

8. Re-covering the Hiroshima Maidens

Amanda Jane Graham

Is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?

Cathy Caruth (1996, 7)

From the ashes of the atom bomb arose a post-war discourse of recovery and reconciliation. No longer a threat, Japan and its citizens 'benefited' from American patriotic altruism, albeit germinated in a modern colonial culture laced with guilt. The innocent and docile Oriental Other replaced her kamikaze brother in the American national imagination, but in some instances her exotic appeal was tainted. The traumatic event, unspeakable in two languages, marked her body. The question that arose from equal parts compassion and disgust, from Americans and Japanese alike, was: How do we fix her?

In May 1955, ten years after the end of World War II, twenty-five keloid-covered young women from Hiroshima travelled to New York's Mount Sinai Hospital for plastic surgery. The self-proclaimed 'Unmarried Young Ladies of Hiroshima' belonged to Methodist minister Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto's weekly support group for the severely scarred. They were re-named 'The Hiroshima Maidens' by goodwill ambassador and influential *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins, who was solicited by Tanimoto to help with his humanitarian cause. Dedicated to improving post-war relations between Japan and the United States, Tanimoto and Cousins, who met in 1949 while drafting human rights provisions for the new Japanese constitution, approached Cousins' personal physician, William Hitzig, to ask him to donate his time and medical expertise toward the reconstruction the Maidens' faces. Over the course of an eighteen-month long period, Hitzig, and plastic surgeons Bernard E. Simon, Arthur J. Barsky, and Sydney Khan, offered their services to the Maidens project, while Cousins recruited press to cover the women's physical and cultural transformations (Gaie 1996, 352–53). With support from the US State Department, which was committed to controlling the visible traumatic consequences of the atomic bomb, Cousins envisioned and realized a fundraising effort and publicity campaign that simultaneously veiled the women's wounds with plastic surgery and covered up a steadily increasing US public concern over government funding and support for nuclear and hydrogen weapons research (Gaie 1996; Serlin 2004).

The history of the Hiroshima Maidens is a history of surviving the atom bomb. Thus, it is a history of trauma, of living through a disaster and living with the psychological scars it leaves behind. More than a historical event, the Maidens' tale is a psychoanalytic parable that illustrates the impossibility of remedying mental scars through the reconstruction of their corporeal correlates. As Cathy Caruth argues, 'psychological trauma does not occur in strict correspondence to the body's experience of a life-threat, that is, through the wounding of the body' (Caruth 1996, 60). But if physical and psychological wounds are connected arbitrarily, why then did the United States government as well as private American citizens invest so much time, money, and thought into rehabilitating the faces and bodies of the Hiroshima Maidens?

In this paper, I will trace the atomically wounded Japanese face in order to illustrate how the Maidens' story is a fable about failure; the United States' failure to manage Japanese trauma (cf. Kaplan 2005, 66), and control and contain what Caruth calls 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena' (Caruth 1996, 11). My objective is to firstly expose how the Hiroshima Maidens mutilated faces were manipulated signifiers, constantly and visibly contested through pictures and discourse, as well as across national borders and languages. I will thereafter argue, following cultural anthropologist Lisa Yoneyama, that the Hiroshima Maidens' actual faces and mediated images were, like other 'residues of Hiroshima's catastrophe [...] being recuperated for the establishment of coherent national narratives and identities' (Yoneyama 1999, 217). That is, the Maidens' story is illustrative of the United States' post-war effort to contain and control the physical, and visual, repercussions of atomic war so American culpability was assuaged, and the decision to drop the nuclear bomb appeared clearly warranted.

While Caruth, influenced by psychoanalytic theories developed by Sigmund Freud (that I will discuss later in this paper), claims that a physical wound is a 'simple and healable event,' I allege that the wound and the scar it produces are complex and have corporeal, psychological, social, and political consequences (Caruth 1996, 4). As Petra Kupperts writes of scars, they indicate a 'place' where the body 'becomes unfamiliar, [where] sense, perception, and meaning making become experiential as spatial and temporal phenomena' (Kupperts 2007, 1). The scar, in other words, is hardly superficial; it marks a change the body's experience of the world and a shift in society's perception of the body. Thus the medical effort to remove the scar is significant for it is an attempt to alter the body's experience and its perception. The Hiroshima Maidens' overlapping nuclear and surgical scars silently speak to the role of the visibly wounded body in a particular historical and cultural moment. The scars, and the public effort to repair them – to make the unfamiliar more familiar – demonstrate that that which lies upon the surface can expose traumatic experience otherwise isolated from consciousness. In the Maidens' story, the traces of individual and cultural trauma repressed within the collective historical unconscious are corporeally evident. What is more, the process of traumatic repression is performed through medical procedures and the dissemination of visual materials documenting those procedures.

Part I: I Can See the Light

Before everything went dark, thirteen-year-old Shigeko Sasamori saw a beautiful silver plane. She remembers pointing it out to a classmate just before a strange light swallowed her vision and a powerful force knocked her body to the ground. The days and nights that followed were filled with the stench of rotting bodies, intensified by a hot August sun. Shigeko was alone, hungry, thirsty, and disabled by a pain she could not comprehend. By the time Shigeko returned to her family, traces of the atom bomb were permanently fixed upon her face. Each scar was a mark of shame, a representation and reminder of a traumatic moment Japan was eager to inter. So, for the next ten years, Shigeko hid from sight, avoiding the disapproving public gaze (Gaie 1996, 352).

The landscape of post-war Hiroshima, decorated with new highways, office buildings, public transportation and modern services, illustrated a deep-seated commitment to the concealment of geographic scars. The urban regeneration of Hiroshima, and the regeneration of Japan more generally, was funded by billions of dollars in US grants, quickly re-established a bigger and better industrial centre, built in the image of its benefactor. In a 1955 *Saturday Review* article, Cousins reports 'Hiroshima is on its way to becoming one of the most exciting cities, architecturally, in Japan' (Johnson 1988, 50). The architectural reconstruction of Hiroshima, well recorded and publicized in both Japan and the United States, successfully covered atomic pockmarks littered across the surface of the city. These were engineered into invisibility. But architects and planners were not equipped to contend with the scarred bodies belonging to burn victims like Shigeko. Nor, as Lynne Luciano writes, were Japanese doctors as short on essential medical supplies as they were on expertise. Understandably cautious not to 'inflict more trauma than the bomb' these doctors eventually called 'a halt to their ineffectual cutting' (Luciano 2001, 66). Without medical recourse, Shigeko and her atomically burned sisters, unfortunately nicknamed 'The Keloid Girls', were fated to live with their scars in a social and geographic landscape undergoing an otherwise apparently successful reconstruction. Painfully aware of their country's social and architectural efforts to repress the physical and psychological vestiges of atomic war, including the marks upon their faces, the scarred women only left their homes in the dark of night, or, if necessary, during the day, with their corporeal archives of atomic encounter covered by veils (Gaie 1996, 352).

While images of Hiroshima's architectural ingenuity were published in the pages of Japanese and American post-war periodicals, Japanese bodies were omitted from the photographic frame. Thus, the bodies of Hiroshima survivors were absent from the collective American post-war imagination. Censored into invisibility, scarred Japanese faces became hard to imagine. Cultural historian David Serlin points out that it was not until late 1952 that photographs of the victims of the atomic bomb were published in American magazines or newspapers (Serlin 2004, 66). The visual sanitation in the years following the war was not coincidental. After the Japanese surrender, the US government's Civil Censorship Division of the Occupation declared stringent censorship on images and discourse that referenced the bomb. The new governmental edict stated that 'nothing shall be printed that might, directly or by inference, disturb public tranquility' (Levy 2009). Accordingly, American publications unanimously responded with images that distanced

the viewer from Japanese bodies and faces, focusing instead on buildings ravaged into splinters and abstract aerial photographs. The press recognized that pictures, as well as descriptions, of people in pain were off limits, as they would disturb the post-war public, who were relatively ignorant of the effects of the bomb on human bodies.

A number of photographers and journalists were individually censored. The Japanese photojournalist and atomic bomb survivor Yoshito Matsushige, for one, had his photographs of the nuclear aftermath confiscated and not returned until 1952, years after the war had ended (Gusterson 2009). One of Matsushige's black and white photographs, published in *Life Magazine* on September 29, 1952, and taken hours after the bombing, depicts a policeman providing first aid. Matsushige remembers his hesitancy behind the lens and the guilt he experienced with each flash of the shutter:

There I saw a crowd of people whose burned skin was slithering off them. As time went by, the street filled with more people so hideously injured that even their gender was unclear ... What did these people at death's door think of me as I recorded this scene in photographs?

(Hiroshima Virtual Museum Exhibit 2001)

The chaotic moment the photographer describes is crystallized by his technology into something physically tangible, still, and silent. The borders of the photographic frame materially contained the disaster, but the visual manifestation of pain and desperation conveyed by Matsushige's picture emanated beyond the bounded image. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, and a principal proponent of suppressing photographic records of radiation-ravaged Japanese bodies, ironically acknowledged the power of Matsushige's photograph through its firm censorship.

Determined to simultaneously move on from the horrors of the war and celebrate American victory, the State Department's motivation to conceal the photographs is complicated. As Gar Alperovitz notes, the United States suppressed images of the war not only out of fear of criticism, but also to maintain a reputation free of the 'inhumane or barbaric' associations (Alperovitz 1995, 611). The effort suggests that photographs like Matsushige's were too close, and too viscerally charged with real pain, to convey patriotic triumph. By burying disturbing images of the physical consequences of atomic war until the American Occupation of Japan ended in April 1952, MacArthur temporarily silenced the embodied testimony of countless Japanese victims, and perhaps even attended to his own latent guilt (Saito 2006, 9). The decision to manufacture an American media landscape free of human suffering propagated a collective national myth premised upon visual absence, a story of atomic war without corporeal casualties. As with all good myths, spoken and unspoken, this one was created as a means of contending with the otherwise incomprehensible. In her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, cultural critic Susan Sontag discusses the impossibility of looking at photographs of atomically ravaged victims. She notes that pictures of 'faces melted and thickened with scar tissue ... are pictures whose power does not abate, in part because one cannot look at them often' (Sontag 2003, 83). More than a visual record of war, Sontag claims, these pictures are a form of testimony. The scars upon the bodies of the individuals who were exposed to the atomic bomb are a true confirmation of war's human consequence. Even without

textual commentary, they effectively communicate the raw reality of physical trauma, and thereby the power of the visual that MacArthur, due to his involvement with The Civil Censorship Division of the Occupation, so ardently suppressed.

Like the trauma associated with the event itself, Matsushige's photographs, and the open wounds they portrayed, could not be suppressed forever. As Caruth suggests '[t]he historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all' (Caruth 2005, 17). Freud too argues for the importance of forgetting as part of the experience of trauma. For Freud, to forget is to contain or isolate experiences outside of consciousness, to filter pain from everyday life. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes 'we often forget in obedience to a purpose of the unconscious, and that forgetfulness always enables us to form a deduction about the secret disposition of the forgetful person' (Freud 1938, 241). What we forget, neglect, or leave out, in other words, is often the event that defines us, ultimately motivating us to make the decisions we do. For, as Freud advocated throughout his career, 'unconscious mental activity permanently determines, gives form to, and participates in our conscious life' (Surprenant 2006, 199). The conscious and unconscious are linked, ever informing one another. So while forgetting is 'essential to civilization', for it allows people to live without constant conscious overwhelming pain or desire, avoiding traumatic memories is futile (Rivkin and Ryan 2004, 389). Experiencing the trauma housed within the unconscious is inevitable because, according to Freud, traumatic memories sequestered in the unconscious seep through into the conscious. They show up, most notably in dreams, but also arise as repetitive neuroses that interrupt and determine the actions and interactions of waking life. Often unrecognizable in new their form, traumatic memories appear and reappear in a variety of guises, claiming their power over the mind and the body.

The mental and physical symptoms of trauma attest to the 'failure in repression.' Freud demonstrates that this 'failure' is as relevant to the experience of the individual as it is to society (Freud 1964, 183). As objects of trauma and symptoms of the US government's guilt-laden effort to conceal, deny, and ultimately forget, the photographs of atomically ravaged Japanese bodies, contributed to their eventual materialization. That is, if the photographs of disfigured bodies in the midst and aftermath of the bomb are of themselves material manifestations of a historical trauma, it was their official denial that ultimately fuelled their subsequent publication in *Life Magazine*, and motivated their dissemination thereafter.

Part II: Look, Don't Touch

One day after the keloid scarred women left Tokyo, the US State Department sent a telegram to the American Embassy in Japan expressing concern that,

[the] Hiroshima girls['] medical treatment in [the] US can generate publicity harmful not only [to] our relations with Japan but particularly [to] our worldwide efforts to avoid playing up [the] destructive effects [of] nuclear weapons

(State Dept. Files 1955, cited in Serlin 2004, 74)

If this telegram had arrived twenty-four hours earlier, Serlin (2004) contends, the Maidens may never have left Japan. As it was, the Maidens were well on their way to New York, and the State Department found themselves on a reconnaissance mission to salvage whatever Americanist propaganda they could from the Maidens' medical sojourn in the United States.

Shortly after the Maidens arrived in New York, Cousins met with Walter C. Robertson, Assistant Secretary to the Far East for the State Department. The men discussed a strategy for introducing the young women to the American public. Their mutual intent was to suppress the United States' part in the injuries suffered by the girls by creating patriotically altruistic rhetoric. If successful, the Maidens' marketing campaign might also stave off dissent against nuclear and hydrogen testing. Theirs was a campaign of forgetting what did happen and what could happen. Robertson and Cousins quietly, yet forcibly, constructed a declarative culture of surfaces; questions and doubts regarding the efficacy of atomic warfare were buried like the atomic impressions upon Hiroshima's landscape, Matsushige's photographs of mutilated bodies, and the silent psychological scars that belonged to every individual who experienced the bewildering light that preceded bewildering darkness.

The State Department's concern that American medical treatment of Japanese survivors could be interpreted as an official US apology for the bombings (Lindee 1994, 138) began with the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC). The ABCC, established in Hiroshima during the Occupation, was created to 'diagnose radiation illness but not treat it' (NuclearFiles.org 2012). Based first at The Red Cross building in Hiroshima, and afterward on a hilltop in Hijiyama Park, the ABCC studied the effects of atomic warfare by examining the victims of the bomb. Their findings were recorded and purportedly used for consulting purposes. Through the ABCC, the US government entered into the country-sized petri dish it had created. The rules in this environment were clear: look, but don't touch. By refusing to medically intercede in Japan's atomic aftermath, the ABCC established a hands-off precedent. While American curative technologies were developed by doctors and scientists in Japan, and produced in response to tests on Japanese 'subjects', they were unavailable to Japanese victims of the atomic bomb. Ultimately, the ABCC celebrated American medical innovation while refusing to treat a country in pain.

The Maidens project circumnavigated issues of post-war American atonement insisting that:

the common standards of war, the treatment accorded wounded enemy soldiers or civilians under military occupation, for example, suggest that medical care is not necessarily linked to moral responsibility for an injury ... Medical treatment is not generally construed by either side as an apology or admission of guilt

(Lindee 1994, 141).

The Maidens' medical treatment, then, was not a confession, or a show of remorse. Rather, Cousins, the Maidens' doctors, and their hosts felt they were involved with a goodwill enterprise, addressing the needs of the less fortunate. The popular discourse and visual representations of the women before and after their treatments depicted the medical and moral transformation as the result of a benevolent intervention. According

to Cousins, and the Maidens themselves, the girls were grateful for such an opportunity (Sasamori 2009). In the opinion of Ellen Cousins, wife of Norman, '[t]he loving warmth and concern shown to the girls by their host families made it possible for [them] to regain their self-confidence and self-esteem and to eliminate the shame they had previously felt about their scars' (Gaie 1996, 353). Bernard Simon, one of the plastic surgeons who treated the Maidens in New York, agreed. In a 1985 interview he compared the young women's collective medical metamorphosis to 'watching a beautiful flower open' (Gaie 1996, 353). According to Simon the girls transformed emotionally and culturally as much as they did physically. Whether or not the Maidens felt legitimately indebted to Cousins, Tanimoto, and the American volunteers is difficult to know, given Cousins' control over their interviews and images. For what it is worth, the mediated Maidens, who inhabited the simulated spectacle Cousins constructed for and around them, publicly attributed their American friends and benefactors for providing them with a (second) chance to lead 'normal lives' (Gaie 1996, 353).

Outside of Cousins and Tanimoto's public investment in the Maidens, a number of individuals were necessary for the apparent success of the project. The Maidens' story is full of unsung heroes: the Quaker families who volunteered to house the women during their recovery, the surgeons and nurses who offered their time, skill, and hospital beds, and countless people who donated money to support the medical procedures. All those involved came to epitomise a kind of humanitarian patriotism that uncannily resembled the benevolent monarchical impulse of colonial missionisation practices. The conquered were saved by the conquerors, and the conquerors thereafter demanded accolades for their salvation. This self-congratulatory sentiment resonates throughout a report from the *New York World-Telegram* of the 9 May 1955 which reads: 'for years [the Maidens] have avoided society's gazes and stares, helpless in their common sorrow. But now there is hope ... Twenty-five Japanese girls are seeing what America is really like' (cited in Serlin 2003). The Maidens experienced stigmatisation in Japan, but were hardly the spectacles they became during their sojourn in the United States. Their experiences of America – at Mount Sinai, with their host families, and during the public relations campaign – in no way resembled those of the average foreign tourist. The Maidens were not tourists; they were the main attraction.

Part III: Other Others

The Maidens were the first *hibakusha* – victims of the atomic bomb – that the post-war American public ever encountered face to face. It is a significant irony then that the first faces Americans saw were also the first faces they attempted to reconstruct. Images of the women's faces and bodies were scrutinised in the press, and circulated through philanthropic circles with pleas for further funding. The discomfort this attention produced for the girls must have been unimaginable considering their former isolation, as well as language and cultural barriers, amplified by the general self-consciousness nearly all young women feel when they are made aware of their physical flaws. Additionally, the Maidens' eighteen months of intense visibility recorded the girls' faces as they underwent painful skin grafts. Collectively, the women participated in



Figure 8.1. Nurse serving lunch to patient (Copyright: Bettmann/CORBIS, U1295978INP).

140 surgeries (Gaie 1996, 353). Somehow they managed to smile through it all – or at least that is what the pictures tell us.

Photographs of the women smiling in their hospital beds, on day trips with their Quaker families, and in front of aeroplanes upon their arrival in the US and prior to their departure, accompanied newspaper stories about hope and physical reincarnation. Serlin notes that the girls even composed an a cappella pop song entitled 'Smile, Please Come Back' released as a single in Japan (Serlin 2004, 92). The Maidens' apparent happiness was fundamental to Cousins' State Department approved plan. Here, photographs were censored from within the frame. Bodies could be in pain as long as it looked like they weren't. The positive and sympathetic public response to the images is a testament to the power of specular signifiers and highlights the relationship between aesthetics and ideology (cf. Kaplan 2005). The American public of the 1950s, enamoured by the possibilities of the modern televisual world, lived by the mantra that believing is seeing. Images were truths, aids to assuage doubt and confirm the story.

The photographs of the smiling Maidens were proof of their happiness; America made these girls smile and the camera fixed the smile upon their faces for posterity.

The Maidens' reconstruction was highly visible, but a singular televised incident simultaneously veiled the women's faces and revealed the traumatic fault lines in Cousins' marketing campaign. On the 11 May 1955 Reverend Tanimoto, his family, and two of the women, Toyoko Minowa and Tadao Emori, appeared on NBC's reality show *This is Your Life* with the intended goal of raising money to help pay for the Maidens' surgeries' (NBC-TV 1955; Serlin 2003). Producers asked Minowa and Emori to sit behind a screen 'to avoid causing them any embarrassment' (Serlin 2004, 90). Because the women's faces had already been publicised by newspapers, the producers' argument for their visual anonymity appears an unconvincing disclaimer at best. Rather than protecting the women, the screen protected the audience from viewing the physical ramifications of nuclear war. Visually and spatially separating the women from the other guests, host, and viewers, the screen positioned in front of the women was a physical manifestation of the prevailing American post-war ignorance of nuclear-devastated Japan.

As silhouettes, Minowa and Emori represented a shadowy unknown Japanese 'Other', ethnically and psychoanalytically distinct from the Western audience who watched the show. Literally and figuratively profiled, the women sitting behind the screen conveyed a layered alterity; differentiated from the white American body because of their ethnicity, physical disfigurement, and lack of specific subjectivity. As psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argues, the presence of the Other is necessary to the constitution of the self; '[t]he Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the subject – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear' (Lacan 1998, 203). That is to say, the presence of the Other – in this case the keloid scarred Japanese female body – is evidence of an antithetical collective Western subject, an American post-war identity premised upon not being Japanese and not being scarred. As part of an oppositional structure, the Japanese 'Other' codifies the American subject that *knows who he is because he knows who he is not*.

While the scarred women were shown in profile behind the screen, producers asked Tanimoto's Westernized wife, Chyssa, to change out of her modern American clothing into a kimono and slippers. Even as *This is Your Life* forced the Maidens into virtual invisibility behind the screen, the show sought to visibly 'celebrate the exotic authenticity' of the Other (Zizek 1999). Her identity superficially re-constructed, Chyssa served to represent a docile and 'traditional' Japanese woman unchanged by nuclear war. Chyssa's identity, like the Maidens' lack of identity, was fictional. Neither Chyssa, in the traditional Japanese clothing that the producers provided, nor the Maidens, in profile, portrayed a post-war Japanese woman with any accuracy. However, fidelity was never the goal.

Interestingly, Naoko Shibusawa notes that Cousins', who was the Maidens' primary American advocate, never extended medical treatment to any hibakusha men. Shibusawa convincingly argues that his neglect of adult men was more than simple oversight. She writes, with regard to Cousins' investment in the Maidens project, and his ongoing support of the 'moral adoptions' program for Japanese children orphaned by the bomb:

... *Saturday Review of Literature* editor Norman Cousins, predictably chose Japanese women and children as the beneficiaries of their aid...both programs neglected the adult male victims of the atomic bomb, providing yet another example of the postwar interpretive framework that cast the Japanese as the dependents of a big-hearted and wise US breadwinner, protector, and parental figure.

(Shibusawa 2006, 216)

This in mind, the televisual dynamic between the silent Maidens' in silhouette and the show's host, Ralph Edwards, is especially noteworthy. While it appears Toyoko Minowa and Tadao Emori have a microphone (also visible in silhouette) they remain completely silent. Edwards refers to them, but never engages with them. He infers that they are behind the screen for protection because revealing their scarred faces to the American public would be too emotionally draining for the women. Here, Edwards, as the representative of *This is Your Life*, plays the role of 'protector.' But his concerned paternal script leaves the women no opportunity to tell their own stories. While there was certainly the issue language barrier, the show did not provide a translator that night. Ultimately, then, the individuals involved with Tanimoto's *This is Your Life* episode had no intention of humanizing the women. In shadow, and without voice, the women were infantilized. Like children in the company of a parent, they were spoken about, but were not directly addressed.

The *This is Your Life* episode that featured the Tanimotos and the Maidens may have easily been the most traumatic in the show's history, for it was host to the first and last encounter between Lieutenant Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the Enola Gay, and the victims of the bombing (NBC-TV 1955). It is rumoured that prior to the televised meeting between Lewis, Tanimoto, and the Maidens, the former pilot spent the day drinking his anxieties away (Serlin 2003). No doubt, Lewis, an alcoholic, had to calm his nerves before publicly recalling his experience of the 6th August 1945. Lewis responded in a trembling voice:

Well, Mr. Edwards, uh, just before 8:15 am Tokyo time, Tom Ferribee – a very able bombardier – carefully aimed at his target, which was the Second Imperial Japanese Army headquarters. At 8:15 promptly, the bomb was dropped. We turned fast to get out of the way of the deadly radiation and bomb effects. First was the big flash that we got, and then the two concussion waves hit the ship. Shortly after, we turned back to see what had happened. And there, in front of our eyes, the city of Hiroshima disappeared. I wrote down later, 'My God, what have we done?'

(Serlin 2004, 88–89)

After his short monologue, a wide-eyed Lewis handed Tanimoto a cheque for 50 dollars to go toward treating these Japanese victims of the bomb. Edwards encouraged the two men through an awkward conciliatory handshake. This exchange must have been unnerving for all parties involved. But it may have had the greatest impact on Lewis. Shortly after the show, the former pilot was diagnosed with depression and mental illness. He spent the latter part of his life in an upstate New York mental institution constructing a large mushroom cloud sculpture with a stream of tears issuing from its centre (Serlin 2004, 89).

Lewis' obvious on-air remorse did a great deal of harm to Cousins' State Department endorsed plans to reconstruct American altruism without apology. As Robert Jay Lifton observes, 'The reporting in Hiroshima of an expression of repentance ('What have I done?') by [...] Robert Lewis, after meeting the Hiroshima Maidens, had considerable meaning for some hibakusha' (Lifton 1991, 341). Lewis wanted forgiveness. He had a guilty conscience because he knew dropping the atomic bomb caused casualties beyond the expected crossfire of war. Lewis' regret incriminated all of America and compromised the efficacy of the Maidens Project, but it also initiated a slew of donations from viewers across the nation who felt pangs of compunction from the comfort of their living rooms. As the cheques for the Maidens' reconstructive needs poured in, national guilt was superficially alleviated, and the consequences of the bomb further repressed. Cousins may have given the Maidens new faces, but his gift to America was far more valuable. He granted Americans distance from the war's horrific aftermath and endowed them with the peace of mind that they had done everything they could for the Japanese survivors. Cousins' prescription for post-war American guilt was simple and took little time and energy: write a cheque, send it in, and feel better.

Was Cousins wrong to seek cultural reconciliation? Was he manipulative because he hoped to repair America's image, as the surgeons he recruited restored Japanese bodies? Probably not, but he is guilty of displacing his culpability onto the faces of twenty-five young women. His self-reproach not only shaped their faces; it ultimately moulded their lives. One of the Maidens, Tomako Nakabayashi, died of heart failure during her third surgical procedure. Another, Hiroko Tasaka, married taxi driver Harry Harris who proposed to her following her television appearance (Barker 1985). As for Shigeko, she was adopted by the Cousins family and lived with them for over two decades. Her only son, Norman Cousins Sasamori, was named after the American father who modelled her into the woman she became. For all of Cousins political propagandising he definitely 'turn[ed] trauma into opportunity'; his actions allowed Americans and Japanese to forget the war and remember the reconciliation (Serlin 2004, 102).

Part V: A Cry So Loud

When Lewis appeared on *This is Your Life* he confronted Reverend Tanimoto, his wife Chyssa, and the Maidens, whose presence was mitigated by the screen partition. With this meeting, Lewis' victims became real people; they had faces (or at least the shadows of faces), voices, and memories that were inalterably linked to his own. In the NBC television studio, ten years after Lewis fled Hiroshima air space, his absent victims became present. The once distant and nameless casualties of war in close physical proximity, Lewis confronted the disturbingly apparent psychological and corporeal repercussions of his actions. Lewis' encounter with the survivors visually and tangibly confirmed that the atom bomb made it to the ground, and that its impact had been more than aesthetic. Lewis may have witnessed a powerful flash of light subsuming the landscape below, but the Maidens experienced the inassimilable force of a nuclear weapon. For Lewis, and many Americans who watched *This Is Your Life*, seeing post-war Japanese bodies, and acknowledging the pain of post-war Japanese subjects, summoned

the formerly invisible Other into visibility. The physical presence of the survivors of the atom bomb compounded Lewis' latent realization that he was intimately implicated in modifying bodies and altering lives. It is this trauma, and its symptoms, that Lewis experienced until his death.

Freud's classic psychoanalytic text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, first published in 1950 and revised in 1961, sheds light on Lewis' reaction to the Maidens' and his initially dormant but eventually crippling traumatic reaction. In this book Freud considers Torquato Tasso's 16th century Romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Freud's version of the tale is:

Tancred unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders [sic] army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree: but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.

(Freud 1961, 16)

Freud's reading of Tasso's story serves to illustrate the psychoanalytic notion of transference, or the compulsion to repeat and reanimate 'painful emotions...with the greatest ingenuity' (Freud 1961, 15).

As Ann Pellegrini observes, '[t]he retelling of Tancred's story, and Clorinda's, is extremely brief ... [it] ... does not even amount to a full paragraph in Freud's text' (Pellegrini 2009, 241). In this short passage, the father of psychoanalysis concisely demonstrates that the psychological trauma associated with an event can be masked, but never disappears. Tancred does not begin to recognise his suffering associated with Clorinda's death until he leaves battle and enters the forest. In this unfamiliar setting, away from the site of the traumatic event, Tancred unwittingly repeats the moment he stabbed Clorinda by piercing the tall tree that speaks to him in the voice of his lost love. The voice that issues from the gash in the tree sounds like Clorinda, but as Freud – and Caruth after him – explain, it does not belong to her alone. Nor, for that matter, does it simply emanate from the tree, which is a symbolic substitute for Clorinda and testament to the ingenuity of traumatic transference. The wound addressing Tancred in the forest is the sound of Tancred's inassimilable guilt: the voice of living through and with trauma.

In Caruth's interpretation of Freud's reading of *Gerusalemme Liberata* she writes that the voice Tancred hears – the crying wound – 'represents the experience of an individual traumatized by his own past – the repetition of his own trauma as it shapes his life' (Caruth 1996, 8). Caruth's representation of Freud's analysis complicates the original reading. For Caruth, Tancred's trauma is ever bound to Clorinda's; 'the wound that speaks is not precisely Tancred's own but the wound, the trauma, of another' (Caruth 1996, 8). Tancred shares the trauma of the event with his dead Clorinda. Here, it is evident that trauma is the product of an encounter that binds two (or more) individuals. Even as it is repressed, trauma unites the traumatised. Although the painful incident remains outside of daily consciousness, the voice of the other screams for recognition in the subject's mind, and manifests in every traumatic repetition. Clorinda's trauma was a part of Tancred, like the Maidens' trauma was part of Lewis. Clorinda's voice, contingent

upon the repression of the traumatic encounter, lived in Tancred's unconscious forever, as the voice of Lewis' victims haunted him, and ultimately led to his psychological unravelling.

More than once, one could imagine, Tancred muttered the words of Robert Lewis, 'My God, what have I done?' Like Tancred, Lewis killed 'in error ... but ... on purpose' (Caruth 1996, 2). Similar to Tancred, Lewis was purposefully violent but relatively unaware of the humanity of his faceless victims or the extent of his action. With the benefit of hindsight Tancred and Lewis, as well as many of the Americans who supported atomic war, realised the consequence of their blind decision. Yet, Tancred and Lewis only acknowledged the repercussions of their destructive encounters after what Freud and Caruth both call a 'latency' period: a period of dormancy during which trauma develops (cf. Caruth 1996). It was during this period that Lewis' trauma became unbearable. The television encounter with Tanimoto and the scarred women unequivocally called his regret to the fore. Although he never saw the scarred faces of his victims, the meeting with the Maidens forced Lewis to face the historical trauma in which he was intimately implicated.

Freud and Caruth both establish that traumatic psychological wounds never close. But what of the physical wound that heals to become a scar? What of the traces of trauma written upon the Maidens' faces? Clorinda's wound was her death, but those who lived through the atomic bomb also lived with the scars of death narrowly averted. While the Maidens' psychological wounds were not immediately evident, their bodies betrayed the severity of their traumatic experience. Their psychological scars had obvious physical correlates; the corporeal scar is a permanent marker of the traumatic encounter. Invested in the activities of unconscious rather than in what traumatic encounter literally *looks like* upon the skin, neither Freud nor Caruth ever acknowledge the connection between physical and psychological scars. While Freud does contend that the body expresses symptoms of the mind, the scar is not a psychological symptom. Unlike the symptom, the scar is not necessarily a marker of unconscious mental distress. The wound appears during rather than after the event of causation. The scar does not surface or manifest; it is the wound's trace. While the symptom, as Linda Edwards and Michael Williams write, 'operates as an explanation – as the present trace of an absent cause', the scar is ever-present (Edwards and Williams 2006). If the symptom wilfully refuses repression, the scar is a mark of encounter that cannot be repressed. More corporeal than psychological, external than internal, the scar is a sign of possible traumatic encounter that belongs to the body but at least in the Maidens' case has complex and interrelated social and psychological implications. Its conspicuous presence is an indication that some trauma is visual and a sign of the futility of repression.

Delineating the scar from the symptom is integral to comprehending how the Maidens' story is different from other incidents of traumatic encounter. The Maidens' scars did not appear on the girls' bodies as a result of their psychological distress. But like traumatic symptoms, the Maidens' scars were external indications of the trauma they housed within. The women's unconscious minds and their bodies both testified to the unspeakable experience of living through the atomic bomb. Yet their physical appearances clearly and painfully iterated what their minds, and their culture, repressed. Each physical scar upon the girls' skin marked the moment of the event,

and the body's proximity to the atomic bomb. Collectively, the women's scars were a physical archive and testament of the destructive power of atomic energy. Even when the Hiroshima Maidens' suppressed their traumatic experience, their bodies revealed it. In so doing, their skin became an ever-present reminder of the choice the American government made in order to end the war.

Conclusion: Impossible Erasure

When The Hiroshima Maidens returned to Japan they did not get the response that Cousins had anticipated. No one celebrated their homecoming. They remained stigmatised. But, like their faces, the stigma that followed the Maidens was transformed. The Maidens were once signifiers of Japanese victimisation, but after their surgeries their faces became symbolic of invasive Americanisation. 'When none of the Maidens showed an interest in political activism, and collectively they did nothing to enlarge the project beyond twenty-four individual experiences,' Rodney Barker writes, 'people began to say they must have been spoiled during their year abroad' (Barker 1985, 187). The Hiroshima Maidens had, in a sense, betrayed their country with their bodies. The sign of their unfaithfulness was written upon their faces. First through war and afterward through medicine, the United States constructed and reconstructed the Maidens.

The Maidens surgical reconstruction was a medical and cultural performance of repression. Because the Maidens' scars were physical they could not be contained by the unconscious. But their faces, like Hiroshima's post-war urban landscape, could be razed and rebuilt. And their photographed and televised images could, like so many pictures of Japanese bodies ravaged by nuclear disaster, be strategically censored or framed. By surgically manipulating the Maidens' scars and visually engineering how the Maidens' were portrayed in the popular American press, Cousins and his supporters were able to protect the US from the physical consequences of nuclear war. Ultimately and with relative success, the Maidens project hid trauma in plain sight.

There is a striking and revealing parallel here between Cousins and the US State Department's efforts to ameliorate the cultural and physical fissures produced by atomic war and those performed by Freud's daughter, Anna (a practicing psychoanalyst). Later in his life Freud suffered from cancer of the mouth that left him with a prominent physical scar. Aware of the embarrassment and anguish his facial flaw caused, Anna kept images of her father's cheek wound from the public. Donna Green notes that Anna 'thought if the general public were to see [her father] in the distress he was in that it would take away from his intellect' (Green 2000, 3). Apparently Anna considered her father's scar a signifier of weakness. She feared its visually dialectical power. The wound's exposure threatened to undo an otherwise 'unblemished public image of Freud' (Marinelli 2004, 41). Like the US State Department following World War II, Anna Freud's actions implicitly acknowledged the photograph's power for depicting physical pain and suffering. Anna wanted to maintain a cohesive and intellectually omniscient public image of her father to such a degree that she concealed his physical appearance. But by censoring pictures of her father, Anna, like American post-war propagandists – including the well-meaning Norman Cousins, who mediated the images of the

Maidens – never fully faced the fact that things had changed. With or without pictures, before and after medical intervention, bodies ruptured by trauma can never entirely recover, nor can the psychological scars beneath.

Anna's actions are especially notable considering her father never paid much attention to physical scars in his intellectual work. While he wrote prolifically on the unconscious' ability to contain and control traumatic memories he neglected an exploration of the meaning of the traumatic imprint on his own face. For Freud, the scar belonged to the external body; as I noted earlier in this paper, he and many of his colleagues involved with psychoanalytic inquiry regarded the scar as 'a simple and healable event,' detached from unconscious traumatic repression (Caruth 1996, 4). However, Freud's own experience with mouth cancer, and his daughter's reaction to that experience, as well as the Maidens' sojourn to the United States, and Cousins' mediated portrayal of the venture, suggests Freud's focus on the mind limited his understanding of the scar's role as a signifier of the traumatic unconscious. Freud's mouth scar, like the Maidens' layered keloid and surgical scars demonstrate that trauma is, in fact, as present on the exterior of the body as it is the interior of the mind. They show that although psychological trauma may not occur through the wounding of the body, the body's wounds and subsequent scars do have relevance beyond the physiological. The medical and visual treatment of scars too is related to the unconscious' efforts to repress traumatic encounters. Thus surfaces, and how they are negotiated, contain an undeniable psychological and social depth.

Bibliography

- Alperovitz, G. (1995) *The Decision to Use The Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
- Barker, R. (1985) *Hiroshima Maidens*. New York, Penguin.
- Caruth, C. (1996) *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Caruth, C. (2005) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Edwards, L. and Williams, M. (2006) Introduction: the symptom, *Invisible Culture* [online]. Available at: <http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_10/issue10intro.html> [Accessed 9 December 2009].
- Freud, S. (1938) The interpretation of dreams. In A. A. Brill (ed.) *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, 181–549. New York, Random House.
- Freud, S. (1961) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York, W. W. Norton.
- Freud, S. (1964) The loss of reality in neurosis and psychosis. In J. Strachey (ed.) *The Standard Edition Of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 181–88. London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-analysis.
- Gaie, M. (1996) Healing the Hiroshima Maidens: a historic lesson in international cooperation. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 276(5), 349–53.
- Green, D. (2000) Films honor a writer's father, and Freud, *New York Times*, 2 January, section 14WC, 3.
- Gusterson, H. (2009) Hiroshima and the power of pictures, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 5 August, [online]. Available at <<http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/columnists/hugh-gusterson/hiroshima-and-the-power-of-pictures>> [Accessed 8 December 2009].
- Hiroshima Peace Memorial Virtual Museum (2002) *Special Exhibit: A-Bomb Drawings – A People's Record of Hiroshima*. [online] Available at: <http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/exhibit_e/exh0303_e/exh03031_e.html> [Accessed 9 December 2009].
- Johnson, S. (1988) *The Japanese Through American Eyes*. Palo Alto CA, Stanford University Press.
- Kaplan, A. E. (2005) *Trauma Culture: the Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. Piscataway NJ, Rutgers University Press.
- Kuppers, P. (2007) *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. New York, W. W. Norton.
- Levy, A. H. (2009) Hiroshima: the Lost Photographs. *Observatory: Design Observer*, 5 August. [online] Available at: <<http://observatory.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=7517>>. [Accessed 8 December 2009].
- Lifton, R. J. (1991) *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. Chapel Hill NC, University of North Carolina Press.
- Lindee, S. M. (1994) *Suffering Made Real: American Science and the Survivors at Hiroshima*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Luciano, L. (2001) *Looking Good: Male Body Image in Modern America*. New York, Hill and Wang.
- Marinelli, L. (2004) Smoking, laughing, and the compulsion to film: on the beginnings of psychoanalytic documentaries *American Imago* 61(1), 35–58.
- NuclearFiles.org. (1998–2012) Project of The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, [online] Available at: <<http://nuclearfiles.org/>> [Accessed 8 December 2009].
- Pellegrini, A. (2009) The Dogs of war and the Dogs at Home: Thresholds of Loss. *American Imago*, Vol. 66(2), 231–51.
- Rivkin, J. and Ryan, M. (2004) Introduction: strangers to ourselves: psychoanalysis. In J. Rivkin and M. Ryan (eds) *Literary Theory: an Anthology*. Malden MA, Blackwell Publishing.
- Saito, H. (1996) Reiterated commemoration: Hiroshima as national trauma. *Sociological Theory* 24(4), 353–76.
- Serlin, D. (2003) The clean room/domesticating the Hiroshima Maidens. *Cabinet Magazine*, Issue 11[online], Available at: <<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/11/cleanRoom.php>> [Accessed 10 December 2009].
- Serlin, D. (2004) *Replaceable You*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Shibusawa, N. (2006) *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Boston, Harvard University Press.
- Sasamori, S. (August 17, 2009) *Hiroshima Part 6: The Message of The Maiden*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INkc2MVRMng>>. [Accessed 10 December 2009.]
- Sasamori, S. (2008) Peace and Love – Talk given on the 20 September 2008 as part of the Culture of Peace Distinguished Speaker Series sponsored by Victory Over Violence. [online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4oogsEmc9k>> [Accessed 8 December 2009.]
- Surprenant, C. (2006). Freud and psychoanalysis. In P. Waugh (ed.) *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 206–08. New York, Oxford University Press.
- This Is Your Life: 'Kiyoshi Tanimoto'* (1955) Television programme, NBC-TV. 11 May.
- Yoneyama, L. (1999) *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- Zizek, S. (1999) You may. *London Review of Books* [online] Available at: <<http://www.lacan.com/zizek-youmay.htm>>. [Accessed 10 December 2009].

Medicine, Healing and Performance

edited by

Effie Gemi-Iordanou

Stephen Gordon

Robert Matthew

Ellen McInnes

Rhiannon Pettitt



Oxbow Books
Oxford & Philadelphia

Published in the United Kingdom in 2014 by
OXBOW BOOKS
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
908 Darby Road, Havertown, PA 19083

© Oxbow Books and the individual contributors 2014

Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-158-0
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-168-9

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Medicine, healing and performance / edited by Effie Gemi-Iordanou, Stephen Gordon, Robert
Matthew, Ellen McInnes, Rhiannon Pettitt.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-78297-158-0

1. Traditional medicine. 2. Medical archaeology. 3. Mental healing. 4. Spiritual healing. 5.
Shamanism. I. Gemi-Iordanou, Effie, editor of compilation.

GN477.M28 2014

610--dc23

2013050575

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any
form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording
or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the
publisher in writing.

For a complete list of Oxbow titles, please contact:

UNITED KINGDOM

Oxbow Books

Telephone (01865) 241249, Fax (01865) 794449

Email: oxbow@oxbowbooks.com

www.oxbowbooks.com

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Oxbow Books

Telephone (800) 791-9354, Fax (610) 853-9146

Email: queries@casemateacademic.com

www.casemateacademic.com/oxbow

Oxbow Books is part of the Casemate group

Front cover: *Pestle and Mortar* (© Rhiannon Pettitt 2012)

Back cover: The tools of a Ghanaian medicine man (© Bryn Trevelyan James 2010)

Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
<i>Effie Gemi-Iordanou, Stephen Gordon, Robert Matthew, Ellen McInnes and Rhiannon Pettitt</i>	
1. Early Neolithic Shamans? Performance, Healing and the Power of Skulls at Hambledon Hill, Dorset	6
<i>Ffion Reynolds</i>	
2. Before Hippocrates: Healing Practices in Ancient Egypt	25
<i>Roger Forshaw</i>	
3. Who is Performing What and for Whom? The Dedication, Construction and Maintenance of a Healing Shrine in Roman Egypt	42
<i>Jane Draycott</i>	
4. Disease, Sin and the Walking Dead in Medieval England, c. 1100–1350: A Note on the Documentary and Archaeological Evidence	55
<i>Stephen Gordon</i>	
5. Pilgrimage, Performance and Miracle Cures in the Twelfth-Century	71
<i>Miracula of St Æbbe</i>	
<i>Hilary Powell</i>	
6. Gendered Attitudes Towards Physical Tending Amongst the Piously Religious of Late Medieval Sweden	86
<i>Johanna Bergqvist</i>	
7. The Rattlesnake and the Otter: Anthropology, Gender, and Contraception among the Niitsítapi (Blackfoot) in the 1930s	106
<i>Kristin Burnett</i>	
8. Re-Covering the Hiroshima Maidens	120
<i>Amanda Jane Graham</i>	