

“ . . . And my heart screams”

Children and the War of Emotions

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In 1937, an eleven-year-old girl named Omiya Setsuko wrote a poem for her free-writing class entitled, “Older Brother Is Strong and Healthy, Isn’t He?”

Mother who until now had diligently affixed sliding doors suddenly
looks at the newspaper.

“What is it, mother?”

In the newspaper is a photograph of IJA soldiers shouting, “Long
live His Majesty!”

Mother’s eyes brim with tears.

Mother remains silent while lighting a candle at the shrine.

I too recall older brother on the battlefield and my heart screams
(Tomonaga, Tanaka, and Ienaga 1993: 339).

In previous histories, the culture of the Asia-Pacific War has been primarily discussed in terms of propaganda and indoctrination, major forces “steering children’s minds toward militarism,” effective tools “in every aspect of war bond drives,” and “important in morale boosting” (Earhart 2008: 186–91; Kushner 2007, 2009; Dower 1987, 2010; Cave 2016). Children were encouraged to role-play as soldiers, young teenagers were drafted to work in munitions factories, and children of all ages were taught that death in military service was honorable and probable (Manabe 2013: 105). Indeed, after World War I, the leaders of most modern and modernizing nation-states ascribed to the promotional tactic of symbolically fusing childhood and war—a tactic most succinctly conceived by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*: “The tactical objective of the fight was the winning over of the child, and it was to the child that the first rallying cry was addressed: “German youth,

do not forget that you are German,” and “Remember, little girl, that one day you must be a German mother.” Those who know something of the juvenile spirit can understand how youth will always lend a glad ear to such a rallying cry” (Hitler (2010 [1925]: 19).

Like their German counterparts, Japanese propaganda professionals, educators, writers, artists, and publishers who engaged in familiarizing and inducing children to see themselves as either soldiers or “wombs of the empire” (Shigematsu 2012: ix) knew to aim for a balance between discipline and fun, rules and play. In the following analysis of Japanese children’s roles in wartime culture, I propose that children were implicated in a much more complex and ambiguous emotional regime than the language of suppression and control, propaganda and indoctrination suggests. In this essay I will describe how children’s early socialization into a military-centric culture went hand in hand with campaigns for both the suppression and incitement of emotion on the part of adults and children alike. The political, educational, and cultural production elites did not just attempt to control and manage children’s emotions—they also saw children as mediators of and chief manipulators of adult emotions. As such, the emotions evoked in representations of children depicted in wartime child publications could not be farther from the raw pain that Setsuko expressed in her poem.

But the ideological dynamics of the Asia-Pacific War went far beyond the suppression of children’s individual emotions about the war and its consequences. Yes, wartime publications, which narrated for child readers both the war and children’s roles in it, worked to suppress certain emotions in both children and adults; but they also forcefully incited and nurtured other, equally powerful sentiments: gratitude, friendship, pity, empathy, and pride. The key media that conveyed and incited these feelings in children were children’s books and magazines, which also romanticized children, evoked pity and sympathy, and manipulated the context and consequences of war—especially for the adults who read and explained those texts and images to preliterate or early-reader children. Because though the politico-sentimental lessons were often, in essence, directed explicitly to the Japanese *child* readers, books and magazines were nonetheless delivered and read to children through the filter of *adults*, particularly parents. Not surprisingly, publishers capitalized on this dual readership in the course of crafting and packaging their messages. In this chapter, I examine the various ways children—and the sentiments that have been attributed to them—were manipulated in order to shape the emotions of both children and adults.

What I call “emotional capital”—akin to Pierre Bourdieu’s economic, cultural, and social capital—constituted a prime “use value” (Hutnyk 2004) of children. Bourdieu proposed that capital can take on three guises: namely as “economic capital,” which is immediately and directly convertible into money and often institutionalized as property rights; “cultural capital,” which can be convertible into economic capital and institutionalized as educational qualifications; and “social

capital,” which comprises social obligations, can be convertible into economic capital, and can be institutionalized, as in a title of nobility. I propose a fourth such category: “emotional capital.” In this discussion, I consider the “emotional capital” of children as comprising the emotions attributed to children as well as the emotions adults are expected to have in response to both children and representations of children. (These representations could include pictures of children and objects associated with children and childhood sensibilities.) In such instances, children’s “emotional capital” signifies two things: the assumption that children were politically innocent, morally pure, and endowed with authentic feelings; and the expectation that adults would respond to the sight of children as vulnerable and innocent creatures with a specific, predictable set of emotions. (In principle, “emotional capital” could also be applicable to emotions tying an adult to another, but that exceeds the scope of this discussion.)

Along these lines, anthropologist Liisa Malkki (2010) observed, in the context of humanitarian engagements at the margins of war, that “children occupy a key place in dominant imaginations of the human” and of the “world community.” She finds that today’s humanitarianism utilizes “special, observably standardized, representational uses of children” in five registers that have “affective and ritual efficacy.” These include children as embodiments of basic human goodness and symbols of world harmony, children as sufferers, children as seers of truth, children as ambassadors of peace, and children as the embodiment of the future (Malkki 2010: 60). These registers function in contemporary humanitarian work under the rubric of the “infantilization of peace.” Under this rubric, the word “peace” cannot be uttered without the representational presence of a child. And, precisely because of the mediating role of the child, “peace” is no longer a serious option—the concept of peace is made infantile, a utopian ideal that has no place in modern society. Viewed through the lens of “emotional capital,” the representational uses of children that Malkki identifies as essential to the iconography of humanitarianism at the beginning of the twenty-first century share a lot of similarities with the iconography of the child culture of war at the beginning of the twentieth (for another example of a child’s role in the iconography of humanitarianism, see chapter 13).

In around 1900, when Japan waged war first against China (1894–1895) and then against Russia (1904–1905), children’s relationship with war was one of mere casualties. But by the early 1930s, when the Japanese took control of Manchuria, children (and infancy) had become utilized as the figures that make war appear inevitable, natural, and intrinsically human. These articulations are particularly prominent in writings, drawings, and photographs in children’s books and magazines, which juxtapose and link children with soldiers in order to create and perpetuate this message. In these publications, children are employed to portray the humanity, the inherent necessity, and the inevitability of war. A range of pictures and stories of children with soldiers worked to transmute war into an aesthetic and rhetoric: not of destruction but rescue, not of battle but peace, not of chaos but

comforting order. These representations aimed at steering the emotions of children and adults by monitoring, molding, training, and honing them—even as they suppressed emotions by prohibiting their expression. Images and rhetoric were at once repressive and productive, restrictive and liberating. More than any other configuration, representations of children interacting with soldiers blended the two normatively distinct worlds of childhood and war. They have thus been open to an infinite number of political maneuvers and legitimating efforts across periods of war and, as we shall see, times of peace. In fact, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, visual and narrative articulations about the precise relationship between childhood and war proliferated. Children were increasingly represented as vulnerable and in touch with their feelings, and childhood was envisioned as a time of molding and disciplining that moved children away from a state of nature and innocence. Children were therefore capable of lending moral authority to war. War, on the other hand, was rendered as “uncivilized,” especially when conducted by other nation states, and yet inevitable and inherent to human nature.

VULNERABILITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN CHILDHOOD

Before turning to the complex field of children and emotional capital, let us first examine the changing constructions of conceptions of childhood. From early on in the Meiji era, views of the child and childhood were central to public debates on a range of issues. The new Meiji government, the education establishment, the military, and the fledgling modern print media all sought to disassociate the samurai class from its image as warmongers and to link children to the welfare and power of the nation. These efforts manifested themselves in earnest in 1872, when the Meiji government implemented two laws that had revolutionary, modernizing, and democratizing effects. One was the universal and mandatory Conscription Act. This act subjected all twenty-year-old males to a conscription exam, followed by the potential of military service; at the same time, widespread dismissive references were made about the samurai class as men who, according to some commentators, “led an easy life, were arrogant and shameless, and murdered innocent people with impunity” (Lone 2010: 15). The second law was the Fundamental Code of Education, which mandated elementary education for both boys and girls. The Conscription Act established new bounds for male maturity (the age of twenty as the age of eligibility for military service) and rewrote what exactly such male adulthood signified (in principle at least, the will of all able-bodied males to kill and die in the name of the emperor).

Likewise, the Fundamental Code of Education together with a modern education system in the making introduced new names, parameters, distinctions, and to some extent identities among the young, primarily by level of schooling. The Education Law of 1879, which replaced the Fundamental Code of Education classified

all “children of elementary school age” as *jidō*; “student” (*seitō*) was universally applied to children between elementary school and university. The Kindergarten Ordinance of 1927 distinguished kindergarteners as *yōji*; later, the post-Asia-Pacific War education laws distinguished between kindergarteners (*yōji*), elementary school children (*jidō*), middle school and high school children (*seitō*), and university students (*gakusei*) (Moriyama and Nakae 2002: 18–21). As the universal school system developed, age gradually replaced class status as a significant social marker during childhood. In rural areas, it should be noted, children and youth groups had long been considered more important communities than were schools, and they remained so for a time—but eventually new identities gradually replaced the older ones there as well. Eventually, terms such as the “child that was young enough to still nurse” (*chigo*), the child that had “messy hair and laughed a lot” (*warawa*), and a multitude of other older expressions that signified children of one kind and age or another disappeared from use (Moriyama and Nakae 2002: 8–19; see also Kinski 2015; for more on age-specific naming practices, see chapter 1).

Such stratification of childhood prompted some of the earliest debates about children’s rights. In the fall of 1886, Ueki Emori (1857–1892), a prominent member of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement, asserted that individuals, not families, should be seen as the basic units of a society; further, he declared that children should also be considered individuals, not simply entities that benefit their parents (Sotozaki 1956). Of course, many “progressive” ideas can take some time to take hold, and, indeed, family rights continued to be prioritized over individual rights for several decades thereafter. All the same, this radically modern conception of childhood gradually gained acceptance, ultimately becoming codified in a long-term process in which political, legal, and cultural institutions came to declare children, young children in particular, as vulnerable, innocent, and in need of adult influence—the latter regarding protection and care as well as discipline and control. From the Fundamental Code of Education to the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 and beyond, modern education legislation conceptualized children as yet-to-be-formed individuals who would one day realize adult goals for the nation (Okano and Motonori 1999: 15–19; Ienaga and Inagaki 1994: 79).

In the process of childhood coming to be recognized as a time separate from adulthood, the concept of just what childhood was varied a great deal. As a construct, “childhood” could encompass only a few years or it could be extensive, all depending on conceptions of maturity, expectations of independence, and legal measures and practices related to education, welfare, labor, and criminality. But, despite such variations, children generally were viewed not just as part of the nation but also as a prototype of the people—people who should be educated, conquered, and seduced, in order to bring them from a place of weakness to one of strength, all in service to nation and empire.

Children were also seen as embodying a number of binaries: as both loveable and horrible, vulnerable and demonic, valuable and burdensome. Policy makers,

military strategists, educators, social welfare engineers, and ordinary men and women alike believed that, though children were “worthy” of rights, they had little agency; in addition, though these parties considered children to be vulnerable, they were also seen as a potential threat to social order. Essentially, notions of childhood abounded; the only factor they shared was the concept of childhood as being distinct from adulthood.

In addition to the Fundamental Code of Education and the Conscription Act, other legislation also institutionalized the separation of childhood from adulthood, including the Foundling Law of 1871, as well as subsequent legislation designed to ensure basic livelihood to the most unfortunate children (Namaye 1919). In 1874, for example, poverty legislation prescribed support for children younger than thirteen. At the time, 10 percent of children between the ages of eleven and fourteen were employed, as were about 90 percent of children fifteen and older (Fujino 2009: 889–90, Ambaras 2006: 41). A decades-long debate about children’s labor and exploitation, and especially the exploitation of girls, resulted in a 1916 law prohibiting children under the age of thirteen from working more than twelve hours a day in a seven-day week.

The effects of such child labor legislation were widespread. For one, there was a phenomenal increase in school attendance rates; I return to this topic below. In addition, medical practitioners established a separate field of pediatrics, whose representatives aggressively promoted the notion that childhood ought to be a realm separate from adulthood. They insisted that children were particularly vulnerable and worthy of study, special care, and protection—concepts that were framed primarily in terms of social order and control, and only secondarily in terms of scientific and sociopolitical concerns.

In 1909, prominent pediatrician Takashima Heisaburō claimed that only “in countries where civilization has not progressed, ignorant people abuse children, deny them education, and view them as their personal possession. In civilized countries, child protection activities are flourishing” (Ambaras 2006: 86–87). Similar ideas were fashionable in modern and modernizing nation-states around the world and were often attributed to the Swedish feminist Ellen Key, who claimed the new century to be the “century of the child”; indeed, such was the title of the 1909 English translation of her 1900 publication *Barnets århundrade*. Alerted to these new concerns about childhood, anxious parents in Japan and elsewhere increasingly turned to pediatric experts for advice.

As these experts’ work gained traction, growing numbers of people outside the academy began to think of the infant years as educationally productive (Koresawa 2009: 6–8). This conversation spread across several intellectual and academic fields, infiltrating popular science journals and parents’ self-help guides and finding its way into households far beyond the middle class. Pedagogues, physicians, politicians, and others concerned with the future of the Japanese empire began to promote programs to improve children’s physical exercise and cleanliness in

schools. They sought to balance scholastic training—which had come to dominate school education—with physical modes of training. In addition, welfare institutions for children were developed, and child protection laws were implemented (Frühstück 2003).

After several instances of severe child abuse scandalized the nation—resulting in popular calls for legislation to protect “innocent children from crimes”—the legislature enacted the Child Abuse Prevention Act in 1933 (Mishima 2005: 31–36). This law was yet another piece of legislation that codified children’s vulnerability, innocence, and need of protection—sometimes even from their own parents.

At the same time, women were naturalized as children’s primary caretakers and educators of children in the home; over time, women became educators in grade schools as well. The twentieth century ushered in cultural expectations regarding the proper way for parents—especially mothers—to love their children. As a result, maternal love became obligatory and was increasingly declared natural, instinctual, and normative. In turn, public intellectuals interested in creating a “child-centered society” that would produce healthy, happy, and well-loved children capable of becoming “ideal students” targeted their advice toward mothers (Jones 2010).

Mostly male experts advised mothers on nutrition, home medical remedies for minor ailments, children’s reading and educational materials, and the benefits of proper play (Frühstück 2003: 50–52). They encouraged mothers to “carefully monitor and channel their children’s potentially evil instincts and turbulent passions until they evolved into mature, well-adjusted people” (Ambaras 2006: 95). Guidebooks for home use, such as *The Health Reader for Daughters, Wives, and Mothers* (Musume to tsuma to haha no eisei dokuhon), and *Methods of Pregnancy, Safe Birth, and Child Rearing* (Ninshin to ansan to ikujihō), described how good mothers guided their offspring toward adulthood, leaving nothing to chance—least of all the training of children’s emotions.¹

RESCUING THE CHILD AT WAR

Most woodblock prints featuring battles from the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars depicted dramatic militaristic tableaux: disciplined soldiers looking down from above; officers striking dramatic poses, swords held high; troops advancing, military flags fluttering, foes retreating (Dower 2008: 8–9). Such scenes do not cry out to have the image of a child added within their frames. And yet, beginning in 1894, representations of children occasionally entered visual and narrative representations of Japan’s modern wars, through a number of different channels. In some instances, members of the Imperial Japanese Army are depicted “clutching a Chinese child found abandoned in the battlefield.” In such images, the child takes the place of the inanimate object of symbolic value: the flag or the sword the charging officer would have otherwise held aloft. But the emphasis is

always on the courageously charging man, not the presumably frightened child. The child's face is invisible, its emotional state impalpable. After all, these prints were designed as propagandistic "war reportage"; as such they depicted what artists envisaged as beautiful and heroic in modern war (Dower 2008: 4, 15). Accordingly, children appear in soldiers' arms in order to enhance the hero's righteous cause, not his humanity.

In addition to such products of the era's emerging propaganda machine, the Sino-Japanese War and its successor, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), also saw a boom in portrait photography of men in uniform, sometimes with family members, including children, personalizing the generic warrior. During that same period, children also became subjects of hobby photography in their own right, often featured singly or with other children. In these portraits, national affairs had no place; it was the stages of childhood that inspired typical amateur photographer fathers, who captured such rituals as the "first eating" (*okuizome*), first-hundred-days celebrations, and Shichi-Go-San, the annual November festival for three- and seven-year-old girls and three- and five-year-old boys. They collected images of these important days in their children's lives in family albums. Then, beginning in the early 1930s, alongside those younger-days photos were added photographs of boys playing soldier in remnants of uniforms, holding toy rifles or bayonets, stern-faced, at attention, or concentrated at an all-boys' "rifle practice."

This pattern was heightened when photo magazines encouraged hobby and professional photographers to submit commemorative family photographs and portraits to photography competitions. Winning photographs were printed in the publications, their exposure thus expanding to a wide audience. For these photographs, parents often dressed their children in military garb and posed them with toy weapons. The 15 June 1932 issue of the photo magazine *Tainichi Gurafu* printed an entire page of baby pictures sent in by readers. Central to the array is a photograph with the title "Children's Heaven" of a little boy in a tank-shaped stroller pushed by a girl of about five. The caption reads: "Baby in tank—he is going to Manchuria but the tank won't move. So his sister pushes from behind" (*Tainichi Gurafu* vol. 4, no. 6). Similarly, the elegant magazine *Home Life* (Hōmu raifu, October 1938) printed a shot by photographer Yamagami Entarō of a boy in underwear and a helmet waving a flag that read, "This is a soldier's home" (Tsuganezawa 2006: 152). The photograph was captioned "The Commander of Our House."

Adults were likely the primary consumers of this type of photography, but illustrations with similar motives and settings also adorned children's books and magazines, which proliferated as the print media market rapidly expanded. Within the pages of such publications could be found visual representations of soldiers with children, as well as of children embodying and playing soldiers. As print media progressed in the 1930s, these representations appeared in text as well as image. The products specifically manufactured for elementary-school-age children—and, presumably, their mothers—intentionally depicted war through children's eyes,

making the soldier appear not as a fierce warrior but as a playmate, substitute mother, savior of children, or big brother. To achieve a complementary emotional effect, roles of strength and vulnerability were also switched. In these, the soldier is featured as having a childlike need for care, indicating the interchangeability of children with soldiers. Each is reflected in the other, with the child serving as reminder of the past just as the soldier speaks to the future.

The production and publication of pictures and narratives representing children with military paraphernalia, play-acting war, or interacting with soldiers all served to exploit the feelings of tenderness associated with images of children. These representations tied notions of glory and heroism to warm sentiments of belonging to family, community, and nation. They evoked excitement about war as adventure, and constructed wartime experience as a means by which to accelerate entry into adulthood, bringing honor to the country via meaningful contributions of bona fide men rather than merely the make-believe play of boys.

By the early 1930s, textual and visual representations of children with soldiers featured regularly in military postcards and textbooks, commercial children's books, magazines, and newspapers. Unlike woodblock prints depicting soldiers as warriors, these images focused on children's sweetness and innocence. Magazines published stories about children's relationship to war, whether that took place in Japan, in the colonies, or behind the frontlines. These stories invented new ways to blend soldiers with children, war with play, and violence with care. On some occasions, the military invited children onto bases to comfort and entertain soldiers, to eat with them, and to bring them small gifts. Some of the visiting boys no doubt looked up to the soldiers around them, perhaps aspiring to someday proudly wear the boots of war. Some girls might have imagined themselves “do[ing] their part for the war effort” by becoming nurses or romancing soldiers, marrying them, and producing more soldiers; some others wished they had been born as boys and could go to battle themselves (Kameyama 1997 [1984]).

Many of these stories and pictures had one thing in common: they concealed the exact nature of the relationship between soldiers of one nation and the children of another, as well as the circumstances of their encounters. The use of little children as key messengers for adult readers became ever more commonplace in the wake of the beginning of a full-blown war with China. Less than three months after the Nanking massacre, the 2 March 1938 issue of the photo magazine *Asahi Graph* (Asahi guraifu) featured a series of photographs from the Chinese front. Next to many photographs of troops going about various activities—other than fighting—one photograph features a very young-looking Japanese soldier with two Chinese girls. The smaller girl sits on his lap. The older one stands right next to them and looks into the camera. The young man smiles. The caption states that upon the Japanese soldiers' arrival in the city, these “picture perfect, lovely bobbed-haired” girls cheerfully called out in Japanese, “Long live the Japanese Army” (16). The declared adorability of children is put to work in order to sideline, if not make

invisible, the extreme mass violence that the army—of which the young man is a member—had just perpetrated. For another example of how adorable children were used to conceal violence perpetuated by the army, see chapter 6.

The cover of that issue of *Asahi Graph* features three boys dressed in military uniforms and gear at the National Foundation Day Festival. Employing the child language of both war technology and folk and fairy tales, the accompanying headline reads, “Plane or anti-aircraft gun? The midget heroes of the National Foundation Festival” (*Asahi Gurafu*, 2 March 1938, vol. 30, no. 9: cover and p. 16). Again, the chubby faces and the boys’ clumsy attempts to look and strut like adult soldiers work to playfully undermine the deadly force of the military plane and anti-aircraft gun evoked in the caption text.

The sentiment and iconography of friendship with and gratitude toward Imperial Army soldiers was also widely commercialized in advertisements for a slew of products, especially foodstuffs, sweets, and tea. Ads for caramels told war stories concocted in a harmonious universe where the worlds of children and soldiers intersected through the exchange of a single, highly desirable piece of candy. A 1939 issue of the children’s magazine *Children’s Club* featured caramels by Meiji Seika, a confectionary company founded in 1916. Variations of the ad reappeared across a number of issues of the same magazine. One such ad depicts in the foreground an Imperial Army soldier giving a Meiji caramel to a Chinese child; in the background, a Japanese mother gives a Meiji caramel to her children. The text notes that, when the clock turned three, the Chinese child would receive a Meiji caramel from an IJA (Imperial Japanese Army) soldier just as Japanese children back home would (*Yōnen Kurabu*, vol. 14, no. 13, table of contents flap). In both scenes, the children happily accept the candy—and in that brief moment of transaction, the Japanese soldier in China slips into the role of the Japanese mother.

Candy advertisements had been couched in the terms of military conquest since the mid-1910s. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, a great many other products—from toothpaste to fountain pens—followed suit. In many advertisements, the soldier is stripped of his identity as combatant and instead adopts a familial role, particularly in encounters with Chinese and other colonized children. The children are represented interacting with IJA soldiers, sometimes even playing with them and marching along with them in a continuous process of slipping in and out of, imitating, even temporarily embodying the figure of the soldier. Especially for children younger than twelve or so, all things military were aestheticized, fictionalized, and familiarized in ways that focused not on the battle but on its aftermath. Whether as passive recipients of candy from soldiers or as active players in the pursuit of peace and nation building, children repeatedly appear as triggers of warm feelings.

Like many illustrated children’s books, the *Kōdansha Picture Book: Japan’s Army* introduced the military to beginning readers through “stories of soldiers and children behind the frontlines.” One of these one-page visual narratives shows

two members of the military police giving candy to Chinese children: “The Military Police play the role of police within the military. The picture is about the place where members of the Military Police divide up caramels and give them to Chinese children” (*Kōdansha no ehon: Nippon no rikugun*, October 1940, p. 41). Many such narratives represent children as the beneficiaries of Japanese soldiers’ friendliness and playfully protective spirit.

In some depictions, soldiers’ status vis-à-vis children is more ambivalent: they are depicted as the vulnerable ones, in need of care and attention. The book *Japan’s Children* (*Nippon no Kodomo* 1941) promoted children’s imitations of battles and encounters with soldiers in pictures spread out over several pages, all designed for the smallest, beginning readers. It also includes a scene, however, that had already appeared, ubiquitously, in many children’s books and magazines. The scene features a woman accompanying a group of four children—two boys and two girls—to a military hospital. One girl gives an injured soldier a bouquet of flowers; in accompanying text she says: “How are you, Honorable Soldier? We all came and brought you flowers.” One of the boys talks with a second injured patient, a smiling soldier propped up on his elbow in his hospital bed: “How is your wound, Honorable Soldier? Please accept one of my drawings” (*Nippon no Kodomo* 1941: 6). Neither the two soldiers nor the woman speak. All three adults simply smile at the children, who appear more intimidated than pleased by this response.

Similarly, *Kōdansha Picture Book: Japan’s Army* (1940: 75) has three elementary school boys chat with three injured soldiers while a Red Cross nurse stands by (figure 10). They learn where in China they fought and how they got injured. In turn, they ask the soldiers what subjects they had most liked at school.

So while products specifically manufactured for elementary-school-age children depicted war in way they imagined to be suitable for young children’s eyes, they frequently depicted Japanese soldiers with enemy children or Japanese children in easy-going conversations, mostly representing soldiers as children’s saviors and allies, and claiming a natural affinity and interchangeability between soldiers and children. Furthermore, children in stories, cartoons, advertisements, and personal photographs are often dressed and posed as soldiers; in turn, soldiers are depicted with childlike faces and bodies that blend in with the children around them—depictions that trivialize and flatten the soldiers’ varied experiences as well as the differentiated thoughts children had about soldiers and adults more generally (see chapter 7).

On 20 January 1941, Fröbel Hall, an organization devoted to children’s education and play, published an issue of its popular “Children’s Book” series with the title *Kinder Book: Getting Along with Neighbors* (*Kindā bukku: Otonari nakayoshi* 10, no. 13). On its cover are three figures: a Japanese teenage boy wears a school uniform in the colors of the Imperial Army and an upper armband with Japan’s national flag; he holds the hand of a small girl in Korean traditional dress, representing Japan’s colony; she in turn holds the hand of a slightly older boy in Chinese



FIGURE 10. Japanese children with injured members of the Imperial Army, 1940. From *Kōdansha no ehon: Nippon no rikugun—Jūgo dōwa heitaisan to kodomo* (Kōdansha picture book: Japan's Army—Home-front children's stories about soldiers and children), Dai Nippon Yūbenkai Kōdansha, 1940, p. 75.

dress, most likely representing Manchukuo. (Note that, in 1941, Manchukuo had been under Japanese control for almost a decade, since before either of the small children in the picture was born). Those two children, who might be about three and six years old, gaze sweetly at the Japanese youth. In turn, the Japanese boy “soldier”—soft-faced and young looking, almost like a child himself—gazes down at the children with the gentle smile of a loving older brother. Here, the connection that is visually established between child and boy soldier suppresses the would-be incompatibility between war and vulnerability, between the perpetration of acts of kindness and the horror of victimization.

Children's Book: Getting Along with Neighbors was just one of many publications promoting this message. Young readers were repeatedly reminded that, just as they might grow up to become soldiers, soldiers had once been children like them. Indeed, the depiction of children with soldiers also embodies soldiers' ties to their own, once innocent, childlike selves. These allusions seem designed to obscure the mass violence of war, and to assure young readers that brothers, fathers, and uncles fighting abroad were just as caring toward “other” children as they were toward their own.

These representations may have allowed soldiers to reconnect with their own (prewar, preadult) innocence. They also signaled to Japanese children that, though their brothers, fathers, and uncles were physically far away at war, they remained emotionally close through their caring interactions with enemy children. Providing children with a Robinson Crusoe-like idyllic image from the South Seas, Kawasaki Daiji's *Village Nursery School* (Mura no hoikusho 5–7; Kawasaki 1944) features IJA soldiers playing with brown-skinned children. The text explains that letters from children in Japan had just arrived, and the soldiers had cheerfully offered to read to them aloud.

One might be tempted to assume that the primary purpose of these representations was to satisfy individual soldiers' need for emotional redemption. Through touching children and embracing their childlike innocence, it would appear that soldiers could connect again to their own childhood. It is easy to imagine that, after battle, soldiers might turn to children—perhaps even to the children whose fathers they had just killed—“out of regret, relief that they had not destroyed everything, respect for life, or because they missed their own children” (Linhart 2010: 141–42). Though some soldiers indeed reported such sentiments, both during the war and later in memoirs, these representations were not simply unmediated depictions of soldiers' sentiments. After all, even during the severe wartime paper shortage, children's color books and magazine publications remained common in Japan, perhaps one of the strongest indications of their use value. Furthermore, postcards depicting these representations were given away or cheaply sold. In addition, veterans' memoirs, other stories from the frontlines (written by former IJA service members for a young Japanese audience), and a variety of other publications continuously reproduced such sentiments. These representations clearly had both

commercial and political value. They invested the military and war with familiarity and individuality—while also redeeming the soldiers and appeasing children on both sides of the war. Illustrators and authors of children's books and magazines, soldier memoirists, artists, and authors all mobilized children's vulnerability in order to reinvent soldiers as children's protectors, saviors, and playmates—whether behind the frontlines, in occupied territories, or back at home. Ultimately, soldiers' unlikely and fleeting friendships with the young were evoked to cleanse them from the violence they had committed and suffered—at least in the eyes of the young and adult consumers and readers of such stories and pictures.

These representations communicate as much through what they leave out as through what they depict. The children shown in these images are healthy, smiling, properly clothed; children suffering from hunger, trauma, or injury are left out, as are dead children. And though these representations show IJA soldiers interacting with both Japanese and colonized children, enemy (colonized) soldiers are removed from the vicinity and rendered invisible. Children in these images appear happy. They look friendly and grateful in the course of interacting with soldiers—or even in imitating them, temporarily embodying the figure of the soldier.

The oft-repeated paired configurations of child and soldier exploited the emotional capital of children—embedded in innocence, vulnerability, malleability, and cuteness—to shape affective responses to and emotional conventions regarding the military and war.

REINVENTING VULNERABILITY

Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution called for the dissolution of the IJA, which saw completion on 30 November 1945. At that point Japan officially and swiftly moved from the imperialist victory culture it had known for the first half of the twentieth century to the victim culture of the second half. Initially, the production of the victim culture drew primarily from both the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the resurrection of the child as a symbol of suffering and the need for peace. Many of the same writers, illustrators, and publishers who had previously worked to militarize children's worlds now made energetic pronouncements about how to transform children into proper pacifists—and back into “true children”—by providing children with the conditions to preserve their innate innocence, vulnerability, and natural inclination toward peace.

And yet, illustrators and photographers continued to produce depictions of soldiers with children, and these still were published in a range of venues. American and British soldiers clad in the uniforms of the Allied occupation of Japan were featured in photographs, print media, and children's publications, in arrangements strikingly similar to their wartime IJA opponents. Allied soldiers were depicted as cheerful and warm-hearted as they handed chocolate and chewing gum to Japanese children. The photographs suggested that these soldiers were keen on

befriending children everywhere. It is noteworthy that illustrations and photographs of Japanese children with American and British soldiers also served to paint over the dramatic demonization of westerners so recently widespread in Japanese wartime propaganda.

Publically posted as appeals to consider the Americans “everybody’s friends,” these representations addressed anxieties regarding Japan’s former enemies turned occupying armed forces. Here as before, children were enlisted as mediators. Such representations were utilized by 1946 textbooks for the first post-Asia Pacific War English-language course, titled *Come, Come, English for Everyone*—a title borrowed from the theme song of Hirakawa Tadaichi’s English conversation radio program. The simple everyday English phrases in the textbooks accompanied illustrations of a conversation between a Japanese boy in school uniform and a friendly American soldier. The context of the encounter of the boy with the soldier—Japan’s occupation by allied armed forces—is brought into the pictures only via the soldier’s uniform, his tall frame, and his stereotypical blond hair and blue eyes. The illustrations mirrored the wartime iconography of colonized children’s encounters with Imperial Japanese Army soldiers, as well as the contemporary, occupation-era iconography of Japanese children’s encounters with Allied soldiers. Yet, in all other respects, the two characters in this language course interact in a manner that differs significantly from wartime representations of soldiers and children.

Rather than embodying the cheerful and grateful recipient of caramels or chewing gum, the boy becomes a guide to the adult soldier-tourist in Japan. The Japanese child and the American soldier meet in a park, a distinctly nonmilitary setting. The soldier is unarmed. In contrast to the emotional weight of wartime representations of (Japanese) soldiers with Japanese or enemy children, the boy does not primarily appear sweet and helpless, neither does the soldier appear patronizingly tolerant of the boy. Instead, even though the purpose of this textbook and the associated radio lessons was to help Japanese adults and children learn English, it is the American soldier who asks questions about Japan, and who in turn is the happy recipient of information about Japanese customs that the boy provides.

In contrast to him and many other happy children interacting with American G.I.s so often depicted in photographs, magazines, books, and newspapers of the occupation era, children who had lived through the war had a more mixed reaction to the soldiers. Akabane Reiko, a young teenager at the time, recalled that American and British soldiers seemed “almost like the Kamikaze pilots,” she had been enlisted to wave farewell to during the last months of the war. “They were almost as young and appeared even nicer because they expressed themselves more directly” (Scherer 2001: 113). She fondly remembered the chocolate they gave her, and how she had enjoyed playing cards with them at her house (113). Other children felt more apprehensive toward their occupiers. Miyazaki Hayao, today an acclaimed filmmaker, was eleven when the Allied occupation of Japan came to an end on 28 April 1952, following the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty

between Japan and the Allied Powers. Miyazaki described himself as “the kind of kid who was too ashamed to ask the Americans for chewing gum or chocolate” (Miyazaki 2014).

As much as publishers’ efforts during the Asia-Pacific War and the occupation era were directed at encouraging positive feelings of children towards the war, Japan’s soldiers, the children on the other side of the frontline and, afterward, towards the occupation forces, some were not to be fooled. The relentlessly repeated cheerfulness gave way to Setsuko’s pain, Reiko’s fondness, and Hayao’s ambivalence.

THE END OF INNOCENCE?

In 2015, Japan celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War. During that same year, Abe Shinzō’s administration introduced controversial security legislation that triggered popular resistance in Japan and a great deal of anxiety among Japan’s neighbors, as well as intense discussions about implications for the future of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), which succeeded both the war-time Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. “Abe’s Japan,” writes Gavan McCormack (2016), the “peace state” Japan, had effectively become a “war-capable state.”

In a country that had been at peace for over three generations, though the Self-Defense Forces engaged in a broad range of domestic and international missions, they did not make war. Working hard to shed their association with the Imperial Army, the Ground Self-Defense Force had little international involvement until 1992, when it was deployed on a peacekeeping mission in Mozambique. In the wake of this controversial deployment, it discovered the necessity and utility of shaping its public image, domestically and internationally, through public relations efforts that increasingly incorporated female television celebrities, cute imagery, and manga and animation elements (Frühstück 2007).

At the beginning of this century, these public relations campaigns took another turn when two separate institutions—the military and popular culture—rediscovered the appeal of representations combining children and the military. Self-Defense Forces iconography and narratives have reincorporated representations of children and childlike creatures on recruitment posters, animation available on the homepage of the Ministry of Defense, and open house festivals on individual bases. A brochure produced to explain to a wary Japanese population the Self-Defense Forces’ effort to help “rebuild Iraq” features two drawings by children and two photographs of Iraqi children. In one of the photos, a child sits on the knee of a Japanese service member. The Self-Defense Forces’ role in Iraq primarily concerned infrastructure, and the brochure takes great pains to convey, to both the Iraqis and the Japanese back home, that the SDF were in Iraq to rebuild, not to fight.

Similarly, a Maritime Self-Defense Forces public relations video released on 1 March 2011 declares service members’ “pride” and “joy” in their “mission and duty”

to secure Japan's borders. It ends with a uniformed male service member taking into his arms a female toddler dressed in soft pink while a young, smiling woman—likely his wife and the girl's mother—happily looks on.²

The Self-Defense Forces and mainstream mass media also collaborated on the exploitation of children's emotional capital regarding the SDF's deployment to northeastern Japan to provide relief for what is often referred to in Japan as “3/11” and known elsewhere as the “Fukushima disaster”—a 9.0 earthquake that resulted in a tsunami and the meltdown of a nuclear power plant in March 2011. One particular joint effort, the *Mainichi Illustrated Magazine of the Self-Defense Forces' Other Frontline* (Mainichi mukku Jieitai mo hitotsu no saizensen, 29 July 2011: 6–7), is visually wrapped in pink. On the cover, a small girl dressed in bright pink, with a forlorn yet determined look on her face, marches ahead of a group of Self-Defense Forces service members; she carries a big bag, itself pale pink, which appears to contain all her remaining belongings. On the back cover, two girls, both wearing shades of pink, wave at a jeep; this image is juxtaposed against a child's thank-you letter written on pink stationery.

Similarly, a photograph that first appeared in the magazine *Bessatsu Takarajima*, on the topic of “The Self-Defense Forces vs. the Eastern Japan Great Earthquake” (23 July 2011, no. 1780: 9), features a female service member with a little girl dressed all in pink in front of a makeshift bath. Smiling, both flash the peace sign. In another photograph, a male service member lovingly smiles down at a rescued baby in his arms. Numerous other photographs featured in SDF public relations materials and mass media publications in the following years retell the story of children's privileged relationship with soldiers, highlighting laughter and play, solidarity and kinship. These images were widely circulated, as later were the thank-you notes and letters children were encouraged to write to their heroic Self-Defense Forces.

Perhaps it is unseemly to critically address commercialized representations of SDF efforts to ease suffering in the wake of a devastating disaster. Yet it is important to consider how often these images depict a specific type of child: a preschool- or elementary-age girl or girls, dressed in an inordinate quantity of pink in order to accentuate their innocence and vulnerability.

Indeed, this particular iconography echoes Japanese popular culture at the edge of the mainstream. Only very recently have magazines, manga, anime, and other media begun to feature and embrace military themes. In such publications, though female figures' looks vary considerably, their age—prepubescent—is fairly constant. But even the variations in costume falls into an interesting range. In one part of the story, the figures may wear the short dresses typical of elementary-school girls, while at another, they appear half undressed and holding machine guns, thus suddenly embodying a key figure in Japanese popular culture: the fighting girl, who ties together prepubescent sex appeal with the capacity to engage in deadly mass violence.

The main characters in *Strike Witches* (Sutoraiiku Witcheezu, 2010–present), for example, all appear to be younger than ten years of age. Some have animal ears and tails that enhance their feminine yet infantile cuteness. For most of the story, the characters wear clothes that are perfectly mainstream for five- or six-year-olds. And yet, whenever they use their weapons, they appear to be wearing only panties—suggesting a confluence between two different kinds of exhilaration and excitement on the part of the reader or viewer. Similarly, in *Infinite Stratos* (Infinitto Sutoratosu, 2009–present), young girls put on high-tech suits that essentially turn them into living weapons capable of mass destruction. These girls can show a great deal of skin—quite similar to the “fierce flesh” of the “sexy schoolgirls” in *Sailor Moon* (Allison 2006: 128)—but only when they are fighting. Similarly, *Military!* (Miritari! 2009–present) and *Warship Collection* (Kantai Korekushon, 2013–present) also feature groups of heavily armed fighting girls within a continuum of sexualized and pornified settings.³ While specialists of media and popular culture have pondered whether such figures represent girl empowerment, feminism, or only yet another version of the sexual exploitation of girls and women, I believe it is important to note that the Self-Defense Forces, newly equipped with the legal means to cause mass destruction in the context of war, have adopted such fighting girls into its public relations campaigns. In 2016, three striking female fantasy figures from a new television series titled *GATE—Thus Self-Defense Forces Fought in that [Distant] Land* (GATE—Jieitai kanochi nite kaku tatakaeri) began to appear on SDF recruitment posters, working hard to convince its audience that the SDF’s core goal has remained: “to protect someone.”

CONCLUSION

Long before the current global debate about child soldiers, children have been eminently useful to military establishments and militarism (Pignot 2012; Robson 2004; Macmillan 2009). Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the military and militarism have relied on specific notions of children and childhood. During the first half of the twentieth century, children’s use value laid in their presumed vulnerability, innocence, and sweetness, characteristics that could be tapped to paint a picture of war as righteous and just and of the Imperial armed forces as composed of good men out to protect Japan’s children and rescue those in colonized territories and behind the frontlines across Asia. During the late twentieth century and particularly during the first decades of the twenty-first, the SDF has made increasing use of children’s emotional capital in an effort to build legitimacy for its missions abroad and at home and to shape children’s and adults’ sentiments towards the armed forces. In publications of the SDF and the growing popular culture around it, representations of children and childlike creatures do a great deal of emotional work to endear the military to a population that had seemed to have overcome the modern habit of glorifying the military and war.

While, thus far, the SDF's missions could not be more different from those of their predecessor, their appeal to the emotional capital of children has only intensified over the last two decades. In both instances, the respective military establishments have worked hard to engage mass and popular culture in order to employ the emotional capital ascribed to children for securing the legitimacy of their missions and, indeed, their existence.

NOTES

1. Both readers were distributed as supplements to the subscribers of *The Housewife's Friend* (Shufu no tomo, vol. 21, no. 8, 8 July 1937, and vol. 21, no. 2, 8 February 1937, respectively); the issues were between 330 and 450 pages long.
2. For the video, see “Japan Maritime Self Defense Recruiting Video -2008-,” YouTube video, posted by Tarō Yamamoto on 29 March 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ejiog3AM9do>.
3. For the manga and animations mentioned in this paragraph, see <http://movie.douban.com/photos/photo/2235646233/> and <http://movie.douban.com/photos/photo/2220906719/> (accessed 3 May 2015). These images are widely shared by Internet users throughout Asia on video-sharing sites, including the Chinese platform Douban, for other users to comment on.

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