wartime youth in many ways, some of which I will analyse here: wartime personal records, post-war personal memories, and public museum exhibits of material objects. Critically engaging with the remnants of these lost youth, including wartime materials and post-war reminiscences, allows us to move beyond the narratives of pity, nostalgia, and innocence in order help us construct new ways of seeing WWII.

A Child's Record: Violence, Hunger, and Play in Wartime Japan

Children and youth suffered and died in large numbers during WWII due to the machinations and beliefs of adult authorities,[10] and the loss of their lives represented an irretrievable, extinguished potential. Children were subjected to bullying, starvation, and loneliness, while youth were denied education due to labour and military conscription.[11] Across the Japanese Empire, Allied forces orphaned or killed young people, and the victors sent the survivors of empire home to a hostile population in Japan who viewed them with suspicion and derision.[12] Although their feelings of loneliness, hunger, and frustration were not mere artefacts of post-war memory, and despite a post-war emphasis on the tribulations of wartime children and youth, personal accounts from the period show us that children did not describe these years solely as a time of loss.

At the same time, in order to avoid a facile acceptance of the wartime diary as a direct reflection of their inner thoughts, it is important to understand how Japanese children came to write them in such massive numbers.[13] Adult educators across Japan helped children find the means to record their daily life, which helped capture 'facts' about wartime society. For example, primary school evacuee Ōkawa Takeshi described children tormenting a snail, which he said 'made me feel very sad for the snail'.[14] Although this was a forgettable

moment in the history of WWII, like many children Ōkawa took the time to record these small, insignificant, and quotidian events. While state and society were emphasising labour, fighting, and sacrifice at the national level in public discourse, Japanese teachers were training children like Ōkawa to embrace the 'life writing movement' (*tsuzurikata undō*), which meant composing detailed, daily records as a form of self-cultivation (*shūyō*). Educators provided paratextual commentary in blank diaries for children, including admonitions to record, in accurate detail, their experiences. The influence of teachers on children's writing, and its selectivity, should warn us against accepting their records as unblemished truth. Still, even in a country where dubious confessionals regularly attracted media attention,[15] juvenile writers tried their best to earnestly capture lived experience within the confines of genre and classroom instruction.

Like adults, Japanese children and youth were terrified by urban air raids, but they focused more on familiar neighbourhood spaces. For example, when young people saw their schools destroyed by Allied bombing campaigns, they took it as a personal loss. Kobayashi Narihide recorded in his diary the effects of an air raid on Shizuoka:

> Look at this, our lovely school … The workroom, staff room, and kendō [fencing] room were all done in. The workroom was a mess, and so was the staff room. The headmaster's office was only a shell. Near the kendō room a bomb went off but there wasn't much damage. That dōjō didn't even flinch, which seemed like divine good luck. … The enemy aircraft defiled our school. To take revenge, we should all become great pilots, and strike down the B-29s.[16]

Just over one month later, in May 1945, fourteen-year-old schoolboy Kojima Yoshitaka joined other children on a train heading out of Nagoya, which was about to be heavily

bombed. He grabbed his younger brother and ran from the train for an air raid shelter just outside of the city. He delineated the familiar landmarks as they burned, describing their importance to his family and social network, concluding, 'I could see smoke coming from the direction of our house, and my heart shivered with fear.'[17] Teenagers like Narihide and Yoshitaka supported the war effort as they tried to situate themselves in an adult society dominated by jingoistic rhetoric—although inklings of 'anti-war sentiment' (*hansen shisō*) existed in personal accounts, they were rare. Still, because young people felt they had been taught to keep an accurate record of their life experience, we can see how young people and their families navigated the urban environment.

Poor food provisions, tyrannical teachers, and basic inequalities appear throughout the diaries of children and youth in the war years, but this is not always obvious from a cursory reading. Japanese primary schoolboy Kikukawa Takehiko kept a strict record of what he ate during his evacuation from Tokyo's Toshima Ward to rural Nagano Prefecture during the transition from fourth to fifth grade:

> Vegetables, daikon miso soup, bok-choy, pickled vegetables, *furikake* … Lunch is boiled pumpkin, with bok-choy, and pickled vegetables … We all gathered around the *kotatsu* [heated table cover] and wrote letters when [we] got to have some beans and bread from Hiroshi's mom. While we wrote, we also got some snacks (bread). Then we went to the hot springs, had dinner, which was vegetable and daikon miso soup, pickled bok-choy, and roasted soybean flour [*kinako*].[18]

Shigematsu Kunitake, another evacuee, sometimes only recorded the contents of meals in his diary, including the farm labour they were required to undertake; often the meals consisted of things they had harvested only a day or two before. Reflecting back on this diary, Shigematsu

wrote, 'This was a diary by a child separated from his parents and during a time of food shortage, so the contents are just about eating, dispelling loneliness, and visiting days.'[19] As Samuel Yamashita has detailed, hunger, bullying, and food theft appeared within wartime accounts by children, and these accounts would become important evidence for post-war writers who did not wish to forget the inequities of the war years.[20] Starvation, exhaustion, and malnutrition-related diseases were a constant concern, and featured more commonly in children's accounts than in adults', prompting some teachers, for example, to admonish children for focusing on the food shortage in school diaries.[21] Still, the records kept by children and youth provide an extraordinarily detailed view of food production, distribution, and consumption.

Physical privations and air raids were only one chapter in the life history of 'lost youth', as interruptions to education feature even more prominently in wartime accounts. Before the 1937 invasion of China, middle-class Japanese children and youth were being increasingly exposed to social expectations of personal academic and professional advancement. [22] Even during air raids, schoolchildren like Yamamoto Hiroko, when ordered to evacuate by their parents, barked back: 'No way—I'm going to be late for school tomorrow!'[23] Middle school student Mikawa Michiko complained about how evacuation hurt her chances for the future: 'Mid-term examinations will be a presentation format. I have neither materials nor textbooks, and ever since I got here, there are all these things that others have already finished, which will cause me problems so I'm really worried.' Then, when her little sister was ill, Michiko recorded in her diary how she became a carer; Michiko's mother could not abandon housework and so Michiko had to withdraw from school.[24] Tamura Yasuko recorded in her diary the irritation she felt in being pulled away from school to work the night shift in one of Japan's many war industries. On top of the exhausting labour, by May 1945 she was also growing tired of the wartime politics and interruptions in her

education, including the government's view that her study of German was inappropriate after the Nazi regime's surrender.[25] These views were not simply post-war inventions of adults reflecting on the privileges enjoyed by their own children; they reveal the intersection of gender, class, identity, and educational privilege in ways statistical information does not.

When analysing the material culture of evacuated children in their personal accounts, it appears that the notion of wartime poverty is mainly a concern of post-war adults. In diaries, children evacuated to the countryside did not focus on missing manufactured toys, but rather emphasised the free amusements that nature provided. Mass media and popular culture celebrated evacuated children as deservedly enjoying a 'childlike' and carefree existence, often in conjunction with consolation programmes aimed at injured or recently mobilised soldiers. As such, it was common, as schoolboy Asano Takahiro described in a letter to his father, for soldiers to bring rare commodities such as candies and meat to evacuees while the children sang songs for or played with them.[26] Kikukawa Takehiko, a twelve-year old primary school evacuee, fondly described outings in rural Nagano Prefecture, including fishing, communal meals, skiing, ice-skating, and 'all sorts of things'.[27] In particular, wartime children celebrated a culture of correspondence, which in Japan was materially rich, as expressed here by evacuated schoolgirl Umano Yōko:

> After I finished studying and was on my way to my room, Mr. Kogura said, 'Umano, I've got something for you.' I wondered what it was when he handed me a package. I was happy, happy, happy—opening it up there were puzzles (*tokimono*) and origami to do—this was wonderful—but there was something else, too—a letter from mother. At night I held this letter close when I went to bed.[28]

Despite post-war jeremiads of a time of severe authoritarianism and destitution, playing with games and handmade toys still featured prominently. In Kikukawa's evacuation diary, he captured the Japanese school policy of 'free play' (*jiyū asobi*) in some detail: 'The afternoon was free play, so we played in the fields and streams and spoke to some soldiers. We ran along the paths of the rice paddies and it was hot. We came back and played chess (*shōgi*).' Not all children used their free play in the same way: unlike Kikukawa, Umano Yōko preferred to read books and disliked swimming outside.[29] Indeed, children who lived in or were evacuated to the Northeast of Japan produced artwork using oil paints, inks, and coloured paper [Figure 1]. There is perhaps no better record of daily amusements than a child's diary.

[Figure 1 - Shimamori Shūichi drawing of morning exercises during evacuation, Akita Prefectural Museum]

While children and youth lost much during WWII, the view that wartime childhood was a time exclusively defined by death, destitution, and hunger seems to be a post-war adult narrative. As a consequence of the daily composition exercises that teachers taught children to adopt, diaries had no overall narrative arc. By contrast, memoirs of wartime childhood and youth—whether they included angry memories of dashed opportunities, sorrow over sacrificed lives, or (more rarely) nostalgia for a 'simpler time'—became characterised first and foremost by a powerful sense of loss. Engagement with young people in the war years could inspire pity, which in turn produced pacifist critiques of the mobilization state. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is now necessary to turn to life-writing genres that emerged after the war's end.

My Childhood without Toys: The Post-war (Re-)Definition of Youth in Memoirs and Museums

After 1945, Japanese society was increasingly preoccupied with the 'lost youth' of the war years, whom they saw as both admirably committed to serving their community but also wasted on a hopeless conflict. As L. Halliday Piel argued, the 'lost youth' narrative of the war years was predominantly a middle-class resentment since most young people had entered the wartime work force as young as 12 years of age.[30] In particular, organisations like the Wadatsumi-kai, which memorialised the lost youth of elite institutions such as Tokyo Imperial University in the 1950s, emphasised the accounts of young people who seemed destined for greatness until the violence of the war took them. Critics of Wadatsumi-kai's approach to the 'lost youth' in the 1960s included those who thought the project was elitist, to late 1960s student radicals who believed that the wartime generation, for all of their post-1945 pacifism, did not fully acknowledge their wartime complicity in mobilisation.[31] The

explosion of accounts in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with important memorial dates, the peace and war museum building boom, the retirements of veterans and war survivors, as well as the famous 'memory battles' around textbooks. Throughout these stages, the prosperity and peace of post-war Japan provided a contrast for adult survivors' re-examination of their wartime childhood and youth, which of course was found wanting in an age of plenty. The lost childhood that they, and post-war generations, wished to engage with was one that had to negotiate a conflict between pity and nostalgia in their own memoirs and the broader discourse of war memory.

Post-war memoirists could hardly extricate their youth from the material conditions in which it was expressed. For example, when notions of 'hometown-making' (*furusato-zukuri*) and the need for new civic institutions were ubiquitous,[32] the destruction of a coherent 'hometown', as opposed to local landmarks, became a much more noticeable trend in memoir literature:

> Terror gripped the modern city—for the victims who passed a night running in circles from violent flames—the light of the fire was a terrible illumination. Our familiar town Hakata, Kyushu's most heroic city, 'Great Fukuoka', where had it gone? … The department stores and banks, the concrete structures, were burned black and horrifying to look at, with smoke still rising from their innards … I got into the shelter with my parents and was saved. I witnessed it all with my classmate, just eight years old.[33]

Although children had certainly recognised the loss of familiar landmarks, the idea of the city as a locus of identity was very rare in their wartime accounts. Reflecting on their extraordinary childhood, post-war adults also emphasised its precarity, which was not a major

of feature of wartime personal documents by young people. Suzuki Yasuo, who was 11 years old during the firebombing of Shizuoka, narrated his harrowing flight through the burning city as a series of narrow escapes while wondering, 'how will I live my life tomorrow?'[34] Memoirs, largely written decades after 1945, are suffused with reflections on the fragility of life, the arbitrary nature of survival, and other philosophical ruminations that did not seem to preoccupy the minds of their younger selves. Similarly, memoirists' depictions of the loss of personal possessions sometimes functioned as metonyms for the fragility of life itself. Isihida Yasuko, who was a primary school third grader when Allied forces firebombing Himeji in June 1945, combined the horrific memories of air attacks with material losses that emphasised her lost childhood:

> There are dead people with babies still strapped to their backs, among other things. … While we were walking on a road between fields, something red, like a burning tile, flew less than a metre over my head with a strange whistling sound. Had I been a bit taller, it would have taken my head off. While running amid the fields and plants, with the bomb fragments flying past, I slipped and lost my precious sandals (*geta*). I couldn't get them out and started to cry, when my mum said, 'Just leave it!' and took me by the hand until we reached a river.[35]

Memoir writers mirrored the destruction of hometown and material possession with the loss of their youth, and consequently the reconstruction of space and material wealth in the post-war era appeared to mirror the reconstruction of self.

This reconstruction was not pure fantasy, but also recovery of a lost past. Post-war memoir writers focused much more on the unspoken psychological and philosophical dimensions of wartime childhood; these were the areas that they believed were an integral

part of growing up in the war years, but that they did not, or could not, articulate at the time. Reflecting on his personal records and experiences, Uchiyama Jun emphasised elements of childhood that rarely appeared in contemporary accounts, such as the influence of religious billeting and gender on evacuation:

> The stories that tied Nichiren Buddhism to the idea of Japan as a holy nation (*shinkoku Nippon*) emotionally overcame us as young lads whether we liked it or not. Nichiren was the most correct faith, we believed. We looked down on the girls who prayed [differently] at the Jōdō Shinshū temple. For starters, the prayer sounded terrible. Sometimes we would have serious debates with the girls about religion, and we tried earnestly to convert our parents when they came for visit days; we sincerely told them that Nichiren Buddhism was the only religion appropriate for a holy country like Japan.[36]

Memoirs of childhood and youth during WWII also reveal a juvenile world within the war that was both separate from, and reflective of, the one created by the adults around them. Fushimi Chizuko, after re-discovering the diary she kept as a ten-year-old evacuee, described in detail the terror she and other girls suffered under the tyranny of a bully whom they dubbed ‘the Queen’.

> A society of children left in that abnormal situation created a ‘twisted’ world. What I am trying to stress is that, it is not important who ‘the Queen’ was, or who was being bullied. That is the ‘fear’ present in a naturally arising society of children. I also think it is a reflection of the twisted society of adults at that time. The ‘twist’ here is WWII. The war, in many forms, left a deep imprint on the people of that era.[37]

The fact that bullying and child abuse were a major concern in post-war Japan by the time Chizuko recorded her memories in the 1990s may very well have influenced her to reflect on these aspects of her war experience. The childhood she lost was not just a self, a hometown, or a collection of child-like material objects inspiring nostalgia, but a whole system of social relations that, while reflective of contemporary adult values, also was unique to the children of the conflict. Museums and memorial events accelerated the composition and archiving of these accounts, particularly as the war generation reached middle age from the 1980s, which meant that writers' views of lost childhood were articulated and trapped in particular instances in the historical record.

Children who perished, or adults who 'lost' their youth in the war, were captured by material objects in the museums and memorial spaces of the latter decades of the twentieth century. Even more than text, these objects invited post-war audiences to imagine lost children, and engage with them. Since the mid-1980s there has been a large culture of local museum space in Japan dedicated to the war years, in which children and youth who perished feature prominently as victims of wartime excesses. During years of memorial importance (e.g., 1995, or fifty years after then end of WWII), when temporary exhibits have been included, there may be over one hundred active exhibits across the country. Exhibits supporting pacifism in Japan frequently make use of representations of childhood and youth to emphasize the horrors of WWII, and the exhibits always offered these with a personal story of grief and loss. In place of the child's remains, memorial spaces include representations of the lost person, including clothing, photographs, artwork, and personal documents. This is not the exclusive domain of the pacifist left, but also the memorial practices of more conservative organisations, as seen in 'National Defence Shrines' such as the one in Shizuoka [Figure 2].[38]

[Figure 2 - Shizuoka National Defence Shrine Museum exhibit space in 2016, including photographs, original letters and diaries, and personal items of deceased soldiers]

Display cases and small book collections, both in museums and libraries, offer representations of lost children for those who wish to engage with them. In Himeji's Peace Memorial Museum, the small reading room has samizdat and commercially published books featuring local, national, and global accounts of the war years, including those by children. One display includes materials related to Takada Masashi, a Middle School 2nd grade schoolboy, which was also featured in the book *Cries of Those Reborn from the Flames*. Museum curators paired his personal photograph with a picture of his childhood diary, stating that he was 'hit directly on the right shoulder by an incendiary bomb and died. Previously, he had kept a diary scrupulously every day.'[39] The diary is thus not just an historical document, but also a representation of the lost child, accompanied by a photograph of his face and living on in his place like a textual doppelganger.

Japanese museums more provocatively suggest the lost child through the exhibition of material objects. The Setagaya (Tokyo) Peace Resource Room displays evacuees' hand-made

paper dolls, which cannot be seen without considering the children who played with them in an ‘age without toys’ [Figure 3].

[Figure 3 – hand-made children’s paper dolls, Setagaya (Tokyo) Peace Resource Room]

In Aomori, museum curators have presented the remains of a child’s fire hood and mantle on top of period newspapers with an explanatory note [Figure 4]: the three-year-old child was carried on her older sister’s back, but the firebombing of Aomori, which destroyed the city in a single night, meant that fires quickly set the cloth hood and mantle ablaze. The sister, who was fleeing in panic for a safe haven, did not stop to douse the flames; in fact, the rush of oxygenated air made the fire worse, and the child died of her burns soon after they arrived at a shelter. Adults recounted such scenes in published accounts throughout the post-war era. The commercially published and privately produced memoirs capture survivors’ terrible sadness following the loss of young relatives, including this one from Tokyo:

> As I ran through the fires, Noriko continued to shout, “I’m hot, I’m hot (*atsui, atsui*)!” But I kept running, because it was so dangerous, saying, “Just wait, Noriko, just

wait." I didn't know that her clothes had caught on fire. It was only later, when we made it to the air raid shelter, that I realized what had happened … No matter how many times I call out, [Noriko and my parents] cannot reply, and I am gripped by crippling sadness … Three years later there we received skeletal remains from 'The City of Tokyo', and buried them in a rural grave. But the remains of three other [relatives] were lost, and their names to this day cannot be found in a registry of victims in the Hall for the Spirits of the Dead in Tokyo.[40]

[Figure 4 – child's fire hood that was damaged during an air raid, Aomori Air Raid History Centre]

These cases in Japan are representative not only of the child-qua-victim trope, wherein the horror of war is most effectively transmitted by a child's suffering, but also of the ability and desire felt by the family members who wished to engage with them, such as when their bodies were lost. Wrapped in wartime and post-war newspapers covering the commanding heights of politics, the fire hood is firstly a stark reminder that it was Japan's political and military elite who brought about the destruction of the child's body. In addition to that,

however, the hood is also an object through which the silenced child can be present, approached, and part of the continuing discussion about wartime society. This helps us to understand why museums treat such objects with reverence, and why people in Japan hold them in the same esteem as diaries and memoirs: if the text represents the voice of the lost child, then the objects represent the body.

Conclusion: The Power of Engaging with Lost Children

The lost children and youth of WWII haunt the post-war in many ways, including museum exhibits, memoir collections, and films such as *Grave of the Fireflies*. In most cases, memoirs, material objects, and other representations of the lost child were often designed to elicit pity or outrage. As Franziska Seraphim described, social and political organisations selectively included and mobilised personal memories as the interests of constituents changed, and dialogues with new generations influenced the articulation of personal memory.[41] Judging from the wartime materials, however, children and youth did not always feel especially aggrieved by their situation, with exceptions such as food shortage, separation from parents and, of course, the violence that comes with war. Their tendency to cheerlead and support the war effort, as children, shows us that they did not see themselves as particularly lost or pitiable.

The post-war era brought a different consciousness, built around the notion of lost childhood and youth. First, memoirists often used their juvenile accounts as evidence for the indictment of wartime values. When recounting his traumatic experience of air raids as a schoolboy, Yabe Masaaki described how vulnerable he felt as a child. Masaaki recalled how he saw his baby sister Aoi's bloodied head dangling from his mother's shoulder after being struck by an Allied incendiary bomb. Despite his protests, his mother refused to stop running. The memory of his sister's death, abetted by the selfish preservation instincts of both adults

and children, poisoned his view of social and political authority throughout the post-war era.[42] Second, post-war memoirs and exhibits create a space in which the 'lost children' of the past cannot be ignored or forgotten—that those who survived the war have a 'destiny' (*shimei*) to preserve and transmit what was lost, 'screaming in our hearts, never let this happen again'.[43] Museums display toys, clothing, and drawings to invite post-war generations to continue to engage with wartime children, but it is not clear how we should do so. The stories of lost children haunt the pages of memoirs and oral histories: mothers who thought their evacuated children were safe came to collect their bodies following air raids, and became inconsolable, became recluses, or went blind from grief.[44] Third, the survivors of WWII must confront their own lost childhood and youth, which becomes increasingly distant, fragmented, and influenced by post-war memory discourse. Although the loss of one's children, or witnessing the death of children, influenced post-war Japanese society's anti-war sentiment, the sacrifice of one's own childhood also had a long-term effect. Watase Tamotsu, who was just fifteen years old when he lost his family in the Takamatsu air raids, noted how the youth of Japan in the 1970s were singing a folk song called 'We don't know war' (*Bokutachi wa sensō o shiranai*). After reflecting on how much he had given up during the war years, Tamotsu wrote:

> To 'not know war,' what a wonderful thing that is. But I wonder if it's wise to overlook the fact, as if it's a coincidence, that Japan's wealthy industrial families (*zaibatsu*) flourished in wars from the Meiji Period, and have grown through the [Cold War] Korean and Vietnam conflicts. I want to create a peaceful world in which young people truly do not know conflict, and carry on singing 'we do not know anything about war'. Because, speaking from my own experience, I will do my utmost to oppose anything that even stinks of war.[45]

Using personal documents to create outrage, or nostalgia, for the wartime past is one way in which we engage with these 'lost children and youth', but it is not the only way.

We know that memories are always selective and perpetually in dialogue with historically changing notions of what it means to be young, simultaneously (re-)creating silences and allowing us to hear new voices. In this respect, future generations share something in common with the wartime past: due to the unreliability of memory and selectivity of past records, we must eventually confront the fact that all children and youth become irrevocably lost. The past is indeed a foreign country, as L.P. Hartley put it in *The Go-Between*, but like the protagonist Leo Colston's struggle with records in his boyhood diary, lost children leave a trace that can change our view of the world if we allow it. Because Japanese teachers encouraged children across the country to be such dutiful record-keepers, we have diaries, letters, handmade toys, games, and drawings to help us see wartime society in new ways. We should not marginalise or ignore the texts that historical actors have left behind nor the objects that once touched their bodies, and by continually seeking engagement with these lost children and youth it is possible to re-write the history of WWII.

Acknowledgements:

This research was supported by a grant ('Remembering and Recording Childhood, Education, and Youth in Imperial Japan 1925-1945', AH/J004618/1) through the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Notes:

Japanese names in the body are given in the usual fashion—surname first, followed by given name—but are listed in the notes with the given name first, surname second, for bibliographic consistency.

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[1] Toshio Nishi, 'Sokai-ji no kioku wa nai ga omoide wa tsugitsugi to' [I have no memory of the evacuation, but I recall things bit by bit], in *Gakudō sokai no kiroku* [Records of the student evacuations], v. 2, ed. Zenkoku sokai gakudō renraku kyōgikai (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1994), pp. 65-67.

[2] Sabine Frühstuck, *Playing War: Children and the Paradoxes of Modern Militarism in Japan*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), p. 112.

[3] Donald Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980); Mark A. Jones, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010); Peter Cave, 'Story, Song, and Ceremony: Shaping Dispositions in Japanese Elementary Schools during Taisho and Early Showa', *Japan Forum* 28 v. 1 (2016), pp. 9-31; Ruselle Meade, 'Juvenile Science and the Japanese Nation: Shōnen'en and the Cultivation of Scientific Subjects', *Japan Review* 34 (2019), pp. 113-38; Manabe, Noriko, 'Songs of Japanese Schoolchildren during World War II', in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures*, ed. Patricia Shehan Campbell and Trevor Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 91-113.

[4] For critical analyses of materials by children, see Gregory S. Johnson, 'Life in Retreat: Japan's Wartime School Evacuation in Practice', *Japanese Studies* 36, no. 3 (2016), pp. 319-337; L. Halliday Piel, 'The School Diary in Wartime Japan: Cultivating Morale and Self-discipline', *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (2019), pp. 1004-1037; Samuel Hideo Yamashita, *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies: Selections from the Wartime Diaries of Ordinary Japanese* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

[5] James Marten and Mischa Honeck, eds., *War and Childhood in the Era of Two World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[6] Olga Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Margaret Tillman, *Raising China's Revolutionaries: Modernizing Childhood for Cosmopolitan Nationalists and Liberated Comrades, 1920s-1950s* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018); L. Halliday Piel, 'Japanese Adolescents and the Wartime Labor Service, 1941-1945: Service or Exploitation', *Japanese Studies* 36, no. 3 (2016), pp. 361-381; on WWI see, Nazan Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children & Youth during World War I* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019).

[7] For a critical summary on the historiography of childhood, see Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Mona Gleason, 'Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education', *Journal of the History of Education Society* 45, no. 4 (2016), pp. 446-459; and execution of these critical approaches in Kristine Alexander, 'Can the Girl Guide Speak? The Perils and Pleasures of Looking for Children's Voices in Archival Research', *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* (Summer 2012), pp. 132-144.

[8] Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 18.

[9] Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1998), p. 223.

[10] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[11] Samuel Yamashita, *Daily Life in Wartime Japan, 1940-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2015).

[12] Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asia Monographs, 2010).

[13] In 1995 alone, over one hundred and ten museums had exhibits on the war experience, including accounts by local children; by 2015 there were 260 such exhibits. Masahiko Yamabe, 'Chiiki no rekishi hakubutsukan ni okeru sengo 50-nen kankei no tokubutsuten, kikakuten no gaikan' [An overview of special exhibits and displays in local history museums on the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII], *Rekishi kagaku*, 147 (Dec 1996) and 'Heiwa no tame no hakubutsukan to sengo 70-nen' [Museums for peace and the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII], *Seikei kenkyū* 107 (2016), p. 149.

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[16] Narihide Kobayashi, 'Nikki: shiritsu 1-cchū no bōgeki' [Diary: bombing of the Municipal Middle School No. 1], in *Shizuoka-shi kūshū no kiroku* [A Record of the Air Raids on Shizuoka], ed. Shizuoka-shi kūshū o kiroku suru-kai (Shizuoka: Self-published, 1974), pp. 7-9.

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[18] Takehiko Kikukawa, 'Diary', in *Toshima no shūdan gakudō sokai shiryōshū: nikki / shokan-hen 1* [Records of Toshima's Mass Student Evacuation: Diaries and Correspondence 1], ed. Toshima ku-shi kyōdo shiryōkan (Tokyo: Self-published, 1990), 17 January 1945.

[19] Kunitake Shigematsu, 'Boku wa yobarenai: sokai jidō no nikki kara' [I was not called: from the diary of an evacuated child], in *Gakudō sokai no kiroku*, v. 5, pp. 166-168.

[20] Yamashita, *Daily Life*, 116-123.

[21] Piel, 'The School Diary in Wartime Japan', 1015.

[22] Roden, *Schooldays*; Jones, *Children as Treasures*.

[23] Yamamoto, Hiroko, 'Chisaku natta chichi' [My diminished father], in *Takamatsu no kūshū: shuki-hen* [Takamatsu's air raids: personal accounts edition], ed. Takamatsu kūshū o kiroku suru-kai (Takamatsu: Self-published, 1973), p. 50.

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[26] Takahiro Asano, 'Letter', in Gekkōhara shōgakkō (ed), *Gakudō sokai no kiroku* [A record of student evacuations] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1984), p. 249.

[27] Kikukawa, 'Diary', 14 January 1945.

[28] Yōko Umano, 'Diary', in *Shinagawa no gakudō shūdan sokai shiryōshū* [A collection of documents recording the mass evacuation of students from Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo], ed. Shinagawa kuritsu rekishikan (Tokyo: Shinagawa Ward Government, 1988), 6 September 1944.

[29] Kikukawa, 'Diary', 18 February, 19 March 1945. For fishing, see 15 April 1945. Umano, 'Diary', 29 August and 1 September 1944.

[30] Piel, 'Japanese Adolescents'; Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

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[34] Yasuo Suzuki, 'Enjō shita Gofuku-chō shōtengai' [The arcade of Shizuoka's Gofuku neighbourhood bursts into flame], in *Shizuoka-shi kūshū no kiroku* [Record of Shizuoka air raids], ed. Shizuoka-shi kūshū wo kiroku suru-kai (Shizuoka: Self-Published, 1974), p. 79.

[35] Yasuko Ishida, 'Atama o kasumeta bakudan no hahen' [A bomb fragment just missed my head], in *Himeji kūbaku no kiroku* [Records of the bombing of Himeji], v. 2, ed. Himeji kūshū o kataritsugu-kai (Himeji: Self-published, 1989), pp. 51-52.

[36] Uchiyama, Jun, 'Gaki no kisetsu' [Season of the brats], in *Gakudō sokai no kiroku*, v. 2, pp. 47-48.

[37] Chizuko Fushimi, '10-nin no sekai' [A World of Ten People], in *Toshima-ku no shūdan gakudō sokai shiryōshū (2): Nikki, shokan-hen II—Nagasaki dai-5 kokumin gakkō (sono 1)* [Toshima Ward Student Group Evacuation Document Collection (2): Diaries, Correspondence II—Nagasaki #5 State School (Part 1)], ed. Toshima kuritsu kyōdo shiryōkan (Tokyo: Toshima-ku kyōiku iinkai, 13 March 1991), p. 122.

[38] Please note, these materials have recently been moved to a new exhibition space on shrine grounds [Personal correspondence, 31 January 2021].

[39] Fukuyama kūshū o kiroku suru-kai, ed., *Yomigaeru en no sakebi* [The cry of rebirth from the flames] (Fukuyama: Self-published, 1982), p. 29.

[40] Quoted in Masako Mochizuki, 'Dōkoku no hibi' [Days of lamentation], in *Tōkyō daikūshū / sensaishi: Tomin no kūshū taiken kirokushū* [The air war on Tokyo / record of war damage: records of urban citizens' bombing experiences], v. 2, ed. Tōkyō daikūshū wo kiroku suru-kai (Tokyo: Self-published, 1975), pp. 160-164.

[41] Seraphim, *War Memory*, pp. 159-188.

[42] Masaaki Yabe, 'Shōidan chokugeki, muzan ni mo korosareta imoto' [My little sister was cruelly killed in a direct strike from an incendiary], in *Sengo 65-nen no tsuioku* [Memories 65 years after the war], ed. Shizuoka heiwa shiryōkan wo tsukuru-kai (Shizuoka: Self-published, 2010), pp. 31-34.

[43] Kazuko Yagihashi, 'Ni-do to kurikaeshite wa naranai' [Never let this happen again], in *Jidai e no shōgen: Aomori kūshū 65-shūnen / taikensha no kiroku* [A testimony for the next generation: 65th anniversary of the Aomori air raids / records of the victims], ed. Aomori kūshū o kiroku suru-kai (Aomori: Self-published, 2010), p. 17.

[44] Iriye Yoshiko memoir, in *Gakudō sokai no kiroku* [Record of child evacuations], ed. Gekkōhara shōgakkō (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1984), pp. 220-221.

[45] Tamotsu Watase, 'Haha to sono kazoku no shi' [The death of my mother and her family], in *Takamatsu no kūshū: shuki-hen* [Takamatsu's air raids: personal accounts edition], ed. Takamatsu kūshū o kiroku suru-kai (Takamatsu: Self-published, 1973), p. 159.