

## Negotiating Hiroshima's Cultural Memory Across Media: Comparative Analysis of Japanese Animation and French Cinema

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### Abstract

Hiroshima has been remembered through documentary testimony, animation, and cinema. As a site of cultural memory, its meanings continue to be negotiated across different national, historical, and representational contexts. This paper investigates how Hiroshima as a site of cultural memory is linguistically constructed across Japanese animation and French cinema. Moving beyond visual-centric approaches in film and memory studies, it foregrounds language as a constitutive site of memory production, examining how dialogue, narrative voice, and discourse structure shape the representation of historical trauma. The study conducts a comparative analysis of *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), *In This Corner of the World* (2016), and *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959). Drawing on frameworks from cultural memory studies, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis, it examines language at micro (lexical choice, repetition, silence), meso (register, politeness, interactional dynamics), and macro (narrative voice, fragmentation, temporal structure) levels. Findings show that Japanese animation constructs war memory through embodied everyday speech, where repetition, politeness, and silence embed trauma within ordinary interaction. In contrast, French cinema articulates memory through fragmented and reflexive discourse, where repetition and narrative disruption highlight the instability of testimony and remembrance. Despite these differences, both traditions demonstrate that memory is actively produced through language. The paper argues that language is not a transparent medium of memory but a site where cultural memory is negotiated, reconstructed, and transmitted across cultures. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to film and linguistic studies by demonstrating how linguistic practices shape transnational representations of historical trauma and highlighting the importance of discourse analysis in visual media.

**Keywords:** postwar Japanese animation, war trauma, cultural/transnational memory, interdisciplinary media studies, discourse analysis

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## Introduction

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 remains one of the most significant events in modern history and one of the most enduring symbols of cultural trauma. Beyond its historical reality, Hiroshima has become a powerful site of memory continuously reconstructed through literature, film, visual art, and documentary media. As subsequent generations become increasingly distant from direct wartime experience, media representations have assumed a crucial role in shaping how Hiroshima is remembered, interpreted, and transmitted. Hiroshima therefore functions not only as a historical event but also as a cultural construct whose meanings are repeatedly negotiated across different social, national, and media contexts. Documentary works such as *Atomic People* (Ishikawa, 2015) and *La face cachée d'Hiroshima* (Dechavanne, 2017) preserve survivor testimony and contribute to ongoing public engagement with the bombing, while fictional narratives continue to reinterpret its historical and emotional significance for new audiences.

Among the various forms of representation, Japanese animation and French cinema offer particularly illuminating perspectives on the construction of war memory. Although both engage with the legacy of Hiroshima and the broader trauma of World War II, they employ markedly different narrative and aesthetic strategies. Japanese animated films such as *Grave of the Fireflies* (Takahata, 1988) and *In This Corner of the World* (Katabuchi, 2016) foreground ordinary life and interpersonal relationships, embedding historical violence within the routines of everyday existence. In contrast, Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) approaches Hiroshima through fragmented narration, transnational encounters, and philosophical reflections on memory and forgetting. Together, these works provide a rich comparative corpus for examining how memory is constructed across media and cultural traditions.

Existing scholarship on Hiroshima in visual media has primarily emphasized issues of representation, trauma, affect, and narrative form. Studies of Japanese animation frequently focus on emotional engagement, pacifist discourse, and postwar identity formation (Anandhasayanam, 2025; Napier, 2005). Research on *Hiroshima mon amour* has similarly examined the relationship between personal memory and collective history, emphasizing the film's fragmented temporality and reflexive structure (Nora, 1989; Rancière, 2009). While these studies have significantly advanced our understanding of war memory, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of language in shaping these representations.

This omission is notable because memory is not merely communicated through language; it is actively structured by linguistic practices. Dialogue, narrative voice, repetition, silence, and interactional patterns do not simply express pre-existing memories. Rather, they contribute to the production of memory itself. The ways characters speak, remain silent, address one another, or fail to communicate all participate in the construction of historical meaning. Consequently, an examination of linguistic practices can reveal dimensions of memory that may remain obscured within predominantly visual approaches.

This study therefore investigates how language functions in the construction of Hiroshima as cultural memory across Japanese animation and French cinema. Rather than asking only how Hiroshima is represented, it examines how memory is linguistically mediated through discourse, interaction, and narrative organization. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between language, trauma, and temporality, as well as to the ways different

media establish distinct conditions under which memory becomes speakable, visible, or resistant to representation.

Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do Japanese animation and French cinema employ language and narrative voice to construct cultural memory?
2. How are trauma, emotion, and subjectivity articulated through linguistic features such as repetition, silence, register, and fragmentation?
3. In what ways do different linguistic practices reflect broader cultural approaches to memory, identity, and historical representation?

Drawing on cultural memory studies, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and film theory, this paper argues that language is not merely a vehicle through which memory is transmitted. Instead, language functions as a constitutive site where memory is produced, negotiated, and contested. Furthermore, Hiroshima emerges not simply as a historical reference point but as a temporal rupture that reshapes the linguistic conditions under which memory can be articulated. Through a comparative analysis of Japanese animation and French cinema, this study contributes to ongoing discussions concerning the relationship between language, media, and cultural memory.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts an interdisciplinary framework that integrates cultural memory studies, media theory, and linguistic approaches to discourse. By placing language at the center of analysis, the framework moves beyond purely visual interpretations of cinema and animation and conceptualizes memory as a socially embedded and discursively constructed process.

#### **Cultural Memory**

The concept of cultural memory provides an essential foundation for understanding how societies remember historical events beyond the lifespan of direct witnesses. Halbwachs (1992) argues that memory is fundamentally social rather than individual. Individuals remember within socially structured frameworks that determine what can be recalled and how recollections are organized. Memory, therefore, is not a stable record of the past but a reconstruction shaped by present social conditions.

Building upon Halbwachs' work, Assmann (2011) distinguishes between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory is maintained through everyday interpersonal interaction and generally extends across only a few generations. Cultural memory, by contrast, is preserved through symbolic forms such as texts, rituals, monuments, museums, and media. These cultural forms allow historical events to remain meaningful long after direct experience has disappeared.

Within this framework, Hiroshima can be understood as a prominent site of cultural memory. Its significance is continuously reproduced through representational practices that shape how historical trauma is understood by later generations. Films and animated works do not merely preserve historical knowledge; they actively participate in the ongoing reconstruction of memory by providing narrative frameworks through which the past becomes intelligible.

Hiroshima may also be understood as a *lieu de mémoire*, a symbolic site where collective remembrance is continuously negotiated (Nora, 1989).

### **Media, Narrative, and Memory**

Although memory may be transmitted through multiple media forms, different media construct memory in distinct ways. Film and animation are particularly significant because they combine visual, auditory, and linguistic modes of communication. As multimodal forms, they offer complex mechanisms for representing experiences that may resist conventional narration.

Japanese animation frequently emphasizes everyday experience and embodied perception. Napier (2005) argues that anime often creates emotional engagement through intimate attention to ordinary life, enabling viewers to experience historical events through personal and affective perspectives. In war-related narratives, this strategy situates trauma within domestic spaces and interpersonal relationships rather than within military or political discourse.

French cinema, particularly *Hiroshima mon amour*, adopts a markedly different approach. Rather than presenting coherent historical narratives, the film disrupts temporal continuity through fragmented storytelling, repetition, and reflexive narration. Such strategies challenge assumptions that memory can be transparently represented and instead foreground the instability of recollection itself.

Nichols (2017) emphasizes that cinematic representations of historical events are never neutral reproductions of reality. Instead, they involve specific representational choices that shape how viewers understand the past. Memory is therefore not simply depicted by media but actively constructed through narrative and formal techniques.

### **Language, Discourse, and Trauma**

At the center of this study lies a discourse-oriented understanding of language. Rather than treating language as a neutral medium of communication, discourse analysis conceptualizes language as a social practice through which meaning is produced and negotiated.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, linguistic choices index social identities and relationships. Features such as politeness, speech style, register, and forms of address position speakers within broader social structures. These linguistic resources are particularly significant in Japanese contexts, where speech styles frequently encode age, gender, and social hierarchy.

Narrative discourse also plays a crucial role in memory construction. Who speaks, from what perspective, and with what authority profoundly influences how historical experiences are represented. Memory is therefore not simply content being conveyed but a discursive process shaped by narrative organization and interactional dynamics.

Trauma theory further highlights the importance of linguistic disruption. Caruth (1996) argues that traumatic experiences often resist straightforward narration because they exceed conventional structures of understanding. As a result, trauma frequently manifests through repetition, fragmentation, silence, and discontinuity. Similarly, Sontag (2003) suggests that

representations of suffering reveal the limitations of language and image in communicating extreme experiences.

These insights are particularly relevant to Hiroshima-related narratives. The atomic bombing represents a form of historical violence that challenges conventional modes of representation. Consequently, linguistic instability, silence, and repetition become significant not because they fail to represent trauma, but because they reveal the conditions under which trauma becomes representable at all.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives support the central argument of this study: memory is not merely expressed through language but emerges through linguistic, visual, and temporal structures that shape how historical experience becomes meaningful. Language therefore functions not as a transparent medium of remembrance but as a critical site where memory is continually reconstructed and contested.

Memory is therefore understood as a discursive process rather than a stable repository of historical information.

## Literature Review

### Japanese Animation and War Memory

Japanese animation has long played a significant role in shaping postwar cultural memory, particularly in relation to World War II and its aftermath. Scholars have argued that anime provides a distinctive medium through which historical trauma can be represented, remembered, and transmitted across generations. Unlike conventional historical narratives that focus on military events or political actors, many animated works emphasize everyday experiences, personal relationships, and the emotional consequences of war (Napier, 2005). Beyond national contexts, Japanese animation has also circulated globally as a form of cultural exchange and memory transmission. Iwabuchi (2002) argues that Japanese popular culture plays an important role in transnational cultural flows, allowing local narratives to acquire broader international significance.

Within this context, Hiroshima-related animation contributes not only to Japanese postwar memory but also to global understandings of war and trauma. Among the most extensively studied examples is *Grave of the Fireflies* (Takahata, 1988), which has been widely recognized for its portrayal of civilian suffering and childhood vulnerability during wartime. Existing research frequently highlights the film's emotional intensity and its critique of war through the experiences of Seita and Setsuko. Rather than presenting large-scale military conflict, the film focuses on the gradual deterioration of ordinary life, encouraging viewers to engage with the human costs of war at an intimate level (Napier, 2005).

Similarly, *In This Corner of the World* (Katabuchi, 2016) has attracted scholarly attention for its depiction of domestic life during wartime Japan. Anandhasayanam (2025) argues that the film contributes to postwar memory by portraying everyday experiences that coexist with larger national narratives of conflict and loss. Through its emphasis on routine activities, family relationships, and local community life, the film demonstrates how historical trauma becomes embedded within ordinary social practices. Such representations challenge simplified understandings of wartime memory by highlighting the complex relationship between personal experience and collective remembrance.

Despite these important contributions, scholarship on Japanese animation has generally privileged visual aesthetics, emotional engagement, and ideological interpretation. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to the role of language in shaping these representations. Dialogue, speech style, politeness strategies, and patterns of silence are often treated as secondary elements rather than as central mechanisms through which memory and identity are constructed. Consequently, there remains a need for research that examines how linguistic practices contribute to the formation of cultural memory within animated representations of war.

### ***Hiroshima mon amour* and Memory Studies**

In contrast to Japanese animation, *Hiroshima mon amour* (Resnais, 1959) occupies a central position within both memory studies and film theory. Since its release, the film has been widely discussed for its innovative narrative structure and its exploration of the relationship between personal memory and historical trauma. Rather than offering a straightforward account of Hiroshima, the film presents a fragmented narrative in which recollections, emotions, and historical events intersect in complex and often contradictory ways.

Scholars have frequently emphasized the film's disruption of linear temporality. Memory in *Hiroshima mon amour* is not presented as a stable recollection of the past but as a dynamic process in which past and present continually overlap. Nora (1989) identifies such disruptions as characteristic of modern memory cultures, where historical experience is increasingly mediated through symbolic forms rather than direct recollection. The film's shifting temporal structure thus reflects broader concerns regarding the instability of memory and the difficulty of representing traumatic events.

Another important area of scholarship concerns the ethics of representation. Rather than claiming to reproduce the reality of Hiroshima, the film repeatedly questions the possibility of fully understanding or depicting historical trauma. This concern is particularly evident in the recurring dialogue that challenges the authority of witnessing and memory. From this perspective, *Hiroshima mon amour* has often been interpreted as a meditation on the limitations of representation itself (Rancière, 2009).

Although language occupies a prominent role within many discussions of the film, it is frequently approached from philosophical or narratological perspectives rather than through systematic linguistic analysis. Existing studies have examined themes such as memory, testimony, and subjectivity, yet relatively little research has explored how specific linguistic features—including repetition, silence, pronoun use, and discourse organization—contribute to the construction of memory. This gap is particularly significant given the film's reliance on dialogue and monologue as primary narrative devices.

### **Language, Film, and the Construction of Memory**

Research on language in film has developed across several interdisciplinary fields, including discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, narrative theory, and media studies. These approaches have demonstrated that language serves functions far beyond the transmission of information. Through dialogue, narrative voice, and interactional patterns, films construct social identities, emotional relationships, and ideological positions.

Discourse-oriented approaches emphasize that narrative meaning emerges through specific linguistic choices and communicative practices. Narrative voice, for example, shapes how events are interpreted by determining who speaks, from what position, and with what degree of authority. Similarly, repetition, hesitation, and silence can function as meaningful discourse features rather than merely stylistic devices. Such features are particularly relevant in representations of trauma, where experiences often resist coherent narration (Caruth, 1996).

Despite growing interest in language and media, relatively few studies have integrated linguistic analysis with cultural memory research. Few studies have systematically examined how linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Hiroshima as cultural memory.

Existing scholarship on Hiroshima-related films tends to focus either on visual representation or on philosophical interpretations of memory, leaving linguistic dimensions underexamined. Furthermore, comparative studies that investigate how language operates across different cultural and media contexts remain limited.

This study addresses these gaps by placing language at the center of analysis. By combining insights from cultural memory studies, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis, it examines how linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Hiroshima as a site of cultural memory. Through a comparative analysis of Japanese animation and French cinema, the study seeks to demonstrate that memory is not merely represented through language but actively produced through linguistic and discursive processes.

### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach that combines discourse analysis, sociolinguistic analysis, and cultural memory studies. Rather than treating film and animation primarily as visual texts, the study conceptualizes them as multimodal discursive artifacts in which memory is constructed through the interaction of language, image, sound, and narrative structure. The primary objective is to investigate how Hiroshima as a site of cultural memory is linguistically produced across different media and cultural contexts.

### Data Selection

The corpus consists of three films: *Grave of the Fireflies* (Takahata, 1988), *In This Corner of the World* (Katabuchi, 2016), and *Hiroshima mon amour* (Resnais, 1959). These works were selected because they represent influential cinematic engagements with wartime memory while employing distinct narrative and linguistic strategies.

The two Japanese animated films focus on everyday civilian experiences during wartime Japan, emphasizing family relationships, domestic life, and ordinary communication. In contrast, *Hiroshima mon amour* examines memory through fragmented narration, intercultural dialogue, and reflexive discourse. Together, these texts provide a productive basis for comparing how language contributes to the construction of cultural memory across Japanese animation and French cinema.

The analysis focuses on scenes associated with remembrance, loss, trauma, and interpersonal interaction. Particular attention is given to sequences characterized by repetition, silence, emotional tension, shifts in narrative perspective, and disruptions in communication. Since

the study is concerned with discourse functions rather than translation accuracy, the analysis prioritizes communicative patterns and narrative organization over detailed linguistic comparison between source and translated texts.

### **Analytical Framework**

The study employs a three-level discourse-analytic framework consisting of micro-, meso-, and macro-level analysis. This framework allows memory to be examined as a linguistic and discursive process operating simultaneously at multiple levels of communication.

#### ***Micro-Level Analysis***

The micro level focuses on lexical and interactional features within individual utterances. Particular attention is paid to repetition, lexical choice, pauses, silence, hesitation, and emotionally marked expressions. These features are analyzed as discursive resources through which memory and trauma become communicatively meaningful.

Repetition is examined not merely as a stylistic device but as a mechanism through which experiences are recalled, reinforced, or destabilized. Similarly, silence is treated as an active communicative strategy that contributes to the construction of meaning rather than as a simple absence of speech.

#### ***Meso-Level Analysis***

The meso level investigates interactional dynamics between speakers. This includes forms of address, politeness strategies, turn-taking patterns, and the negotiation of social relationships through language.

Drawing on sociolinguistic perspectives, the analysis examines how communicative practices position speakers within broader social structures such as family relationships, gender roles, and cultural expectations. Memory is therefore understood not solely as an individual cognitive phenomenon but as a socially situated process emerging through interaction.

#### ***Macro-Level Analysis***

The macro level focuses on broader discourse organization and narrative structure. This includes narrative voice, temporal organization, monologue, dialogue, fragmentation, and retrospective narration.

Particular attention is paid to the ways in which discourse structures shape the relationship between past and present. Memory is conceptualized as a narrative process in which historical experiences are continually reconstructed through acts of narration and interpretation. This level of analysis is especially important for understanding how different media traditions organize remembrance through distinct discursive forms.

### **Memory as Discursive Construction**

The analytical framework is informed by the assumption that memory is not simply represented through language but actively produced within it. Following cultural memory theory (Assmann, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992), memory is understood as a socially mediated

process rather than a fixed repository of historical information. At the same time, discourse analysis emphasizes that meaning emerges through communicative practices rather than existing independently of them.

Consequently, the study does not treat dialogue as evidence of pre-existing memories. Instead, it examines how linguistic practices—including repetition, silence, politeness, and narrative organization—participate in the construction of cultural memory itself. The focus is therefore placed on the processes through which remembrance becomes possible rather than on the factual accuracy of historical representation.

### **Analysis: Linguistic Constructions of Cultural Memory**

#### **Grave of the Fireflies: Repetition, Silence, and Child Language**

##### ***Micro-Level Analysis: Repetition and Linguistic Simplicity***

At the micro level, *Grave of the Fireflies* constructs memory through repetition and linguistic simplicity. Setsuko's speech is characterized by repeated address terms, recurring requests, and emotionally direct expressions. These repetitions perform more than a communicative function. They establish continuity within an increasingly unstable social environment and create discursive patterns through which emotional attachment is maintained.

The repeated use of Seita's name is particularly significant. Rather than merely identifying the interlocutor, it reinforces the sibling relationship that constitutes the emotional center of the narrative. Memory therefore emerges through recurring linguistic forms that preserve interpersonal bonds despite the progressive destruction of the surrounding world.

The film also employs simple lexical choices associated with childhood experience. Food, family members, and everyday objects dominate the children's vocabulary. Historical events rarely appear through abstract political terminology. Instead, war becomes meaningful through concrete linguistic references to hunger, shelter, and loss. This lexical restriction contributes to a perspective in which trauma is experienced rather than explicitly interpreted.

Silence functions as an equally important discourse feature. As the siblings' situation deteriorates, moments of verbal interaction become shorter and less frequent. Silence does not represent a lack of communication but rather serves as a discursive resource through which emotional suffering becomes perceptible. Trauma is therefore constructed not only through speech but also through the gradual reduction of speech.

##### ***Meso-Level Analysis: Sibling Interaction***

At the meso level, memory is constructed through interactional dynamics between Seita and Setsuko. Their conversations are characterized by intimacy, cooperation, and emotional dependency. Address forms and conversational patterns continually reinforce familial relationships.

Unlike institutional discourse or official wartime narratives, the film privileges private interaction. Historical experience becomes accessible through interpersonal communication rather than public testimony. The sibling relationship functions as a communicative framework within which traumatic experiences are negotiated and understood.

The persistence of affectionate interaction despite increasingly severe circumstances further contributes to the construction of memory. Trauma appears not as an isolated event but as a condition that gradually transforms everyday communication.

### ***Macro-Level Analysis: Narrative Voice and Retrospective Memory***

At the macro level, the film employs retrospective narration that positions memory as a process of reconstruction. The audience encounters events through a narrative framework already marked by loss and death. This structure transforms ordinary conversations into retrospective sites of remembrance.

Language therefore operates across multiple temporal layers. Everyday speech belongs simultaneously to the present of the narrative and to a remembered past. Memory emerges through this interaction between lived experience and retrospective narration.

### ***In This Corner of the World: Politeness and Everyday Memory***

#### ***Micro-Level Analysis: Domestic Lexicon***

Unlike *Grave of the Fireflies*, *In This Corner of the World* constructs memory through a domestic vocabulary centered on food preparation, household activities, and family relationships. Lexical choices associated with ordinary routines dominate the film's discourse.

This linguistic focus is significant because it locates historical experience within everyday life. The effects of war are registered through changes in ordinary language rather than through direct references to military events. Food-related vocabulary becomes increasingly associated with scarcity and adaptation, allowing trauma to emerge through shifts in everyday discourse.

#### ***Meso-Level Analysis: Politeness and Gendered Speech***

The film's most distinctive sociolinguistic feature is its use of politeness and gendered speech styles. Suzu frequently employs deferential expressions and indirect forms characteristic of traditional feminine speech.

These linguistic practices index social relationships and cultural expectations. Politeness functions not simply as etiquette but as a communicative mechanism through which social order is maintained. As wartime conditions intensify, however, these patterns become increasingly strained.

The persistence of polite language during periods of crisis reveals how memory is embedded within social interaction. Historical trauma is not external to everyday communication but becomes integrated into existing communicative practices. Politeness therefore serves as a linguistic site where continuity and disruption coexist.

### ***Macro-Level Analysis: Everyday Temporality***

At the macro level, the film organizes memory through everyday temporality rather than dramatic historical events. Narrative progression is structured around routines, seasonal changes, and domestic activities.

This temporal organization shapes the linguistic construction of memory. Ordinary conversations gradually acquire retrospective significance because viewers recognize their proximity to future catastrophe. Memory is therefore produced through the interaction between everyday discourse and historical knowledge.

The film demonstrates how cultural memory may be constructed through continuity rather than rupture. Language preserves the texture of ordinary life while simultaneously registering its vulnerability.

### ***Hiroshima mon amour: Fragmentation and Reflexive Memory***

#### ***Micro-Level Analysis: Repetition and Pronouns***

At the micro level, *Hiroshima mon amour* relies heavily on repetition. The recurring statement, “You saw nothing in Hiroshima,” functions as a discourse marker that destabilizes claims to knowledge and testimony.

Unlike the repetition found in *Grave of the Fireflies*, which reinforces interpersonal attachment, repetition here undermines certainty. Each recurrence questions the possibility of fully understanding traumatic history.

Pronoun usage further contributes to this instability. References to “I,” “you,” and “we” shift throughout the narrative, producing ambiguity regarding agency, experience, and authority. Memory is constructed as relational and contested rather than individually possessed.

#### ***Meso-Level Analysis: Dialogic Conflict***

At the meso level, communication is characterized by tension and contradiction. Dialogue rarely results in consensus or mutual understanding. Instead, conversational exchanges continually expose differences in perspective and experience.

The relationship between the French woman and the Japanese man functions as a site of intercultural negotiation. Communication remains possible, yet complete understanding remains unattainable. Memory is therefore constructed through interactional conflict rather than communicative harmony.

#### ***Macro-Level Analysis: Fragmented Narrative Structure***

At the macro level, memory is produced through fragmentation and non-linear narration. Monologues, flashbacks, and temporal shifts disrupt chronological continuity.

This fragmented discourse reflects the instability of traumatic memory described by Caruth (1996). Past and present continually intersect, preventing memory from being organized into a coherent narrative.

The film thus constructs Hiroshima not as a stable historical object but as a discursive space where remembrance remains incomplete. Language repeatedly approaches trauma without fully resolving it, emphasizing the limitations of representation itself.

## Analysis II: French Cinema

### Monologue, Translingual Encounters, and the Instability of Memory

A distinctive feature of *Hiroshima mon amour* is its use of monologue and fragmented narration. Unlike the interaction-centered discourse of Japanese animation, the film frequently shifts into reflective speech that blurs the boundaries between memory, narration, and self-examination. The female protagonist's recollections of her German lover in Nevers emerge through discontinuous narrative fragments rather than chronological storytelling, presenting memory as an ongoing process of reinterpretation rather than a fixed record of the past.

This reflexive discourse highlights the inseparability of remembering and narrating. Memory becomes accessible only through language, yet language simultaneously reshapes what is remembered. As Nora (1989) suggests, modern memory is increasingly mediated through symbolic forms; in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the past exists only through incomplete and unstable acts of narration. The continual movement between present dialogue and remembered experience further disrupts temporal boundaries, positioning memory as an active force within present consciousness.

The film's transnational setting also foregrounds the limits of communication. The relationship between the French woman and the Japanese man brings together distinct linguistic, cultural, and historical experiences. Although communication remains possible, complete understanding is repeatedly shown to be unattainable. The memories of Hiroshima and Nevers intersect without fully merging, revealing both the possibilities and limitations of cross-cultural remembrance.

Ultimately, the film constructs memory through instability rather than continuity. Fragmentation, repetition, and reflexive narration expose the difficulties of representing traumatic history. Rather than preserving the past intact, language continually reconstructs it, demonstrating that memory remains a dynamic and contested process (Rancière, 2009).

### Comparative Discussion

The comparison between Japanese animation and French cinema reveals fundamentally different linguistic logics of memory construction. In Japanese animation, language is grounded in everyday interaction, where memory is embedded within relational and embodied practices. In French cinema, language is fragmented and reflexive, foregrounding the instability of memory and the limits of representation.

These differences correspond to distinct temporal models of trauma. Japanese animation constructs trauma as a process of gradual erosion, while French cinema represents it as a sudden rupture. This temporal distinction is reflected in linguistic form, with the former emphasizing continuity and attenuation, and the latter emphasizing disruption and fragmentation.

Despite these differences, both traditions converge on a crucial insight: language is not merely a vehicle for memory but a constitutive site of its production. Memory does not exist independently of linguistic form; it is shaped by the structures and constraints of language.

This has important ethical implications. Both traditions resist the aestheticization of trauma, albeit through different strategies. French cinema does so through fragmentation and discontinuity, while Japanese animation does so through minimalism and the attenuation of spectacle. In both cases, representation foregrounds the limits of what can be said and shown.

### Conclusion

This study has examined how language contributes to the construction of Hiroshima as cultural memory in Japanese animation and French cinema. The analysis addressed three primary research questions. First, it investigated how Japanese animation and French cinema employ language to construct cultural memory. The findings suggest that Japanese animated films tend to embed memory within everyday communication, emphasizing interpersonal relationships, domestic interactions, and routine linguistic practices. In contrast, *Hiroshima mon amour* constructs memory through fragmented discourse, reflexive narration, and the continual questioning of representational certainty. These distinct approaches reveal different cultural understandings of how historical experience can be remembered and communicated.

Second, the study examined how trauma is articulated through linguistic features such as repetition, silence, politeness, and fragmentation. Across the corpus, trauma emerges not simply through what is said but also through disruptions in communication. In the Japanese films, silence and communicative reduction reveal the gradual erosion of everyday life under wartime conditions. In *Hiroshima mon amour*, repetition and fragmentation expose the instability of memory and the difficulty of transforming traumatic experience into coherent narrative. These findings support trauma theorists' claims that extreme historical experiences often challenge conventional forms of linguistic representation (Caruth, 1996).

Third, the study explored how linguistic practices reflect broader cultural approaches to memory and historical representation. Japanese animation emphasizes continuity, embodiment, and the preservation of ordinary life, presenting memory as something lived through social relationships and everyday practices. French cinema, by contrast, foregrounds discontinuity, reflexivity, and temporal rupture, portraying memory as an unstable process that resists closure. Although these traditions differ significantly, both demonstrate that language plays a fundamental role in shaping how historical events become meaningful cultural memories.

The study contributes to existing scholarship in several ways. While previous research has often focused on visual aesthetics, historical representation, or philosophical interpretations of memory, this study places language at the center of analysis. By examining dialogue, silence, repetition, and narrative voice, it highlights the importance of linguistic practices in the production of cultural memory. The comparative approach demonstrates how different media traditions employ distinct discursive strategies to negotiate historical trauma.

More broadly, the findings suggest that Hiroshima should be understood not only as a historical event or symbolic site of memory but also as a discursive phenomenon continually reconstructed through acts of communication. Memory persists because it is repeatedly narrated and reinterpreted across contexts. Language therefore functions not merely as a vehicle for transmitting the past but as one of the primary mechanisms through which the past acquires meaning in the present.

Future research may expand this analysis by incorporating additional media forms, including documentaries, literary texts, digital storytelling platforms, and transnational adaptations of Hiroshima narratives. Comparative studies involving other histories of collective trauma may also provide further insight into the relationship between language, memory, and representation across cultural contexts. Such research would continue to illuminate the crucial role of discourse in shaping how societies remember, reinterpret, and engage with difficult pasts.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

The author used ChatGPT (OpenAI, free version) solely to assist in reducing the length of the manuscript (from approximately 7,700 words) and improving conciseness. The intellectual content, analysis, and arguments remain entirely the author's own.

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