

Memory and myth: the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima in German and Japanese TV drama

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Abstract

Japan is often blamed for not coming to terms with its own wartime past and for focusing solely on its role as a victim of the war. Germany, however, is often seen as the model that Japan has to emulate, having penitently accepted responsibility. Thus, in order to work out how these popular myths are being perpetuated, the media prove to be a good source of information, since they help to uphold memory and myth at the same time. In this paper, it will be examined how the “memory” of the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima is being upheld in Japan and Germany – and what kinds of “myths” are being created in the process. In focusing on two TV dramas, it shall be worked out to what extent Japan and Germany are represented as “victims” and to what extent, if at all, the issue of war responsibility features in these dramas.

Keywords: Hiroshima; Dresden; war memory; television; television drama.

記憶と神話：ドイツと日本のテレビドラマにおけるドレスデン爆撃と広島

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日本は過去の戦争について清算せず、被害者意識ばかりに焦点を置いている。それに対してドイツは反省して自らの戦争責任を受け入れており、日本は倣うべきであるとしばしば言われる。こうした「神話」がいかに受け継がれて来ているかを検証するにあたって、メディアは重要な情報源であり、過去の記憶と同時に「神話」を広め続けている。本稿はドレスデン大空襲と広島原爆の記憶が両国でどのように継承

され、どのような「神話」が築き上げられてきたかを二つのテレビドラマに焦点をあてて見ていきたい。ドイツと日本が単に「犠牲者」として描かれているのか、そして、戦争責任についてどの程度触れられているかを検証する。

1. Introduction

People bowing deeply in the Peace Park, in the background the Atomic Bomb Dome. Hiroshima in August, transmitted via the news to a worldwide audience – a symbol of peace and commemoration. Change of scenery. People holding candles, a baroque church. Another symbol, though less well known globally, again, commemoration, Dresden in February.

Clearly, the media play a key role in commemorating events – be it by bringing news of such acts to national or international audiences, or by simply re-narrating stories to “teach and enlighten”. However, commemoration and memory are no easy candidates for medial representation. Even individuals choose to remember selectively – often forgetting less pleasant times while highlighting other, more pleasant ones. Yet it is our memory that “makes us” – we are who we are because of our past experiences (Halbwachs 1992; Wertsch 2009). Thus the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, among others, proposed that groups function in the same manner as individuals and also “remember” their past in order to create a sense of belonging and unity. But the question arises of whether the collective memory is as problematic as an individual’s – or even more so because of the question as to who determines what is remembered and when.

Consequently, Halbwachs has been severely criticized for casting whole societies in the same mold as individuals (Wertsch 2009). Yet even his critics agree that our societies are based on something, some common feature that binds people together creating a collective identity, be it in “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), in narrating stories that recur on a seemingly shared set of values (Bhabha 1990), or in simply “imagining communities” (Anderson 1994) – all of this allows “us” to maintain an identity as a group, telling us who we are, where we belong, and what our culture and history is.

However, if the term “memory” is defined lexically, it is, or should be, based on something that has really happened.¹ One could argue that the more often a memory is re-narrated, the more likely it ends up becoming a “myth” – a narrative that prevails, transcends time, and is passed on from generation to generation – but that may not be completely true. Nonetheless, myths have an explanatory function and help shape our worldview. They may be altered to suit a different gen-

eration's needs but their core remains. In that sense, myths help maintain and legitimize a nation because they are common narratives that very few people question. They are somewhat broader than memory, encompassing not only narratives of things past, but also making us think about something in a particular manner (Barthes 1972; Lévi-Strauss 2001). Myths therefore are just as important for our identity as memory, with one even reinforcing the other as memories can become myths, and myths memory.

In any modern society, the media are a perfect vehicle for the transmission of both myth and memory as the media are normally rooted in their culture of production (Fiske 1987; Creeber 2004). The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and 9/11, for example, have become both "memory" and "myth", events that people talk about and that the media make frequent reference to. In this context, the genre of TV drama is of importance as it is often said to be a "primary generator of identities and the most everyday source of narratives" (Thornham and Purvis 2005: ix). And even though Thornham and Purvis did not write about "memory" and "myth making" as such, the two words could simply be added to the sentence.

Hence it is very revealing to look at TV dramas that deal with a particular "memory" in a given country in order to identify which myths are being (re)narrated. This narrative could either be in the form of a historical drama or a documentary drama, although genre definitions are somewhat vague in that respect because historical dramas normally are fictional stories in a (pseudo-)historical setting, while documentary dramas should ideally depict actual events as they happened.² In that sense, both genres perpetuate myths, and the dividing line between fact and fiction begins to blur as some people may take fiction for reality (Okada 2005).

What is it then that is chosen for remembrance in the media? Mostly, narratives that are in some way important for a "nation", are part of history, and may even still be within living memory, so that people can relate to them. One very popular topic in both Germany and Japan still is World War II. In Japan, programs about the Second World War seem to concentrate on the August commemorations (Seaton 2007), whereas in Germany they are less focused on particular anniversaries.

Thus, in this paper, two dramas shall be looked at, one Japanese and one German, that "re-narrate" actual events that by and large have remained in the public memory of the two countries since the end of the Second World War, namely the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima. These events were chosen because they seem to occupy a similar space in the collective memory of their countries, as traumatic events

shortly before the end of the war and which therefore could be considered unnecessary (Overy 2006). In this context, it gains relevance to look at both Germany and Japan in order to examine whether there are differences and similarities in the construction of the events in the media. Rather than attempting a comparison of the two events, only their medial representation shall be analyzed to identify what kinds of myths about the events are being narrated. In order to contextualize the analysis, it is necessary to give a short overview of both bombings and the backdrop against which the two dramas were produced and broadcast.

2. The Dresden bombing and postwar German history

During the night of 13 to 14 February 1945, two waves of British bombers dropped 2,260 tons of high explosives and incendiaries on the city of Dresden, creating a firestorm that consumed most of the inner city. The Americans also flew two daylight attacks, on 14 and 15 February,³ dropping another 3,000 tons of bombs (Taylor 2004). In the four attacks, about 25,000 people were killed.⁴

Soon after the attacks, the myth making began on both the German and the Allied sides. The German minister for propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, sought to “prove” that the Anglo-American allies were “savages” killing innocent civilians by the thousands and, therefore, grossly exaggerated the number of casualties, claiming about 200,000 deaths, despite the fact that no more than a fraction of this had been reported to Berlin (Taylor 2004; Cox 2006; Neutzner et al. 2010; Müller et al. 2010).

Goebbels’s propaganda struck a chord with the Americans when independent sources seemed to confirm the German accounts. In addition, a press briefing by a Royal Air Force official made it sound as if the British Bomber Command had taken up where the Luftwaffe had stopped in 1941 by deliberately “terror bombing” cities,⁵ leaving the Americans in unease, since they had, at least for Germany, claimed that they were only bombing targets of military relevance. The myth of an innocent city, full of civilians and refugees who had virtually no protection from the bombs, was born and no one talked anymore about the strategic considerations of the bombing, nor the fact that there were insufficient shelters because the *Gauleiter* had not deemed it necessary to protect civilians,⁶ nor the fact that all anti-aircraft guns had been relocated to the Eastern front, leaving Dresden defenseless (Cox 2006; Taylor 2004).

The ensuing Cold War and Soviet anti-Western propaganda greatly helped to perpetuate the myth of an innocent city, and Dresden was to

become a beacon to show how cruel the Western Allied forces had been to the German people (Overy 2006; Taylor 2004). Therefore, the attack on Dresden stood out to the extent that it even entered postwar British consciousness as an attack that may not have been necessary, or at least not to the extent it was executed. This was exemplified by the historian David Irving and his book on Dresden, in which he grossly overestimated the number of deaths in Dresden – and underestimated the number of deaths at Auschwitz (Overy 2006; Taylor 2004).

Nonetheless, the bombing of Dresden had somewhat faded from postwar West German memory, remembered only by a generation that was old enough to look back at a time before 1945. In the 1950s, the discourse of West German historians on the war was mostly concerned with blaming a ruling class that had brought much suffering to the German people, but from the 1960s on, the focus of historians and public debate was more on German responsibility for atrocities across Europe – including, slowly but gradually, also the Holocaust. In the 1980s, however, a new debate sparked on how to look at history. The starting point was a newspaper article by a conservative historian who likened the Holocaust to other mass killings, mainly Stalin's. The political left was enraged, saying that the Holocaust was a crime singular to mankind and that drawing parallels with other genocides would diminish the scale of it. This debate is commonly referred to as the *Historikerstreit* ('historians' dispute'). A minor point in the debate was also that the left insisted Germany had no right to claim suffering for its civilians because the suffering of the other side had been far greater, while conservatives argued that during the war everybody suffered, and German suffering should be mentioned, too.⁷

By 1989 the debate had petered out. Apparently, those involved became absorbed in the fall of the Berlin Wall and, as former Chancellor Helmut Kohl put it, the end of the trauma of German separation. It was only after the reunification in 1990 that it became opportune to look at what had happened in East Germany during the war and after – while new myths needed to be created. Gradually, Dresden reappeared on the West German map, greatly furthered by the discussion on whether the *Frauenkirche* ('Church of Our Lady'), which had been deliberately left in ruins by the Socialist East German government as a "reminder" of what the "West" was capable of (Taylor 2004), should be rebuilt.

Around a decade after reunification and the end of the historians' dispute, the media in Germany experienced a kind of "memory boom". Documentaries on the Second World War were produced in abundance, sometimes in cooperation with the BBC or ITV (Neitzel 2003;

Classen 2008). Furthermore, Jörg Friedrich's (2004 [2002]) bestselling book *Der Brand*, 'The Fire', sparked a discussion about whether the bombing war was really not targeted at civilians and German culture, and the idea that Germany had also been a victim of the war became more widespread (Kim 2009).

Against this backdrop, the TV drama *Dresden* was produced. It was first broadcast on 5 and 6 March 2006, deliberately timed more than a year after the 60th anniversary of the bombing in mid-February. Thus, the commemorative acts were still fresh enough in the memory of the audience. *Dresden* had a budget of 10 million euros and was produced by the private company Teamworx and public broadcasting station ZDF.⁸ Broadcast on two consecutive evenings, with each episode around 90 minutes long, *Dresden* was incredibly successful for a TV drama. The first episode alone had 12.6 million viewers, making it number 8 for the entire broadcasting year of 2006. The second episode had 11.29 million viewers, ranking it at number 14.⁹

However, if we talk about *Dresden* the drama, we actually talk about three dramas: the version for German television, the version for the German DVD market, and the version for the British market.¹⁰ The two German versions only differ in the fact that in the TV version all the English characters are dubbed, while in the DVD version they are not. This can be explained by the fact that Germans are not used to having too many subtitled sentences when watching TV. In contrast, the British version differs considerably, in that 37 minutes have been edited out. What has been edited out and to what effect will be looked at later.

According to the producers in the *Making Of*, it was "authenticity" that had to be ensured for *Dresden* at all costs, and the firestorm was recreated as a pyrotechnical spectacle. What the producers wanted to avoid was assigning blame to the British, and therefore *Dresden* presents both sides of the story. A considerable number of scenes are set in Bomber Command, where discussion about the attack and the strategic considerations behind it are elucidated. For the producers, *Dresden* was an event that highlights well the cruelty of war, but they apparently did not want to make it look too much like a narrative of German victimization by the British. To use the words of the script-writer, Stephan Kolditz: "Dresden was not an innocent city. Germany started the war and that is where it returned at the end." (*Making Of*, 00:16:00 – translation by the author). To what extent these ideas can really be found in the drama is analyzed in the following. Before that, however, the Hiroshima bombing and the background for the production of the Japanese drama shall briefly be looked at.

3. The Hiroshima bombing and postwar Japan

On the morning of 6 August 1945, the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb over the city of Hiroshima, a city that despite its strategic importance had so far been spared from air raids. The bomb, named Little Boy, killed around 80,000 people instantly, and an estimated 90,000 to 160,000 died later of injuries related to the bomb, mainly from exposure to radioactive substance. Still today, people in and around Hiroshima suffer from the effects of the bomb. It was therefore a bombing on a far larger and longer lasting scale than that of Dresden.

Shortly after the bombing, President Truman told Japan that the United States had unleashed a force yet unknown to mankind – and that more was to come if Japan did not surrender. Surrender it did, but only after another atomic bomb was dropped onto Nagasaki. The Americans moved into Japan as sole occupying force and suppressed most information about the effects of the two bombs, censoring every possible account of it in newspapers and literature (Coulmas 2005; Saito 2006).

Following Saito's argument, the memory of Hiroshima faded in Japan. Only in 1954, when the crew of the *Fukuryū Maru*, a Japanese fishing boat, were caught in the atomic fall-out from a bomb tested in Bikini Atoll, did nuclear power and all its negative side-effects return to public consciousness (Saito 2006). Hiroshima reinvented itself as the first victim of a nuclear attack, as a city that had been filled with innocent civilians without any military or strategic relevance, even though it had been a major naval port and the Second Headquarter General of the Imperial Army. As with Dresden, the myth of an innocent city was born and the commemoration began – although the debate around the memorial for the Korean victims of the bomb hinted at another side of the story (Buruma 1995; Weiner 1997).

Hiroshima became the topic of many novels, most famously Ibuse Masuji's *Kuroi ame* ('Black Rain', 1965), and the event was gradually featured in other media as well.¹¹ Apart from documentaries, the semi-autobiographical manga *Hadashi no Gen* ('Barefeet Gen', Nakazawa 1994), which was later turned into an anime and TV drama, stands out, and has become an important factor in how the war is remembered in Japan. In spite of its importance as a commemorative act for the Japanese, the victims of the bombings were stigmatized and for a long time received little or no compensation.

Nonetheless, the ceremonies in the Peace Park in August are usually broadcast to a nationwide audience – and the picture of the Atomic Bomb Dome has become a national, even global symbol against the use of nuclear weapons. This global stance to the commemoration of

Hiroshima has helped to distance it from any relation to the war and enabled the Japanese to consider themselves as victims of the war. Yet, similar to the historians' dispute in Germany, the political left and right in Japan also struggle to find common ground on how the war and Japan's role in it should be remembered (Buruma 1995; Coulmas 2005; Seaton 2007).

The drama *TBS terebi hōsō 50-shūnen "Nada sōsō purojekuto" dorama tokubetsu kikaku Hiroshima shōwa 20-nen 8-gatsu 6-ka* (Nasuda 2005) (hereafter *Hiroshima*) was aired on 29 August 2005,¹² and, unlike *Dresden*, stands in close relation to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the dropping of the bomb. With a 19.1% market share, it was also fairly successful.¹³ *Hiroshima*, like *Dresden*, was broadcast together with many documentaries and thus both dramas classify to some extent as "media events" in Dayan and Katz's (1994 [1992]) sense, as events generated by and transmitted through the media, because both were heavily advertised prior to their airing, were broadcast alongside documentaries, and did well in terms of ratings.

In the following analysis, it will be examined who are shown as victims and whether "war responsibility" is addressed in the two dramas. Furthermore, the representation of the British and Americans will be looked at, as well as to what extent the events prior to the bombing are explained. Finally, it will be evaluated to what extent the two dramas contribute to the collective memory of their respective countries and what kind of myths they might perpetuate.

4. **Victimization in *Dresden* and *Hiroshima***

The story of *Dresden* centers on a nurse called Anna, the daughter of a hospital director in Dresden.¹⁴ She is about to get engaged to Alexander, an opportunist doctor in the same hospital. Anna herself dislikes the attacks on German cities by the British and Americans, saying that they just kill women and children and even target hospitals. But she is critical of the regime as well, since it discriminates against her best friend Maria's Jewish husband and other people not willing to play by Nazi rules. In one scene, she tries to prevent the shooting of a woman who had hidden her deserter husband – and nearly gets herself shot. In contrast to Anna herself, her family does not consist of characters that the audience would readily sympathize with. Her father sells morphine, a drug that is urgently needed in his hospital, and Anna's sister Eva is a convinced Nazi. To further highlight Eva's involvement with the regime, she is the girlfriend of the *Gauleiter's* assistant. Anna's mother, however, is addicted to medication – tricked by her husband into believing the placebos he gives her have some effect.

Apart from Anna, there is one other character the audience can also easily identify with: Maria, Anna's friend and fellow nurse. With the help of Anna, who provides extra rations, she cares lovingly for her Jewish husband Simon, who spends most of the time indoors and is bullied when outside.¹⁵ Simon has become cynical and wants Dresden to be destroyed. He is about to be deported when the bombing starts.¹⁶

Thus, on the German side, it could look like a balanced picture; there are convinced Nazis, opportunists, and naïve characters, as well as opponents of the Nazi regime and a Jew facing deportation. But there is another victim of the bombing: Robert, a British bomber pilot who is shot down near Dresden. He is wounded by a furious German mob for simply being a bomber pilot (the mob uses the attacks on Hamburg in July 1943 as a justification for the lynching). Robert has to hide in the hospital's cellar, where Anna finds and helps him without knowing who he is. They fall in love, and even when Anna learns that he is a British pilot, she is able to love him in spite of it. It is striking that except for Robert there are hardly any sympathetic male figures among the main characters. Apart from Simon, the few other German male characters of relevance are either Nazis or corrupt, and the plot is focused on Anna.

This gender stance is even more striking in *Hiroshima*. In this drama, the plot concentrates on three sisters: Shinobu, the eldest, runs the family inn; Nobuko, the middle sister, is a substitute teacher at a primary school; and the youngest, Maki, is still a pupil herself. The story is told through the eyes of their younger brother, Toshiaki, who then is in his final year at middle school and about to join the army. They have lost their parents and Shinobu has become the family breadwinner.

Nobuko is outspoken and likes to go against the current. In one scene she takes her pupils to the seaside because she wants to give them a day off from their dismal work of tearing down houses to create firebreaks. She is arrested, but freed thanks to Shinobu, who uses her connections to one of the officers in the garrison, a regular visitor at the inn. Nobuko is in love with a young employee in the Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall.¹⁷ He has a severe limp and is unable to join the army. In the end, they get married a day before the bomb falls.

Maki starts an unlikely friendship with Mika, a young Korean girl who works at the same factory.¹⁸ Both dream of becoming ballerinas one day, but their dreams are shattered by Mika's brutal treatment. She is constantly bullied and beaten up simply because she is Korean. Maki tries to help her, but gets into trouble for that herself – and only Shinobu and her connections prevent worse.

Shinobu, as it turns out, has by no means always been strong. She feels guilt over her mother's death, which she thinks she caused. Consequently, she considers it her duty to stay at the inn and take care of it in her mother's place. For that, she even denies herself love.

Unlike *Dresden*, which tries to show the main characters in various shades of gray rather than just "innocent civilians", *Hiroshima* is quite clear in its message, as the main cast only consists of woman, children and disabled men. Except for the occasional red glimmer in the sky when other cities are firebombed, and the frequent talk about the war being over soon, the war is not present and the drama thus creates the feeling that Hiroshima is an island of peace, far away from the war.

However, when looked at more closely, *Dresden* reveals a quite similar picture. Even though its main characters start out as a mix of "innocent civilians" and "ruthless Nazis", in the end, those actually caught in the firestorm are all women, the elderly, and children. Anna lives through it with Robert and Alexander, but the two men are more concerned with their mutual hatred than with what is actually going on around them. Therefore, as the camera takes mostly Anna's point of view, we encounter a woman with a pram on fire, a man with a burning wooden leg, an elderly man having collapsed, and countless women trying to find their way through the flames.

Even in the cellars, where the three eventually take refuge, there are only old people and young women with their children. So, even though at the outset, *Dresden* seems to operate with very different mechanisms and tries to make its representation as balanced as possible, in the end, the victims are just "innocent civilians" and, contrary to the words of scriptwriter Stephan Kolditz, *Dresden* does appear as an innocent city. Not a single Nazi is shown in his or her struggle for survival, even Anna's sister is entirely left out, and we just learn that she survives.¹⁹ In that way, both dramas contribute substantially to the myth that the respective cities were defenseless, "innocent", and strategically irrelevant.

5. The British and American perspectives

What about the "perpetrators"? Do they appear at all and are their motives being presented? In *Dresden*, the storylines set at Morton Hall, one of the bases from which the attacks were flown, and in Bomber Command seem to develop in parallel to the one set in *Dresden*. Critical opinions are frequently uttered, not just concerning the bombing of *Dresden*, but about the harshness of the attacks on all of Germany. However, as the strategy zooms in on *Dresden*, voices protesting that

it was such a beautiful city and doubting whether it truly needed to be bombed become louder.

In addition, the alleged insignificance of Dresden is highlighted when, during the briefing, the pilots have hardly even heard of it, let alone have any idea of where to find it on a map – all they can say about Dresden is that “porcelain” is produced there. From the moment Dresden is selected as a target, debates about its strategic importance as a major communications center for the Eastern front (and that the Soviets had “asked” for Dresden to be bombed to aide them in their advance) begin to fade into the background,²⁰ thus further emphasizing the “insignificance” of Dresden. Every single officer questions the bombing, and when a crew member of a plane is looking down at the inferno during the attack, arguing that those “pigs” deserved to burn, he is silenced by the pilot. In the end, apart from Winston Churchill and Arthur Harris, the Head of Bomber Command, no one seems to have wanted the attack. While this may be intended to present the bombing as located in a discussion about its relevance, it does turn Churchill and Harris into those to blame, because they remain the only ones not having visible qualms. Only Stalin’s alleged “asking” for the bombing shows them as trapped in a war apparatus. Thus, by carefully assigning blame to no one in particular, the drama seems to try to work for reconciliation instead of letting the British shoulder all the responsibility. In a way, however, this unwillingness underlines the stance that Dresden was an “innocent” city.

It is in this respect that the German and British versions differ decisively. Most of the scenes that were edited out in the British version are set in Bomber Command. Whether the reason for this is because too apologetic behavior may be upsetting for British audiences, or whether the reason is purely technical – to condense a two-part drama into one – is an open question. Ironically, in the British version, the bombing seems much more “arbitrary” than in the German, resulting in villainizing the British to a much greater extent.

In the German version, the British are represented as being victims of their superiors in having to obey orders that they do not want to execute. In this context, the character of Robert is of utmost importance. When he meets Anna, it is clear to him that Germany has brought all this upon itself. Anna, however, thinks that women and children should not be chosen as targets, but when she asks him what it is like to kill civilians, he merely replies that she should ask the Luftwaffe. For him, Germany started the war and the bombing of civilians, and Britain is merely retaliating. It is important, though, that not a single German character actually speaks of Germany as having started the war. However, after the attack, Robert rushes up to the cupola of

the Church of Our Lady and looks down on Dresden. His shocked face is symbolic of all the critics of the attack.

In *Hiroshima*, no American characters appear and no American motivations for the attack are presented, let alone the discussion that preceded the order by Truman. The events on the American side are simply shown by using documentary footage with characters in red superimposed on the images explaining what is happening. *Hiroshima* mixes fact and fiction, creating a different impression of authenticity than *Dresden*. Whereas in *Dresden* the enemy has a human face, troubled by the same conflicts as the people in Germany, in *Hiroshima*, the enemy is faceless, technical, and overwhelming at the same time. This results in the feeling that the war was not really fought by humans on the American side. The bomb will simply fall on Hiroshima and end the lives of the characters. Therefore, one could argue that the drama shows the event as if “the bomb just dropped” without any relation to the war; it remains a senseless, “inhuman” act. The question of war responsibility is not raised at all, nor are critical voices among the Americans presented. While it may be difficult for producers to enter the political realm and present the reasons for the bombing – which might lead to the taking of a political position – it nonetheless singles out Hiroshima as one event in the war for which neither reasons nor motivations are explained. Reconciliation between Japan and America quite clearly is not the message.

6. Visual and narrative techniques

Getting away from the content level and looking at more technical matters, there are similarities despite the differences in plot. First and foremost, both dramas use documentary footage to create an impression of authenticity. In *Dresden*, there is colored footage of the British pilots that is sometimes cross-faded into obviously acted scenes, therefore making it impossible to distinguish between fiction and reality. However, when it comes to documentary footage for the city of Dresden, mostly monochrome material is used, evoking the feeling that Dresden existed in an even more distant past, making us look somewhat nostalgically at a “lost cityscape” not preserved in color.

In *Hiroshima*, the documentary footage is used differently. Although there are no shots of wartime Hiroshima, it is the “actual events” that unfold on the American side that are introduced via monochrome scenes. The monochrome images evoke a sense of distance, while the explanations are superimposed in blood-red, all foreshadowing disaster. Here, the lack of color contrasts sharply with the bright colors of Hiroshima in summer. While Dresden is a rather bleak place, where

people are hardly dressed in any color at all, Hiroshima is a light and happy place, which further underlines the notion that the bomb destroyed an innocent city full of life.

Both dramas feature an authoritative voice telling the audience what the message of the drama is, and both endings carry the viewer back into the present day. It is from the viewpoint of a present-day audience that the message is conveyed, not as a story out of the war set in the war, but as a modern day representation of things past. The story of *Hiroshima* is told by Toshiaki, the younger brother of the three sisters, who, in the present, seems to be a volunteer guiding pupils through the Peace Park and gets upset by the children bored with his tales. He then deliberately strays from the facts to the tale of his family. The children represent the younger generation of Japan, a generation that is no longer perceived as “caring” about Japan’s wartime past, and by giving the tale a personal touch, Toshiaki aims to engage them in the memory of Hiroshima to keep it alive. In the end, Toshiaki will say that atomic weapons should never be used again. Once more, this singles out Hiroshima as an event and does not relate it to the war, let alone the role of the Japanese in it.

In *Dresden*, the authoritative voice is that of Anna who, like a shift between Méliès and Lumière in mid-shot, changes to the voice of the actress Felicitas Woll, who plays the character of Anna. Anna’s narrative about what happened after the bombing and the end of the war, including Robert’s death, is replaced by Woll’s actual self on the screen as she witnesses the re-opening of the Church of Our Lady. She tells us that the bombing of Dresden had stirred something in all the people and that those who only ever looked back would not see anything but their own shadow. Into this are edited snippets of the speech for the re-opening by Horst Köhler, then German Federal President. Although he says that the Church is a symbol of reconciliation, no mention is made of the British contribution to the reconstruction – although he did thank various British initiatives in his speech (Köhler 2005) – and it simply seems as if Dresden (and Germany) had achieved it all by itself. Köhler’s final message – and that of the drama – is “*Friede sei mit Euch!*” (‘Peace be with you!’), repeated in several languages, including Hebrew and English.

Thus, it could be argued that, although *Dresden* might have ventured to present a balanced picture by looking at both sides with the overall message of “peace”, the final minutes make the drama more ambivalent. By not granting Robert and Anna a future together and by not mentioning the British contribution, in the end there seem to be more differences than similarities between Britain and Germany. It remains first and foremost Germany that has come to terms with its wartime

past without any assistance from outside. The re-opening of the Church of Our Lady even seems to symbolically end Germany's postwar period.

7. Conclusion

Why compare two dramas about two events so very different? *Dresden* and *Hiroshima* do not share a great deal on the content level, but both single out one particular event in the Second World War to present it from the viewpoint of the victims. Neither drama locates the event in the wider context of the war and neither requires knowledge that the respective audiences are unlikely to possess, therefore making the dramas problematic in their reception due to the lack of explanation and integration into the wider historical context.

It has to be acknowledged, however, that in both countries the debate as to whether it is legitimate to present Japan and Germany as victims of a war that they started has yet to die out, and therefore the producers have to tread carefully. In addition, *Dresden* sparked off a boom of TV productions relating to the war, most of which presented Germans as victims.²¹ Ironically, though – as the historian Classen (2008) has pointed out – this increased representation may have resulted in audiences knowing less about the war and the Nazi period because events are singled out and presented without proper contextualization.

The same can be said about Japan. Hiroshima is often remembered without the context of the war (Buruma 1995). However, something seems to have changed. The Korean character of Mika is some recognition of the Korean victims of the bomb that have been excluded from Japanese collective memory for a long time. The depiction of her cruel treatment is a subtle acknowledgement of discrimination against Koreans, a development that would have been unthinkable in productions prior to the Korea boom in Japan.²² Furthermore, another factor that could have engendered this representation is that the “collapse of the Cold War paradigm has helped Japan to grow aware of its aggression in Asia”, as Igarashi (2000: 204) claims.

Therefore, it can be argued that, rather than presenting purely historical facts, both productions do represent debates in their respective countries. Again, it is important that in both dramas, the countries that started the war assume the perspective of victim rather than perpetrator. Furthermore, Germany is often perceived to have accepted responsibility for its wartime crimes much more readily than Japan, which seemingly regards itself as victim of the war. However, this view of both countries is over-simplified and popular television presents differ-

ent views on the war. Consequently, *Dresden*, despite its well-meaning message of peace and reconciliation, comes across as a neo-conservative romance in disguise, showing the Germans as victims of the British attacks with little mentioning of war responsibility. And although *Hiroshima* is completely in line with the discourse of victimization in which the bombing of Hiroshima is normally remembered and war responsibility is not addressed at all, it makes a step forward in acknowledging Korean presence in Hiroshima and that discrimination and bullying existed.

In this regard, *Hiroshima* does not stand alone. In 2007, Fuji TV made a TV version of Nakazawa Keiji's (1994) manga *Hadashi no Gen* – and here, too, a Korean character appears (Masumoto and Ogura 2007).²³ In the same year, Nihon TV produced a re-make of the story of Katō Tetsutarō, a B/C class war criminal who, in one of his books, wrote that he wanted to be a shellfish if reborn because he then would not have to worry about the war (Satō et al. 2007).²⁴ But what is different in this drama is that it actually portrays the arbitrary shooting of Chinese civilians by Japanese soldiers. The same can be seen in the 2007 production *Ri Kōran* (Hashimoto et al. 2007), a biopic of the famous singer/actress who posed as a Chinese during the war in spite of being Japanese.

Although singled out in this paper, both dramas are representative of medial trends in their home countries. Both represent to a large extent the myths that Dresden and Hiroshima were innocent cities, but leave out the question of war responsibility, thereby helping to perpetuate existing myths or even create new ones. While in the German example we seem to see the results of the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s in acknowledging German suffering alongside that of its victims, in the Japanese example, it seems as if the role of the United States as focal point for remembering the war is beginning to weaken, and more recognition is given to Japan's neighboring countries. Japan and Germany thus seem to have contrasting trends, but they seem to be finding common ground in showing a little bit of everything. Crucially, however, in both countries, the question of war responsibility seems to lose relevance where events that could be considered cataclysmic are concerned, and victimization becomes more important. In that sense, new myths are being created on the back of old ones. *Dresden* and *Hiroshima* were produced with hindsight, located in the postwar debates on the events, but they remain contemporary representations of things past, ideologically laden, and maybe even revolutionary or reactionary. Yet they seem to preserve myths rather than memories of a not-so-distant past.

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Notes

1. Memory may be deliberately altered, particularly when we relay our memory to others, as we may highlight or denigrate our own role in it. But delving more deeply into a psychological discussion on human memory is certainly beyond the scope of this paper.
2. The definitions are not as clear-cut as they could be. For further details on the genre definitions and the discussion, see Kilborn and Izod (1997) and Creeber (2001).
3. The drama to be analyzed ends with the morning after the firestorm, so the American attacks are irrelevant in the context of this paper.
4. A historians' commission to confirm the number of deaths was employed by the city of Dresden in 2004. Until then it had been unclear as to how many people were actually killed. Ultra right-wing groups had even claimed up to a million, using this number to make the bombing of Dresden a "war crime". For further details, see Müller et al. (2010) and Neutzner et al. (2010).
5. The Royal Air Force (RAF) official said that the destruction of the city had been almost complete. Usually, RAF officials would have said that particular industrial or military targets had been destroyed (Cox 2006).
6. In the Third Reich (1933–1945), Germany was divided into *Gaue* (Nazi party districts used as administrative areas). Each *Gau* was controlled by a *Gauleiter* 'district leader', a person of high rank in the Nazi party hierarchy and close to Hitler. The *Gauleiter* had only Hitler to report to and was usually chosen because he was a faithful disciple who would ensure all orders from Berlin were executed (see, e.g., Wegehaupt 2009).
7. On the *Historikerstreit*, see, for example, Buruma (1995), Fischer and Lorenz (2007), Classen (2008), and Kim (2009).
8. Information given in the *Making Of* on the DVD.
9. The data exclude the 2006 World Cup. *Dresden* was beaten only by domestic and European football, Formula 1 racing, and a popular TV show that consistently ranks highly, therefore making *Dresden* the most successful drama of the year (ZDF Jahrbuch 2006).
10. The drama was broadcast by Channel 4 at least twice, in 2008 and 2009. The drama is also available on DVD.
11. On atomic bomb literature, see, for example, Treat (1995).
12. The *Nada sōsō purojekuto* was a series of dramas aired on TBS in summer 2005 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of TBS. This drama is merely a special edition within this series. *Nada sōsō* is a phrase in Okinawan, meaning 'great tears are spilling', and an allusion to an enormously successful song that serves as the theme song for the series. The title of the drama thus translates literally as '50th Broadcasting Anniversary of TBS. Special edition of the "Great Tears" project. Hiroshima, 6 August 1945'.
13. TBS itself does not list the market share anymore, nor does Video Research, the company that raises the data in Japan. However, the company that released the

- DVD version, along with many sites created by fans, gives the number of 19.1%. It can thus be assumed that the information is correct (Vap@web 2011).
14. For a discussion of *Dresden*, see also Suchsland (2006).
 15. In one scene in *Dresden*, episode 1, Simon walks along the street and several children surround him, singing a derisive rhyme.
 16. His character is apparently modeled after the university professor Victor Klemperer, whose diaries of his time as a German of Jewish faith in Dresden during Hitler's reign have been published and translated into various languages (Taylor 2004; Crang 2006).
 17. The *Genbaku Dōmu* ('Atomic bomb dome') used to be the *Hiroshima-ken Sangyō Shōreikan*, the Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall.
 18. Both girls have been drafted to work in a factory and are not attending school.
 19. Only one allusion that high-ranking Nazis were probably surviving better than the rest is found when Anna's sister, desperate for a place in a shelter, cries out that she is the private secretary of the *Gauleiter*, and a woman merely replies that she should join him in his private shelter then.
 20. Here, the drama seems to convey another popular myth, namely that Stalin had "asked" for the attack. It is, however, not clear whether this truly was the case, since the same cold-war propaganda that helped forge the myth of the "innocent city" also shifted the blame between the former allies. It has yet to be confirmed whether there had been a direct request, or a more indirect one, or whether the bombing had been due to the British need to show that they were not to be overtaken by the Soviet Union (Overy 2006).
 21. See in particular the 2007 ARD drama *Die Flucht*, 'The Escape' (Schuster and Hofmann 2007) and the 2008 ZDF drama *Die Gustloff*, 'The Gustloff' (Sauer 2008). Both deal with the lives of refugees/expellees who are escaping from (or are being expelled by) the advancing Soviet Army in 1945.
 22. The Korea boom since 2004 seems to have led to a wider acceptance of Korean characters on Japanese television. See, for example, Gössmann and Kirsch (forthcoming) as well as Iwabuchi and Huat (2008).
 23. The character also appears in the original manga. Considering that the drama and the manga differ decisively, as the drama is much shorter, it is significant that the Korean has not been edited out.
 24. Before the broadcasting of *Hiroshima*, Katō Tetsutarō's memoirs had been the subject of two television dramas, both by the title *Watashi wa kai ni naritai*, 'I Want to be a Shellfish' and produced by TBS in 1958 and 1994 (Hashimoto 1958; Asai 1994), as well as a movie of the same title produced by Tōhō in 1959 (Fujimoto and Miwa 1959). One further drama, *Shinjitsu no shuki. BC-kyū senpan Katō Tetsutarō. Watashi wa kai ni naritai*, 'A True Memoir. The B/C Class War Criminal Katō Tetsutarō. I Want to be a Shellfish' (Satō et al. 2007), was aired by Nihon TV in 2007, shortly before the story was turned into yet another movie by Geneon Universal in 2008 (Setoguchi 2008).

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