

Transiting Representations of the Memory of the Hiroshima Bombing: Remediation as a Form of Intergenerational Boundary Crossing

Jun Yamana[†]

This paper focuses on the play, “Pictures of That Summer (Ano natsu no e),” which is inspired by the “Paintings of the Atomic Bomb” project in Hiroshima. Through an analysis of its dramatization, the paper develops a theoretical framework for investigating the generation of the collective memory of catastrophes through works of art. In this light, through interviews, it then examines the experiences of professional actors involved in the dramatization. The actors struggle with the difficult task of constructing a communicative activity which conveys the memories of survivors, in a secondary manner, on stage. The paper discusses the means employed to address this challenge, and shows that intergenerational boundary crossing with respect to the transmission of the memory of catastrophes is supported by the crossing of boundaries between various educational fields, such as schools, museums, and theaters, and between various representations, in oral, pictorial, and theatrical form.

Keywords: Remediation; catastrophes; cultural memory; theater; mimesis; representation; “Paintings of the Atomic Bomb” project

Introduction: Dramatization as the generation of cultural memory for intergenerational boundary crossing

This essay focuses on the regional project “Paintings of the Atomic Bomb (PAB) in Hiroshima” and its dramatization. It interprets the dramatization of the project as a means of generating collective memory of catastrophes through media and artistic works. The drama in question, “Pictures of That Summer (*Ano natsu no e*)”, by Keiko Fukuyama (2015), has been performed by the *Seinen Gekijō* theater company in Tokyo.

Of particular interest here is the actors’ experiences: the high school students involved in the PAB project struggle with the challenge of representing the survivors’ memories of a ca-

[†] The University of Tokyo
e-mail: jyamana6s@p.u-tokyo.ac.jp

tastrophe in pictorial form. Their activities are dramatized by professional actors, who strive to transform the activities of the PAB project into theatrical terms. How can these difficulties be overcome? In order to answer this question, a foundational theory is required to aid us in understanding the translation from the atomic bomb paintings to the performance of the play, from the perspective of memory transmission.

The PAB project is a Hiroshima City educational experiment aimed at passing on the memory of the atomic bombing. The dramatization of the project's activities is related to the problem of generational boundaries in the transmission of this memory. More than three quarters of a century has passed since the end of World War II, and the practice of memory transmission, which has focused on listening to the testimony of war survivors, has become increasingly difficult (Araragi, Ogura & Konno 2021). As discussed in detail below, the dramatization of the PAB project can be positioned as a form of transcending the limits of remembrance, through the transition from intergenerational "communicative memory" to "cultural memory" in the terms of Aleida and Jan Assmann.

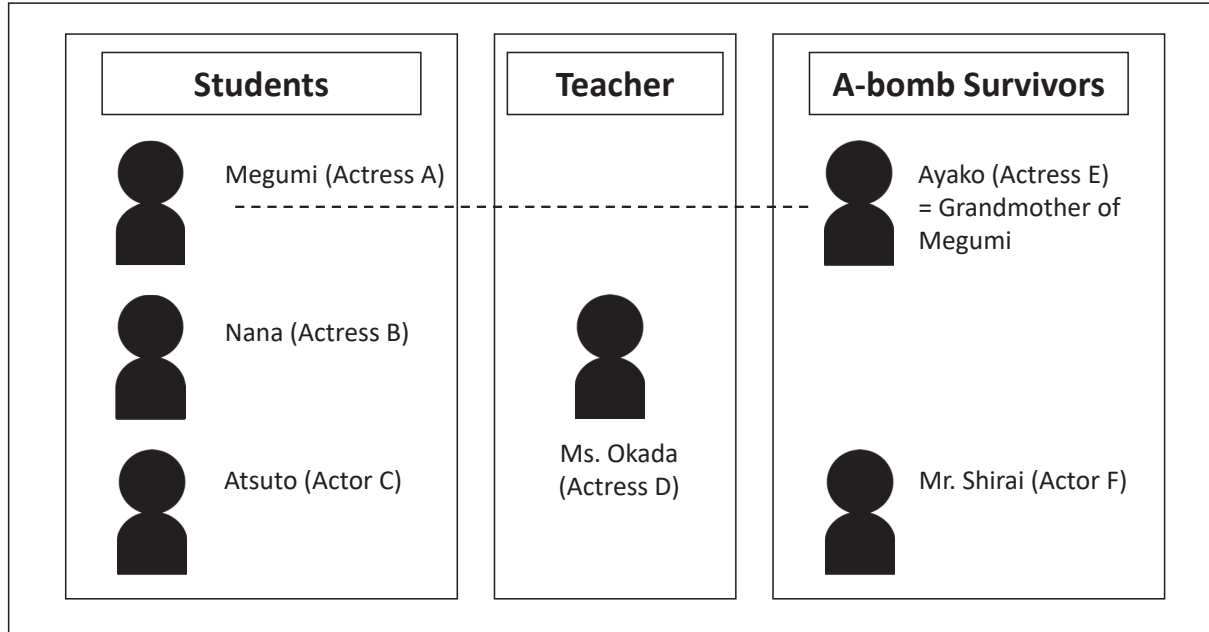
The author's prior research has addressed the relation between the reaction of students to bombing testimonies and the process of drawing in the PAB project (Yamana 2020). Based on those results, this paper explores the question above by focusing on the dramatization of the project, with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of memory transfer across different media. In sum, the essay has two purposes: first, development of a theoretical framework for understanding this phenomenon, based on the concepts of representation and remediation; and second, based on this theoretical framework, characterization of the experiences of the people involved in the dramatization of the PAB project. Here the essay focuses on six professional actors who have performed in "Pictures of That Summer". Based on interviews with these actors, the paper explores how drama is constructed, based on their experience as actors, as a means of passing on memory.

Section 1 presents an overview of the PAB project and its dramatization. Section 2 outlines the author's perspective on the dramatization, based on the key concepts of "representation" and "remediation". On this theoretical basis, through interviews, section 3 analyzes the experience of the actors performing in the play "Pictures of That Summer". The conclusion summarizes the study's results, with remarks and related issues.

1 The PAB project and the play "Pictures of That Summer"

The PAB project is an educational activity sponsored by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Since 2007, Hiroshima Municipal *Motomachi High School* has been collaborating with the project, and students in the school's Creative Expression Course have been creating paintings. The students meet with witnesses of the bombing, and, over roughly 10 months, create "Paintings of the Atomic Bomb" based on the witnesses' narratives. The paintings are donated to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where, among other things, they are used by survivors in their testimonies. In addition, exhibitions of the paintings are held throughout Japan each year. At the Gallery Talk Show in the exhibition hall, the students share with visitors their experiences and feelings about the painting process. Approximately 10 students participate each year. From 2007 to 2022, 155 students have created a total of 182 paintings.¹

Figure 1: Characters and cast of the play, “Pictures of that Summer”



The play “Pictures of That Summer”, written and directed by *Keiko Fukuyama*, follows the interaction between three students and a bombing witness who participate in the PAB project, supported by the students’ art teacher. It premiered at the *Yui Studio* of the *Seinen Gekijō* theater company in December of 2015, and the script was published (in Japanese) in 2017.

Megumi, the main character, is an art club member at a high school in Hiroshima who decides to paint a picture of the atomic bomb. She listens to the testimony of A-bomb survivor *Katsutoshi Shirai* and tries to create paintings, but becomes frustrated that she cannot properly imagine the site of the ultimate catastrophe. Her friends *Atsuto* and *Nana*, though initially reluctant, are also participating in the PAB project. *Atsuto* does not concentrate on painting because he is a member of both the art club and the manga club. As he listens to Mr. *Shirai*’s testimony, however, he begins to think about trying to paint a picture of the atomic bomb. Meanwhile, *Nana*, a transfer student from Tokyo, is shocked by Mr. *Shirai*’s experiences, and at first closes her heart to the horror. However, through her interactions with *Megumi* and *Atsuto*, she reconsiders her decision and tries to paint. The interaction between Mr. *Shirai* and the three students is gently supported by their art teacher, *Michiko Okada*. Another storyline is the change in the attitude of *Megumi*’s grandmother *Ayako Asano* toward her A-bomb experience. As the play begins, she has never spoken of this painful time, but when Mr. *Shirai* falls ill, she visits the high school in his stead and is struck by the paintings of the students, the door of her heart suddenly opening, and an eloquent speech about her A-bomb experience emerging as her “testimony” (Figure 1).

The script was based largely on a series of interviews with the people involved in the roughly year-long project. The sociologist Yasutsugu Ogura, who was an advisor for the dramatization, summarizes the scriptwriting preparatory work as follows.

For data collection, I interviewed students and witnesses about their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, based on my own work as a social researcher, while Ms. Fukuyama gathered information about the elements required for the dramatization, such as how to paint or how to behave in certain episodic situations of the play. We two shared the interview material, and the actors' lines are largely based on these interviews. (Ogura 2017: 50).

A total of 130 performances of "Pictures of That Summer" took place between December 2015 and the end of December 2021. Of these, 50 were performed in schools. The total number of audience members was 33,045 (including 12,477 at schools).² Since 2018, the play has been selected by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as a Comprehensive Project for the Development of Children through Arts and Culture. Within the framework of the project, the theater company has performed "Pictures of That Summer" at theater appreciation classes in schools.

2 The chain of replications and remediation

(1) Transitioning from communicative to cultural memory

From the perspective of Memory Studies, the dramatization of the PAB project is remarkable as an example of shifting collective memory of catastrophes from the dimension of "communicative memory" to that of "cultural memory", both of which are key concepts in the theory of collective memory developed by Aleida and Jan Assmann.

"Cultural memory" is "the stock of reused texts, images and rites peculiar to each society and each epoch. Through its 'maintenance', each society stabilizes and conveys its self-image, a collectively shared knowledge preferably (but not exclusively) about the past, on which a group bases its consciousness of unity and distinctiveness" (Assmann, J. 1988: 15). Specifically, this memory includes various cultural media such as remains, artifacts, literature, paintings, statues, monuments, photographs, videos, films, plays, documents, academic research, and rituals, as well as various forms of architecture (museums, art galleries, libraries, schools, urban structures, virtual spaces with memorial symbolic functions, etc.). These are "constructed as ... cultural heritage over a long period of time" (Assmann, A. 2017: 181), and affect populations beyond individual dimensions (see Assmann, A. 1999 for a detailed examination of cultural memory).

There is, in addition, a further element of collective memory, which arises from direct conversations among contemporaries and experiences shared among individuals. Aleida and Jan Assmann call this "communicative memory," and estimate that it is shared for at most three generations, that is eighty to one hundred years. Cultural memory is thus positioned as a medium that transcends the temporal limits of communicative memory. From this perspective, the PAB project can be characterized as an educational activity that intentionally generates communicative memory in order to pass on the remembrance of a specific catastrophe; however, this cannot continue indefinitely, and the presence of witnesses is an essential condition for the implementation of the project. Staged for the first time in 2015, seventy years after the atomic bombing, "Pictures of That Summer" can be understood as an attempt to "preserve" the project, with its temporal limitations, in the dimension of cultural memory,

and thereby enable the continuation of memory transmission (see Yamana 2020).

(2) Transference of representations and remediation

The transition from communicative to cultural memory involves the transfer of representations. What, then, is the nature of these “representations” in this context? Eckart Scheerer et al. (1992: 790) suggest that “representation (*Repräsentation*)” has four basic meanings: (R1) “imagination” (*Vorstellung* in the broader sense; i.e., a mental state with cognitive content); (R2) “conception” (*Vorstellung* in the narrower sense; i.e., a mental state that reproduces, is derived from, or relates to a previous mental state); (R3) “depiction” (*Darstellung*; i.e., structure-preservation through images, symbols, and signs of all kinds); and (R4) “proxy” (*Stellvertretung*). The first three senses of “representation”—imagination, conception, and depiction— can also be considered as components of a series of processes surrounding memory.

In this schema, the PAB project is an activity in which paintings are produced through the repetitive interaction between verbal representations by witnesses and nonverbal representations by students. An exchange between the creation and observation of paintings occurs, based on the similar communicative exchange between speaking and listening. The former recursively inspires the latter, and vice versa. The paintings, which evolve over the course of their development, become a medium that evokes new words over this time, and these words in turn promote the transformation of the paintings, resulting in a “co-construction of communicative memory” (Yamana 2020: 1382) that combines these disparate representations. In this case, because of the necessary “translation” from language to painting (i.e., because of the different representational media), the mere repetition or reproduction of already existing representations is not acceptable in principle.

The fourth meaning of *Repräsentation* (i.e., *Stellvertretung* or “proxy”) is equally important for understanding the PAB project. The memory of the atomic bombing (say, “X”) is essentially undeputizable; as soon as a representation of the memory is presented, it must be called into question. The communication in the PAB project, in which speaking/listening and drawing/watching intersect, is driven by the difference between what is “depicted” (R3) and recalled (R2, R1). Beyond the things that can be recalled are things for which no proxies are possible. The communication between “depicted” (R3) and recalled (R2, R1) objects, and what is not “represented” (X), is characterized as the repetition of recollection driven by their mutual difference (Figure 2).

The process of transferring these representations continues through the dramatization of the project. Founded on the cross-communication between talking/listening and painting/watching, the script of “Pictures of That Summer” is created. In other words, the process of transferring the representations is then incorporated into the activities of writing/reading between the author and actors of the play. A further representation, called “acting”, is created based on the activities of reading/performing by the actors, and the process is finally connected to the activities of acting/watching between the actors and the audience in the theater.

In media theory, the process by which the dynamics of recollection unfold through the interconnection of diverse media is called “remediation”, defined as “the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (Bolter & Grusin 1999: 273). Memory Studies has incorporated this concept into its own domain by thematizing “media memory” (Erll 2017: 160, see Erll 2007). The previous section characterized the PAB project as an activity

Figure 2: Dynamics of generating representations in the PAB Project

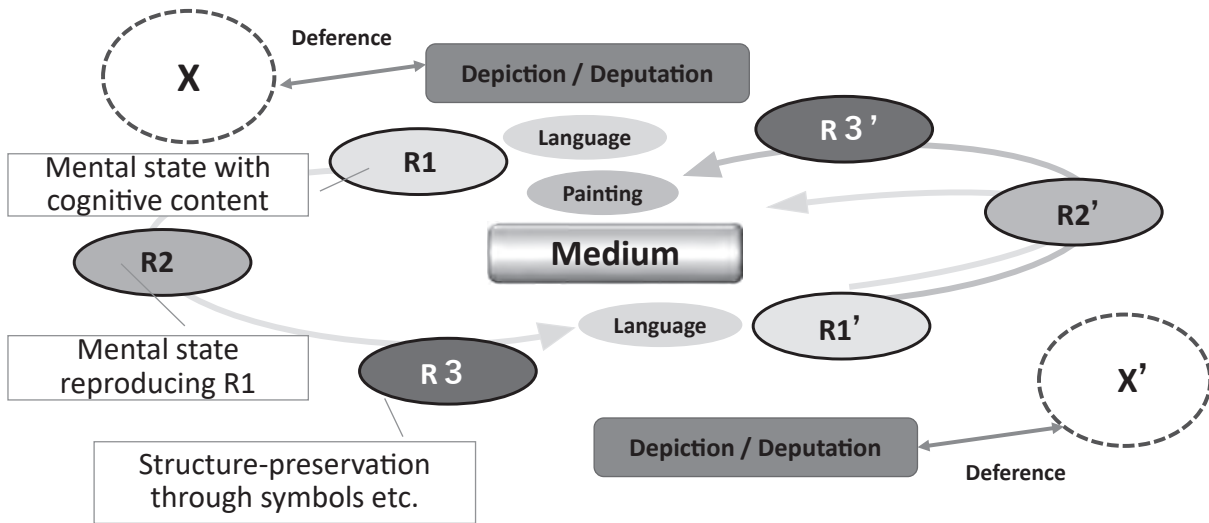
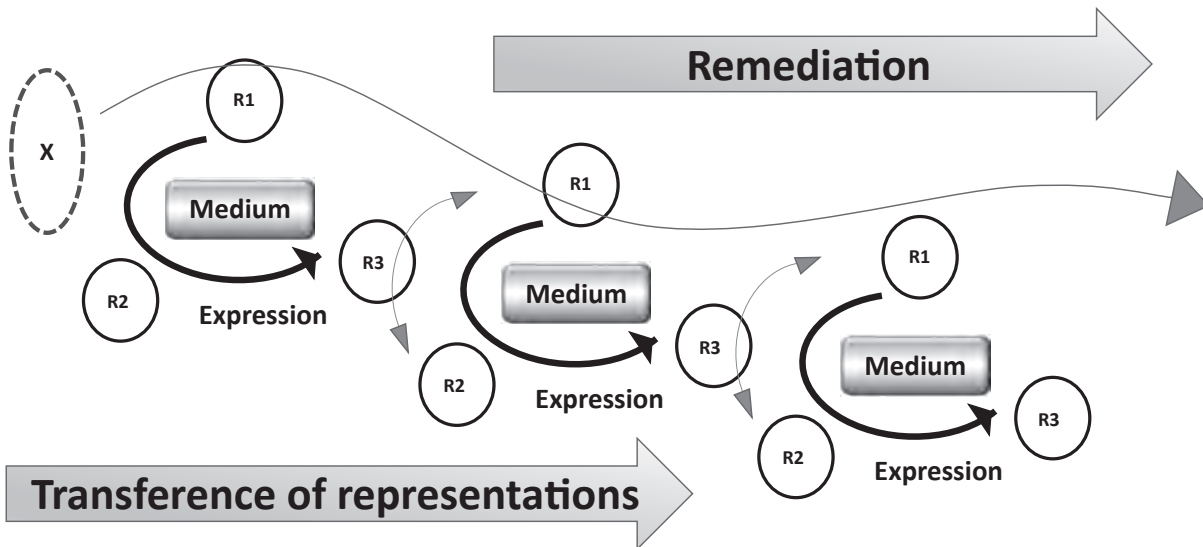


Figure 3: Remediation process and representations

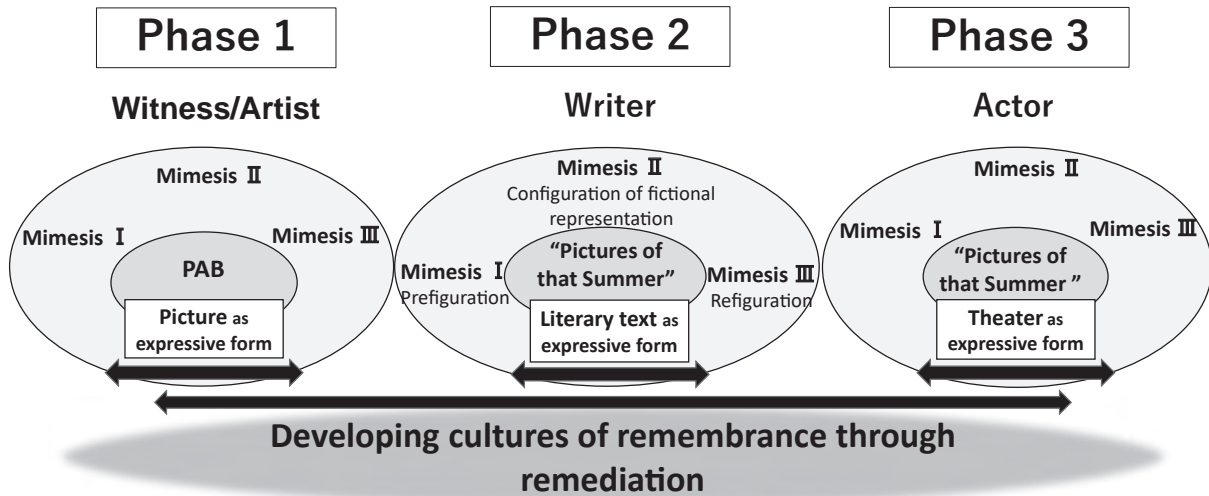


that generates collective memory through interactive representations. The process of transferring these representations creates a kind of remediation, in which the drive of collective memory is extended through the dramatization of the project (Figure 3).

(3) The tripartite nature of cultural memory

For a systematic overview of the remediation process, to which various types of representations are related, the model of “mimesis of collective memory” (Erll 2017: 176) is useful. The model was proposed by the German literary scholar Astrid Erll, who introduced into Memory Studies the “mimesis sphere” model developed by the French philosopher Paul

Figure 4: Mimetic model of collective memory in the context of the PAB Project
(Created by Yamana, based on Erll 2017: 176.)



Ricœur in *"Time and Narrative"* (Ricœur 1987, 1988, 1990). Etymologically, mimesis suggests imitation; however, it is also used in discussing art in philosophy and aesthetics, where it refers not merely to the reproduction of an original, but to an activity that is the source of creativity. After a detailed examination of the concept of mimesis dating back to Aristotle, Ricœur distinguishes three stages of representation: Mimesis I, II, and III. In his view, a literary text refers to the already existing world outside the text (Mimesis I or "prefiguration"), the author constructs the text into a fictional component (Mimesis II or "configuration"), and the reconstruction is then completed by the readers (Mimesis III or "refiguration"). In this light, Erll discusses the characteristics of literature as a medium of collective memory, and suggests that this discussion can be developed as a basis for examining the media of collective memory in general (see Erll 2017: 173-178).

As mentioned above, the dramatization of the PAB project may be seen, in part, as an attempt to shift from communicative to cultural memory of the atomic bombing. On the basis of the theoretical framework above, we may note at least three types of cultural memory media regarding the PAB project, which are intricately interconnected in the remediation process. The first is the student paintings (and witness testimonies), the second is the script, and the third is the actors' performance. Finally, the audience of the play receives various images (Figure 4). Many people are involved in the painting, scriptwriting, and performance stages of the project, and the audience, too, is numerous and varied. From this perspective, the remediation of the PAB project resembles a complex chain of representations incorporating diverse mimetic activities.

3 Theatrical reconstruction of memory transmission: Focusing on the actors' experiences

The sections above attempt to establish a tentative theoretical framework, using concepts such as representation, remediation, and mimesis, in order to gain a bird's-eye view of the shift from communicative memory to cultural memory in the context of the PAB project. Our focus in this section is on the concrete experience of the people who participate in the project, and in particular (given space limitations) on the experience of the actors who take important roles in the final step of the remediation process. What kind of representations are they concerned with in their preparation for the performance, and how do they attempt to realize the play's scenes of talking about and listening to experiences of the catastrophe in Hiroshima? These questions reflect the challenge of understanding how secondary compositions of memory transmission are possible.

The author conducted an interview survey of six actors performing in "Pictures of That Summer." A preliminary interview was conducted with one actress (April 16, 2021, approximately 90 minutes), followed by the main survey. The six actors were divided into two groups (Group A: the three actors playing students (December 14, 2021, approximately 90 minutes), and Group B: the three actors playing witnesses or teachers (November 21, 2021, approximately 90 minutes)) for semi-structured interviews.³ As a coronavirus countermeasure, the interviews were conducted through teleconferencing. The author then studied video recordings of the interviews and analyzed transcriptions made from them. The transcribed data were anonymized (individual names were replaced with single letters) and reviewed by the office of the *Seinen Gekijō* theater company and the interviewees.⁴ The following is a summary of what are considered to be the most important findings of the interviews. The letters below correspond to the actors' alphabetical names (Figure 1), and are used to indicate the identity of the speakers.

- ① Most actors stressed the importance of immersion in the script when preparing for the performance. Actress E, for example, stated: "At the first reading of the script, I rarely consider how to play each scene ... I try to understand not only my part, but the whole story." Actress D described a tendency to focus solely on her own role, at the expense of a more holistic understanding of the script. Thus, the performance preparation begins by concentrating on the script as medium (second phase of Figure 4).
- ② Various representations of the atomic bombing were utilized to make "words stand up on the stage" (A). Concrete examples included photographs (C), documentary films (C), textual materials (C), and the museum (A, B) as a comprehensive facility for these representations, as well as A-bomb paintings by the students involved in the project, etc. Actress E stated: "I read books and watch movies related to the character I play. I think about it so much that I get sick of it, in order to get closer to the character."
- ③ The method of "image hunting" seems to have an important role in this connection. Image hunting means visiting and exploring the locations involved in the various scenes of the play. Actress E stated: "Doing this impresses the script on my mind more concretely and vividly." Actress A remembered that she had shared her impressions of Hiroshima with another actress who accompanied her during an image hunt, and learned that "even though we were both thinking the same thing, we perceived it in very different ways." Through these experiences, she came to see Hiroshima from a more multifaceted per-

spective.

- ④ In addition, the actors said they were influenced by the people they met during their visits to *Motomachi High School* during image hunting and on other occasions. Specifically, several mentioned their encounters with students participating in the project (A, B, C) and their teachers (A, D), as well as with A-bomb witnesses and their relatives (E). Actress D stated: “An interview with a young female teacher involved in the project at *Motomachi High School* gave me a hint that I might try to create my role as an art teacher based on this person.” This data indicates that the interactions with the people involved in the first phase in Figure 4 were important elements in the performance preparation of the actors.
- ⑤ However, several noted that it was not enough to imagine their performances based on image hunting and encounters with the people involved. For them, the emphasis was on creating interaction on stage. For example, Actress D stated: “What I have gained from ... image hunting is really just something I have stored up inside myself. Every rehearsal is really a new discovery.” For Actress B, rehearsal is “a place to be humiliated” and “a place to be shaken down, like, ‘I thought this was good, but other stuff showed that it wasn’t.’”⁵ Other interviewees spoke of the importance of collaborative training through various forms of expression, including “dialogues with my [acting] partners” (C), “fleshing out” and “integrating” the words of the play (E), and playing the simple Japanese singing game *oshikura-manjū* (F), in which the players jostle back-to-back in a circle.
- ⑥ The actors’ comments suggested that they gradually built relationships on stage over the series of rehearsals. Actress D, for example, who played the role of the art teacher of the PAB project, stated: “I myself am wondering The three actors playing the students in the project approach me seriously. Accepting this approach leads to a relationship of trust with the younger actors Then the actors as students have become increasingly familiar to me. I really get close to my role, thinking about how we can complete these paintings together.” Although “Pictures of That Summer” revolves around paintings, not a single picture appears on stage. Only sketchbooks and picture frames are shown as symbols of the paintings, with the details of the latter left to the audience’s imagination. The paintings, almost like the eyes of a theatrical hurricane, remain as vacant points on the stage, around which the communication between the actors is reconstructed polyphonically. Actress D’s comment above shows how the relationships depicted on the stage can take on life and nuance through the rehearsal process.
- ⑦ And what of the actors’ subjective experience over the course of the rehearsals? Interestingly, Actor F, who plays the role of the witness, Mr. Shirai, tried to verbalize the process of overcoming his imaginative difficulties in relation to his physicality. He described the frustration of playing the role of Mr. Shirai after the previous actor in the role retired.

..... Fortunately, I had seen my predecessor’s performance several times, so I remembered it, and relied on that. However, even if I try to trace it, I cannot, even with conscious effort. In preparing for the performance, I put a lot of effort into connecting the words and behavior of Mr. Shirai within my own body. The story is related to the inheritance of memory. But I felt that it was impossible to stand on stage as a witness of the atom bombing. Well, I assume this is something that will continue for a long

time. I went back to the script and revised my performance, ... little by little, as I went through the stages. Through these experiences, I often discovered things, like the rhythm of the lines that Ms. Fukuyama wrote and the meanings that she expressed in that rhythm.

Actor F describes the rhythm of the lines as resembling “the character’s breathing,” adding that, “as the ‘breathing’ gradually becomes more consistent, I begin to catch a little bit of the facial expression or the demeanor of the character.” Other actors also mentioned the difficulty of imagining the inner lives of their characters and the scenes of the play, emphasizing the difficulty of incorporating the lines into the body and the importance of confronting this challenge,⁶ while unanimously affirming that this process is continuous and unending.

- ⑧ The theatrical reconstruction of the PAB project does not provide the audience with the same experience as those who participate in the actual project, which is a one-time event. However, the play is also a one-time event, evoking the experience of the here-and-now, where the practice of passing on memories is being reprised. Actor C’s remarks suggest awareness of this fact. He warns against “getting used” to acting: “You adjust to acting as you do it more and more. In my first scene, I come into the art room to secretly pick up some art books, without realizing that Nana is there. Suddenly, she asks loudly from behind me, ‘Did you get permission from the teacher?’ I say in surprise, ‘Say something if you’re there!’ I’m supposed to be surprised in this scene; but as I become accustomed to the action, it inevitably starts to seem like I interact with her in this way all the time.” The search for the one-time nature of the performance, without unnecessary “familiarity,” is supported by the emotion evoked by the audience’s one-time experience of watching the play.

Conclusion: Tentative results and further issues

How did the actors in “Pictures of That Summer” address the challenge of reconstructing dramatically the passing on of memory of the atomic bombing? As suggested in Figure 3, it was not easy, because the actors, at least in the beginning, were far from experiencing the unrepresentable “X” in the remediation process of the memory of the atomic bombing. Based on the results of the interviews, however, the following were identified as strategies for overcoming this challenge: ① immersion in the script as acting medium, ② reference to a wide variety of other representations, ③ exploring authentic locations for the play (image hunting), ④ interaction with project participants, ⑤ “integration” of the performances through rehearsals, ⑥ building relationships on stage, ⑦ physical embodiment of the lines, and ⑧ resisting unnecessary “familiarity” and sustaining “one-time” expression in acting. To summarize on the basis of Figure 4, the actors prepared for their performance by moving back and forth among the first phase (①), the second phase (③), and the third phase (⑤⑥⑦⑧). Of course, it should not be forgotten that other representations were also referred to (②). It can be confirmed that the actors were engaged in more complex activities than anticipated, in their preparation for the play.

The dramatization of the PAB project is related to the issue of “boundaries” in at least

three ways. One is the boundary between generations. The dramatization may be seen as a kind of strategy for extending the transmission of memory across generations, by transforming communicative memory into cultural memory. At the same time, it represents an attempt to bridge the boundaries between different types of educational environment, with a school, museum, and theater mutually interacting to support a culture of remembrance regarding Hiroshima. The last boundary concerns representations. In this series of activities, we see the transfer of various types of representation: testimony (oral), painting (iconography), script-writing (story), and theater (physical performance). Our discussion also implies that the overcoming of the first boundary (i.e., the transition from communicative memory to cultural memory) is supported by the overcoming of the second and third boundaries.

This essay lacks the scope to discuss the (equally important) effects of the play on the audience. In addition, in order to understand the characteristics of the entire PAB project remediation process, further study is needed with respect to the middle phase of the remediation process (Phase 2 in Figure 4). On the theoretical level, the mimesis model introduced in the field of Memory Studies must be examined in more detail, in light of Ricœur's thinking. These are the issues for further consideration regarding the remediation process of the project.

Finally, the transition from communicative to cultural memory should not be thought of as merely a one-way process. The cultural memory embodied in the theater can be a starting point from which new communications can emerge. A typical example is the interaction between students and actors after a theatrical performance at school. As a further example, Actress A talked about her interactions with former participants in the PAB project, noting that her performance was based on conversations between these students and witnesses of the bombing; the students then see the play and discuss their reactions with the actors. Actress A reflected on this communicative cycle, commenting that "those words turn into my own power", suggesting the possibility of communicative memory generated from cultural memory.

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Notes

- 1 Motomachi High School (September 17, 2022).
- 2 Office of the *Seinen Gekijō* theater company (September 16, 2022).
- 3 For the interview, I prepared an interview guide for the three phases according to the schema in

Figure 4. On the day of the interview, I asked the interviewees questions prepared in advance, taking care not to interrupt the flow of their responses. Stimulated by the questions, the interviewees answered freely what they felt. The prepared questions may be categorized as follows. (1) Phase 1 (painting): Did you have any contact with the people involved in the PAB project? etc. (2) Phase 2 (dramatization): What were your impressions of the script when you first read it? etc. (3) Phase 3 (theater play): What has changed in your acting as a result of the rehearsals and experience of performing every year? etc.

- 4 I have watched “Pictures of That Summer” five times, and was also allowed to observe a preparatory rehearsal. In addition, interviews were conducted with scriptwriter Keiko Fukuyama (November 28, 2017, approx. 60 minutes), oral historian Yasutsugu Ogura (September 22, 2019, approx. 140 minutes), who supported the process of creating the script, and two art teachers at *Motomachi High School* (November 7, 2021, approx. 60 minutes; November 22, 2021, for about 60 minutes). The results of these interviews supplemented the interviews with the actors.
- 5 According to Actress B, the place of practice is “a place where you are allowed to sweat and do whatever you want,” and “a place where you feel safe.”
- 6 Actress E recalled that the stage director gave her the key word “flashback” during rehearsals, which changed the quality of her performance. The actors also shared other interesting examples. However, due to space limitations of the paper, I must omit them here.

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