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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the twentieth volume of the *Japan Studies Review* (JSR), an annual peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the Asian Studies Program at Florida International University Seminar. JSR remains an outlet for publications related to Southern Japan Seminar events that encourages submissions from a wide range of scholars in the field. The 2016 issue features six articles with varied interdisciplinary topics.

In "Performing Prayer, Saving *Genji*, and Idolizing Murasaki Shikibu: *Genji Kuyō* in Nō And Jōruri," Satoko Naito provides an analysis of the dramatizations of the often-overlooked text *Genji kuyō tan* and the different portrayals of Murasaki Shikibu. Next, in "Nihilism And Crisis: A Comparative Study of Yu Da-Fu's *Sinking* and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Rashōmon*," James Au Kin Pong provides a philosophical view of the pervasiveness of nihilism as an authentic literary response to crises in Southeast Asia, exemplified in twentieth-century Chinese and Japanese texts. Tony Tai-Ting Liu and Ren Mu's "Pivot Towards China: Japan's Renewed Security Strategy in Asia" studies the implications of foreign politics and security issues relating to Japan's new strategy to remain cautious over China's rise. Shige (CJ) Suzuki's "Reviving the Power of Storytelling: Post-3/11 Online 'Amateur' Manga" surveys the function of graphic storytelling in two examples of manga that originated after the March 11 disasters in Japan. In "Japan's New English Education Reform Plan: A Step Back to 1904," Yuki Takatori questions the teaching establishment and government initiatives of Japan's reform efforts that have neglected a vital aspect of the curriculum for decades involving the old-fashioned syntactic analysis known as the "Five Sentence Patterns" (*Gobunkei*). Finally, Masaki Mori in "The Creature Disappears for Our Convenience": An Analysis of Murakami Haruki's 'Elephant Vanishes'" offers a literary analysis of the different versions of this original Japanese text by Murakami Haruki and its English translation to deconstruct its divergent Kafkaesque attributes.

This issue also features two essays. Daniel A. Métraux's "George Kennan's Influential 1905 Depiction of Korea as a 'Degenerate State' and Japan as its Gracious Savior" focuses on the reports made by an American war correspondent who geared American foreign policy in favor of Japan's takeover of Korea during the Russo-Japanese War. The second essay by Zenel Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan and the Externalization of China's Securitization," delves into Sino-Japanese politics and security relations as Japan's successful securitization of China has led to several important developments among Southeast Asian neighbors.

There are also three book reviews, with two by Métraux. The first, on Eri Hotta's *Japan 1941: Countdown To Infamy*, pertains to Japan's role during Pearl Harbor, and the other, on Richard J. Samuels's *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, explains the political changes after the March 11 catastrophe in Japan. Lastly, Kazutaka Sugitamao reviews Miura Reiichi's *Haruki Murakami and Postmodern "Japan": The Culture of Globalization and Literature* about the cultural trend of globalization in Murakami's novels.

This year's *Japan Studies Review* is supported by the Japan Foundation Institutional Support Grant for a collaborative project called The South Florida Partnership in Japanese Studies (SFPJS) Housed at Florida International University.

FIU Asian Studies Program greatly appreciates their contribution.

Re: Submissions, Subscriptions, and Comments

Submissions for publication, whether articles, essays, translations or book reviews, should be made in electronic formats, preferably Word for Windows via email attachment (please inquire about other formats). The editor and members of the editorial board will referee all submissions.

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All comments and feedback on the publications appearing in *Japan Studies Review* are welcome.

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Articles

**PERFORMING PRAYER, SAVING *GENJI*,
AND IDOLIZING MURASAKI SHIKIBU:
GENJI KUYŌ IN NŌ AND JŌRURI¹**

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Introduction

The *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* [lit. “Story of Murasaki Shikibu’s Fall] tells that after her death Murasaki Shikibu (d. ca. 1014) was cast to hell.² The earliest reference is found in *Genji ipponkyō* [Sutra for Genji] (ca. 1166), which recounts a Buddhist *kuyō* (dedicatory rite) performed on her behalf, with the reasoning that the Heian author had been condemned to eternal suffering in hell for writing *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] (ca. 1008). Though *Genji ipponkyō* makes no explicit claim to the efficacy of the *kuyō*, its performance is presumably successful and saves the *Genji* author. In such a case the earliest extant utterance of the Murasaki-in-hell story is coupled with her subsequent salvation, and the *Genji* author, though damned, is also to be saved.³ It may be more accurate, then, to say that the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* is about Murasaki Shikibu’s deliverance, rather than her fall (*daraku*).

Through the medieval period and beyond, various sources recounted the execution of *kuyō* rites conducted for *The Tale of Genji*’s author, often initiated and sponsored by women.⁴ Such stories of *Genji kuyō*

¹ Author’s Note: I thank those who commented on earlier versions of this paper, in particular D. Max Moerman, Hauro Shirane, and Rebecca Copeland.

² This is also phrased as *Murasaki Shikibu dagoku/dajigoku ron/setsu* (legend/story of Murasaki Shikibu in hell). In such stories her spirit is either in hell or unable to attain salvation.

³ This notion of the already saved is reminiscent of the discourse on female salvation. For example, Hōnen (Genkū, 1133–1212), credited with founding the *Jōdokyō* (Pure Land sect), declared the inherent sin of being female but also provided the *nenbutsu* chant as a way to get to the Pure Land. Thus, women are “always already saved.” In the case of *Genji kuyō*, Murasaki being female only aggravates her sin of writing *Genji*.

⁴ *Genji kuyō* appear to have been conducted primarily by women until the late fifteenth-century. On the role of women and the development of *Genji*

underscore a preoccupation with notions of *mōgo* (falsehoods) and *kigo* (spurious phrases) and anxieties regarding the production and consumption of fiction, particularly those that display ambiguous morals like *The Tale of Genji*.⁵ These texts can together be called *Genji kuyō tan*, or stories of prayers for *Genji*.⁶

This paper discusses dramatizations of *Genji kuyō* by focusing on the seventeenth-century *jōruri bunraku* play *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* [Ishiyama Temple in Ōmi Province: Genji kuyō] (1676), popularly attributed – though likely erroneously so – to the famed playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725). I situate the *jōruri* within the long tradition of *Genji kuyō tan*, particularly as it relates to the fifteenth-century *nō* play *Genji kuyō*, to trace the varied portrayals of Murasaki Shikibu.⁷ Unlike the *nō* and earlier *Genji kuyō* texts, *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* has not hitherto received much scholarly attention, but the text manifests a crucial development in *Genji kuyō tan* and the discourse on Murasaki Shikibu. Despite its reliance on the *Genji kuyō* convention that originated alongside the Murasaki-in-hell narrative, in the *jōruri* the *Genji* author is

kuyō especially as *sōshi* narratives, see Koida Tomoko, *Hotoke to onna no Muromachi: monogatari sōshi ron* (Tokyo: Kazama shoin, 2008): 333–354.

⁵ *Mōgo* and *kigo* are two of the Buddhist ten evils (*jūaku*). For discussions and translations of various texts that address *Genji kuyō*, rendered ‘Genji obsequies,’ see *Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium*, eds. Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015): 177–206.

⁶ The phrase *Genji kuyō tan* is first used by Toku’e Gensei, “Kokuseki ruishobon ‘Genji kuyō sōshi’ o megurite,” *Biburia* 64 (1976), 17. On the development of the Murasaki-in-hell legend and *Genji kuyō*, see Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no densetu* (Tokyo: Shōwa shuppan, 1976): 151–212. As of 2010, there are at least 201 sources dealing with *Genji kuyō* archived at the *Kokuritsu kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan* [National Institute of Japanese Literature]. Watanabe Shujun, “‘Genji kuyō’ no Tendai,” *Eizan gakuin kenkyū kiyō* 32 (2010), 10–12.

⁷ This is the first of a series of *jōruri* and *kabuki* that have some basis on *Genji kuyō tan*. I do not include later texts here because they depart heavily from earlier *kuyō*. For a discussion, see Shirakata Masaru, “Genji monogatari to jōruri,” *Genji monogatari no tankyū* 4, ed. Genji monogatari kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1979): 179–196.

made into a woman writer who – far from having fallen to hell – is a faultless figure.

Early *Genji kuyō tan*

Though *tsukuri monogatari* (fictional tales) were considered to violate Buddhist precepts forbidding falsehoods and specious words long before Murasaki Shikibu's time, it was during the *inseiki* (cloistered emperor period, 1086–1185) that there arose an increased anxiety – fueled in part by general political and social insecurities of the age – that such tales were sinful.⁸ Thus it is no coincidence that the *Genji ipponkyō* was composed at this time.⁹ Attributed to Tendai priest Chōken (1126–1203), founder of the Agui temple and its line of sermonic orators,¹⁰ *Genji ipponkyō* [Sutra for Genji] (ca. 1166) is a *hyōbyaku*, or a declaration outlining the purpose of a Buddhist service.¹¹

⁸ *Sanbō'e (kotoba)* [(Words Amended to the) Illustration of the Three Jewels] (ca. 984) calls *monogatari* lies which should be avoided: “do not let your heart get caught up even briefly in these tangled roots of evil, these forests of words.” Edward Kamen's translation in *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's Sanbōe* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988), 93.

⁹ There is still no clear consensus about the dating of the text, though Teramoto Naohiko positioned it between 1176 and 1189. Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen* (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1984), 508–509. Regardless, *Genji ipponkyō* is nearly contemporaneous to *Genji monogatari shaku* [The Tale of Genji Explicated] by Fujiwara no Koreyuki (ca. 1160), the earliest extant treatise on *Genji*.

¹⁰ Scholars generally follow Gotō Tanji's early argument that the author is Chōken. Chōken, who was a son of Fujiwara no Michinori (1106–1159), is referred to in *Genji ipponkyō* as *hō'in* (Tendai prelate) but was not given that status until 1183. On the Agui School's sympathy to issues of gender – for example, emphasizing the role of the mother over the father, see Komine Kazuaki, “Shōdō – Agui Chōken o meguru,” *Koten bungaku to bukkyō*, eds. Kon'no Tōru et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 32–36.

¹¹ The term *ipponkyō* usually identifies a ceremony in which the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* are copied, so the title *Genji ipponkyō* can be translated as “Copying the Lotus Sutra for *Genji*.” Gotō Tanji was the first modern scholar to comprehensively analyze this text beginning in 1930

It explains that a nun has approached the priest for help in granting salvation to Murasaki Shikibu and readers of *The Tale of Genji*.¹² She tells that the *Genji* author's ghost has been appearing in people's dreams, warning them that *Genji* readers will join her in hell because *The Tale of Genji* commits the offense of being *monogatari*, the lowest form of writing,¹³ deemed inferior for failing to tell "good and evil actions of people of the past" and "providing record of old events from earlier eras."¹⁴ Though *Genji* is identified to be the most superior of such tales, it is especially egregious in showing relations between men and women and stimulating readers:

and revised as "Genji hyōbyaku kō," *Chūsei kokubungaku kenkyū* (Tokyo: Isobe kōyōdō, 1943): 3–28.

¹² Though there is some doubt, the nun is said to be Bifukumon'in no Kaga (d. 1193), wife of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204) and mother of Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241). If Bifukumon'in no Kaga took vows at the same time that Shunzei did (1176), the first *kuyō* was probably performed around 1180. See Matsuoka Shinpei, "Genji kuyō," *Genji monogatari handobukku*, eds. Akiyama Ken, Watanabe Tamotsu, and Matsuoka Shinpei (Tokyo: Shinshokan, 1996), 83. As Michael Jamentz notes, however, the Sōanshū manuscript shows that the sponsor was a lady-in-waiting known only as Tosa no Naishi. Michael Jamentz, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 189. It is possible that the same *kuyō* ceremony is referenced in several other texts including *Hōbutsushū* [Collection of Treasures] (ca. 1180) and *Ima monogatari* [Tales of the Present] (ca. 1240), though *Ima kagami* [Mirror of the Present] (ca. 1170) suggests that there were numerous ceremonies performed on different occasions.

¹³ The famous ranking of literature cited by *Genji ipponkyō* is the following: Buddhist scripture, Confucian tracts, histories, Chinese poetry, Japanese poetry, and finally, fictional *monogatari*. This hierarchy had already existed by the time of *Genji*'s composition, though it is only during the late Heian period that *monogatari* becomes recognized as a part of literature (*bungaku*). Takahashi Tōru, *Genji monogatari no taihō* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1982), 265.

¹⁴ "Genji ipponkyō," in *Genji monogatari, Kokugo kokubungaku kenkyūshi taisei* 3, eds. Abe Akio, Oka Kazuo, and Yamagishi Tokuhei (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1960), 37.

Of the *monogatari*, the tale of the Shining Genji was written by Murasaki Shikibu. Totalling sixty scrolls and comprising thirty-nine chapters,¹⁵ its words span those of Buddhist and Confucian texts, its contents skillfully composed of conversations between men and women. Amongst the tales of old, this is the most superior. Its poetry is superbly beautiful and stirs up passions. In homes where men and women value the senses, and with people, both wealthy and poor, who are easily allured, this tale is used as a means to manipulate people's thoughts. When unmarried ladies in their inner chambers view it, they are moved to springtime yearnings. When men who lie alone on their cold mats open it, their hearts are worked up with autumnal passions. For this reason, the spirit of its maker and the many people who have viewed it are together bound in sin, trapped in the cycle of birth and death and will fall to the blades of the forests of hell. And because of this, the spirit of Murasaki Shikibu has from old appeared in people's dreams to tell them of the weight of the sin.¹⁶

¹⁵ Some versions cite 49 chapters and 60 scrolls. The specific number of chapters that comprise the whole of *The Tale of Genji* was long a source of some confusion, with numerous references to the tale having a total of sixty books, presumably to match the number of scrolls in the Tendai scriptural canon. By the Kamakura period major *Genji* recensions declared that the correct total was fifty-four, as we have today. Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no nazo* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1983), 203–205.

¹⁶ Translated from “Genji ipponkyō,” 37; in consultation with the modern Japanese reading by Hakamada Mitsuyasu in *Genji monogatari to Bukkyō: butten, koji, girei*, ed. Hinata Kazumasa (Tokyo: Seikansha, 2009), 223. A slightly longer passage is translated in Haruo Shirane, “*The Tale of Genji*

It is not only men and women that “value the senses” and “who are easily allured” – that is to say, those who are somehow primed to be drawn to lascivious stories – who are affected by the tale.¹⁷ So potent is *The Tale of Genji*’s appeal that no one, including confined maidens brought up in protective homes and unattached men leading ascetic lives, can possibly resist its temptations. All such *Genji* readers, including the nun who has volunteered to sponsor the *kuyō*, are culpable and are bound in sin with Murasaki Shikibu, together awaiting a destiny of shared suffering. In order to save them all, the twenty-eight volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* are to be copied, each scroll appended with an illustration of a chapter of *Genji*.¹⁸ The same readers who could not help but be negatively influenced by the tale are tasked with this penitentiary act.¹⁹ The *Genji* reader is thus both victim and potential liberator upon whom Murasaki Shikibu must rely to expunge her of her unique sins as the *Genji* author.²⁰

Genji ipponkyō concludes with Bo Juyi’s view of *kyōgen kigo* (wild words and fanciful phrases) that admonishes secular literature while simultaneously declaring it a means to promote Buddhist truths. First seen in *Hakushi monjū* [Ch. *Boshi wenji*, Collected Works of Bo Juyi], in Japan, this declaration is most famously incorporated in *Wakan rōeishū* [Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing] (ca. 1017) and

and the Dynamics of Cultural Production,” *Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 18. Also translated by Michael Jamentz, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 190.

¹⁷ “*Genji ipponkyō*,” 37.

¹⁸ Re-arranged into twenty-eight ‘corollary chapters’ (*narabi no maki*).

¹⁹ “*Genji ipponkyō*,” 37: The salvation ceremony is conducted by a diverse group of people, “whether they have entered the path of the Buddha or not, whether they be wealthy or poor.”

²⁰ There are other examples of cases in which the victims are the only ones able to mitigate the suffering of the perpetrator; for example, in *A Wonderful Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*, a famed beauty appears in the dream of dharma monk Jakurin, after which the monk determines that she will not be relieved of her pain until her children copy out sutras in her name in a show of forgiveness. Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 103–104.

repeated in numerous texts including *Heike monogatari* [Tales of The Heike] (mid-thirteenth century) and *Shasekishū* [Collection of Sand and Pebbles] (1279–1283). The phrase *kyōgen kigo* comes to be, as Takahashi Tōru put it, akin to a “mantra that legitimizes literature and performing arts.”²¹ Though the *Sarashina nikki* [Sarashina Diary] (ca. 1059) hinted at the possibility of reading *The Tale of Genji* from the perspective of *kyōgen kigo*, it was not until *Genji ipponkyō* that the phrase was used in explicit reference to the tale.²² The first text of the *Genji kuyō tan* thus acknowledged *The Tale of Genji* to be problematic in its fictional depiction of amorous affairs while simultaneously employing Bo Juyi’s rhetoric to forge a connection between the tale and Buddhist enlightenment. This reconciliation of literature with Buddhist faith becomes one popular justification of *Genji* as seen in commentaries like *Kakaishō* [Book of Seas and Rivers] by Yotsutsuji Yoshinari (1362–67) and *Myōjōshō* [Notes for the Morning Star] by Sanjōnishi Kin’eda (ca. 1552).²³ The possibility that literature could be repositioned or reconstituted as an instrument of Buddhist teaching is fundamental to early *Genji kuyō tan*.²⁴

Following this concept, over the next few decades *Genji ipponkyō* is succeeded by texts such as *Ima kagami* [Mirror of the Present] (ca. 1170), *Shin chokusen wakashū* [New Imperial Collection of Poetry] (1235) and *Ima monogatari* [The Tales of The Present] (ca. 1240) that tell of similar *kuyō* ceremonies. The *Ima kagami* cites the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* only to debunk it and defend the *Genji* author, claiming that her tale – which was prized by emperors and empresses – cannot be deemed transgressive since the Buddha himself primarily preached not with

²¹ Takahashi Tōru, *Genji monogatari no taiihō*, 247.

²² Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen*, 500. *Sarashina* suggests that the amorous relations in *Genji* can ultimately lead the reader to seek Buddhist truths; in her *nikki*, Takasue’s daughter depicts herself as resisting this idea until later in her life. See *The Sarashina Diary: A Woman’s Life in Eleventh-Century Japan*, trans. Sonja Arntzen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

²³ Shirane, *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*, 26–27.

²⁴ Women readers in particular felt a need to forge a connection between *The Tale of Genji* and Buddhist enlightenment. Mitamura Masako, *Kioku no naka no Genji monogatari* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2008): 37–43.

historical anecdotes but rather through allegorical parables.²⁵ In its refutation of the Murasaki-in-hell legend, the historical tale suggests that the story was widely known by that time.

Though *Ima kagami* defends the author, in most narratives of *Genji kuyō* the story of *Genji* is identified as corrupt and corrupting, as seen in the below passage from *Ima monogatari* [The Tales of The Present] (ca. 1240):²⁶

In a certain person's dream, someone without a discernable form appeared as if a shadow. When questioned who it was, [the form] replied: "It is Murasaki Shikibu. Because I gathered a great number of lies (*soragoto*) and misled people's hearts, I fell to hell and am suffering. It is truly unbearable. Please, take the titles of *Genji's* tale and for every chapter, compose a poem and include the chant *Hail, Amida Buddha* – and pray for my suffering." When asked how such poems should be composed, she answered thus:

Lost in the darkness of *Kiritsubo*
Bring light by repeating the incantation:
*Hail, Amida Buddha.*²⁷

The sin identified here is similar to that outlined in *Genji ipponkyō*: the tale is fiction and it influences readers, leading them astray. And yet, Murasaki Shikibu is alone in hell, for the offense is here considered to lie only in the

²⁵ See translation and introduction by Thomas Harper in *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 180–184. As Teramoto Naohiko succinctly summarizes, there have been various suggestions on the dating of the text, ranging from the third month of 1170 to as late as 1188. Most scholars agree that *Genji ipponkyō* preceded *Ima kagami*. Teramoto Naohiko, *Genji monogatari juyōshi ronkō zokuhen*, 521. Though *Ima kagami* denies the Murasaki-in-hell legend, in the end it declares that anyone with enough compassion (*nasake ōku*) who prays for her deliverance will be a recipient of good karma, thus advocating for the very thing that it denies is needed.

²⁶ Attributed to Fujiwara no Nobuzane (ca. 1176–1266).

²⁷ *Ima monogatari, Takafusashū, Tōsai zuihitsu*, ed. Kubota Jun et. al (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1979), 156.

writing of the tale, not in its reading. Unlike *Genji ipponkyō*, in which the readers and the author share in the sin and subsequently the penalty found in *The Tale of Genji*, here the responsibility lies clearly and solely with Murasaki Shikibu, who is held liable for writing and disseminating the tale – in other words, for constitutively being the *Genji* author. In fact, in the majority of *Genji kuyō* texts after *Genji ipponkyō*, the *Genji* reader is no longer depicted to be in any danger of ‘falling’ – to hell or elsewhere – alongside the *Genji* author.²⁸

Indeed, one could argue that by conducting services for the author, readers were also hoping to save themselves; dreaming of the author in distress (or claiming to have such dreams) is itself perhaps a manifestation of a sort of guilt in associating with the tale.²⁹ But so far as the *Genji kuyō* narratives after *Genji ipponkyō* are concerned, readers do not share in the sins of the *Genji* author. Komine Kazuaki³⁰ has noted that the *Genji kuyō*

²⁸ The *otogi zōshi* [Muromachi tale] *Genji kuyō sōshi* [A Story of Genji kuyō], shows a nun who fears that her obsession with the tale is injurious and incompatible with her devotions, but the tale itself is not depicted as entirely problematic, as evidenced by the Agui priest’s facility with *Genji* chapter titles, which is praised and rewarded. Andō Michiko favors Fujii Takashi’s dating of the text between 1311 and 1381. Andō Michiko, “Genji kuyō sōshi” in *Monogatari bungaku no keifu* 2, *Kamakura monogatari* 1, ed. Mitani Eiichi (Tokyo: Yūseidō shuppan, 1989), 172. Most likely the *Genji kuyō nō* play was based in part on this tale.

²⁹ Andō Tōru has discussed the tendency of select *Genji* enthusiasts even in the modern period to imagine a unique connection between themselves and the *Genji* author, often in the form of dreams. Andō Tōru, “Yomi no rekishi to monogatari sakusha no jikoseikei: ‘Murasaki Shikibu nikki’ no ichi,” in Ōchō monogatari kenkyūkai, ed., *Ōchō joryū nikki no shikai* (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1999): 308–314. The story that people who have died appear in dreams to ask for *kuyō* appears often in the medieval period. For a brief discussion of dreams in the context of medieval Buddhist thought, William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983): 4–7.

³⁰ As Komine notes, it is no coincidence that the *Genji kuyō* are first seen around the same time as *Genji monogatari shaku*, *Genji monogatari emaki* [The Tale of Genji Picture Scroll] and the age of Fujiwara no Shunzei and

narrative was born once *The Tale of Genji* was established as a ‘classic text’ (*koten*) and the world of the reader became separated from that of the tale. Indeed, *Genji* was undeniably on its way to becoming a ‘classic’ by the time of *Genji ipponkyō*, but the separation of reader from text – and from its author – is manifest more clearly in subsequent *Genji kuyō* texts.

Genji kuyō nō

In significant contrast to the *Genji* reader, the author of *The Tale of Genji* continues to be branded a sinner and made to pay penance in *Genji kuyō tan*. The image of her suffering ghost is most prominent in the *nō* play *Genji kuyō*, of unclear authorship and first performed in 1464.³¹ In it, a priest on his way to Ishiyama temple is stopped by the author’s spirit, who asks that he conduct a memorial service for *Genji* at his destination. He complies, reciting a condensed version of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku* [The Tale of Genji Proclamation], a proclamation in the form of an extended poem comprised of *Genji* chapter titles attributed to Chōken’s son Seikaku (or Shōkaku, 1167–1235).³² This declares the tale to be akin to Buddhist doctrine. At the end of the play, it is revealed that Murasaki Shikibu was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Kannon, and that *Genji* was in fact written by the deity “to tell mankind that the world is but a dream.”³³

Teika, who emphasized the use of *Genji* in *waka*. Komine Kazuaki, *Setsuwa no gensetsu – chūsei no hyōgen to rekishi jojutsu* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2002), 193.

³¹ The earliest recorded performance of the *nō* play *Genji kuyō* was in 1464 at the Tadasugawara in Kyoto. Translated with an introduction by Janet Goff in Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji: The Art of Allusion in Fifteen Classical Plays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991): 198–209; and Royall Tyler, *To Hallow Genji: A Tribute to Noh* (Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace, 2013): 3–17.

³² Most scholars agree with Gotō Tanji’s early suggestion that Shōkaku is the author. Gotō Tanji, “Genji ipponkyō to Genji hyōbyaku,” 44–46.

³³ Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 209. Kobayashi Kenji suggests that *Genji kuyō* were indeed long conducted at Ishiyama temple using a portrait of Murasaki Shikibu depicted as an incarnation of Kannon. Kobayashi Kenji, “Nō ‘Genji kuyō’ seisaku no haikei: Ishiyamadera ni okeru Murasaki Shikibu shinkō” in *Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan kiyō, bungaku kenkyū hen* 37 (2011): 59–92.

During her first contact with the priest, who is identified only by his affiliation with the Agui temple and therefore could be either Chōken or Seikaku, the woman's spirit requests a prayer. Below, the spirit is the *shite*, and the priest is the *waki*:

Shite:	If I may, I wish to speak to the incumbent priest of Agui Temple.
Waki:	Are you addressing me?
Shite:	In seclusion at Ishiyama I composed the sixty <i>Genji</i> chapters, An idle diversion that survived my death. Although my name is still remembered for it, I failed to hold a memorial service for <i>Genji</i> and am thus condemned to wander without attaining salvation. If possible, would you please at Ishiyama Hold a memorial service for <i>Genji</i> And pray on behalf of my soul? ³⁴

In this *nō* play, ubiquitous descriptors of the tale found in earlier *Genji kuyō tan* like the term *mōgo* (falsehoods) do not appear.³⁵ Even though the phrase *kyōgen kigo* is included at the close of the *hyōbyaku*, there is no other explanation of the tale itself as being sinful. Instead, the identified sin is the failure of the author to “hold a memorial service for *Genji*” – in other words, she is wrong to not have conducted a *Genji kuyō*. In the *kyōgen* or comic interlude to the drama, the necessity for this *kuyō* is explained.³⁶ It

³⁴ Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 203–4. See also Royall Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 7.

³⁵ The priests' reference to a “story of *Genji*” that is “not true” (*makotoshikaranu*) may point to the fictional nature of *The Tale of Genji*, but it is likely regarding the Ishiyama temple legend. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyōkushū* 2, 55.

³⁶ In the modern period the interlude is omitted from most performances. Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 275 (n. 19). Royall Tyler includes the interlude in his translation. Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 8–9.

tells that Empress Shōshi (988–1074), after hearing that the Great Kamo Priestess (Senshi 964–1035)³⁷ was tired of stories like *Taketori monogatari* [The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter] and *Utsubo monogatari* [The Tale of Utsubo], commanded Murasaki Shikibu to write a new tale. Finding this task daunting, Murasaki sought divine assistance at Ishiyama temple. On the fifteenth night of the eighth month, the temple deity Bodhisattva Kannon bestowed Murasaki with visions of the tale. Because the divine inspiration came to her so suddenly, she wrote the tale on the back of the *Great Wisdom Sutra* that was lying in front of her. In penance, she was supposed to have copied the scripture to dedicate it to the Ishiyama temple's Kannon – but she neglected this duty.

This legend of the composition of *The Tale of Genji* at Ishiyama temple was popularized beginning in the late twelfth century around the same time as the Murasaki-in-hell story, and is later famously repeated in the influential *Genji* commentary *Kakaishō* [Book of Seas and Rivers] (1362–67).³⁸ The two narratives appear to be in direct opposition to one another; that is, how could the *Genji* author be condemned for writing a tale if it was inspired by a deity? The *nō* play reconciles the apparent contradiction by recounting that the tale was in fact composed under Buddhist auspices at Ishiyama, but the author failed to make amends for having used the back of scripture to write it. The Ishiyama temple legend will be further discussed below, but here I point out that in the *nō* play the *Genji kuyō* is deemed necessary not because Murasaki Shikibu wrote fiction

³⁷ Senshi was the tenth daughter of Emperor Murakami and the Priestess of Kamo Shrine from 975 to 1031. As her tenure lasted over five imperial reigns, she came to be known as *Daisai'in*, or Great Priestess of Kamo. Ii Haruki, *Genji monogatari no nazo*, 11.

³⁸ By Yotsutsuji Yoshinari (1326–1402). The Ishiyama temple legend is later seen most prominently in *Genji monogatari Kogetsushō* [The Tale of Genji Moon on the Lake Commentary] (1673). The fourth chapter of *Ishiyama monogatari* [Tales of Ishiyama] (1658), *Murasaki Shikibu no maki* [Story of Murasaki Shikibu], also made the story accessible to the wider public. For a short discussion on the legend and its emphasis of Murasaki Shikibu's Buddhist devotion, see Naito, "Beyond *The Tale of Genji*: Murasaki Shikibu as Icon and Exemplum in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Popular Japanese Texts for Women," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9/1 (2014): 63–69.

with amorous content, nor was it (as we might otherwise expect) done in order to give thanks to Ishiyama's Kannon for giving inspiration. What was judged sinful in earlier *Genji kuyō tan* – that Murasaki Shikibu was constitutively the author of *The Tale of Genji* – is no longer an issue. Rather, it is the use of the physical material upon which she wrote it that is deemed transgressive. This is a crucial difference from the sin identified in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*.

Furthermore, in the *nō* play the *Genji* reader is not made to save the *Genji* author. In fact, the position of the *Genji* reader, whose function was so indispensable in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, is effectively eliminated. Instead of appearing in dreams and delegating the role of sponsoring a sanctification ceremony to a loyal reader of her tale, Murasaki Shikibu has taken on the task herself. In fact, though she asks the priest to perform the service, Murasaki Shikibu's spirit provides the words of the *Genji hyōbyaku* for him to recite. In the passage below, the "I" points to the *Genji* author:

Shite:	This rare encounter
Chorus:	inspired a fervent prayer, which I have inscribed on a scroll hoping to awaken from darkness. May Radiant Genji's spirit attain enlightenment. ³⁹

In the *nō* play, the ghost of Murasaki Shikibu literally authors her own salvation prayer.⁴⁰ By initiating the *kuyō* and providing the prayer to be used for it, Murasaki Shikibu takes on roles that were divided among *Genji* reader(s) and the priest in previous *Genji kuyō tan*. Furthermore, when the *Genji* author's spirit reappears in the latter half of the play as the *nochi waki* (later *waki*), the actor wears an *eboshi* hat, as if Murasaki were at once the author and a character in her own tale. Indeed, in the *Genji kuyō nō* play, the *Genji* author is undeniably front-and-center, as it happens, atop the *nō* stage.

³⁹ Janet Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 207. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyōkushū* 2, 57. See also Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 14.

⁴⁰ It is possible that the scroll mentioned here is a copy of the *Lotus Sutra*, as Royall Tyler suggests (Tyler, *To Hallow Genji*, 5), but it is also likely to be the prayer that is recited immediately following passage. Itō Masayoshi, *Yōkyōkushū* 2, 57.

This central figure of Murasaki Shikibu initially appears as a soul suffering in hell, but in the end she is revealed to be a Bodhisattva incarnate. Her divinity is amplified with the declaration that she composed *The Tale of Genji* with the intention of disseminating the Buddhist truth that life is but a dream. Centuries prior, *Genji ipponkyō* had used Bo Juyi's declaration of *kyōgen kigo* to proclaim the potential of the tale to be a medium of Buddhist instruction, but the *nō* takes this concept further to allege that *The Tale of Genji* was in fact composed precisely for that purpose by a Buddhist deity.

The story that Murasaki Shikibu was a reincarnated deity – most commonly the Bodhisattva Kannon, the “god(dess) of mercy” – was prevalent by the mid-Kamakura period and appeared as early as the late eleventh century. The *Ima kagami* (ca. 1170) and *Mumyōzōshi* [Nameless Book] (ca. 1200) both claim that she must have been a deity.⁴¹ This Murasaki-as-god story likely emerged as a reaction to the Murasaki-in-hell narrative, and both are clearly premised upon a Buddhist worldview.⁴² The story of her deification also most effectively accounted for the perceived awesomeness of the *Genji*, as select scholars were unconvinced that a mere mortal could have written the tale on her own; the only legitimate explanation would include a superhuman origin. In the *Genji kuyō nō* play, Murasaki Shikibu is deified for the feat, after initially having been vilified for the transgression, of authoring the tale.

From the *Genji ipponkyō* to the *Genji kuyō nō* play we thus see the depiction of Murasaki Shikibu shift from that of a sinned woman whose spirit is forced to rely on others to save her, to a divine figure who composes her own means of salvation. There is also a significantly reduced presence of the *Genji* reader. The *Genji kuyō jōruri*, to which I now turn, is loosely based on the *nō* and its assimilation of the Ishiyama legend with the *Genji kuyō* narrative. In it, the *Genji* author becomes even more celebrated – even if she is no longer made to be divine.

⁴¹ *Imakagami* shows the beginnings of Murasaki-as-deity story, suggesting that she was either Myō'on or Kannon. The basis may have been the myth that Bo Juyi was the reincarnation of Manjusri. Takahashi Tōru “Ōchō ‘onna’ bunka to *Mumyōzōshi*,” *Kodai bungaku kenkyū* 10 (2001), 7.

⁴² Misumi Yōichi, *Genji monogatari to Tendai Jōdokyō* (Tokyo: Wakakusa shobō, 1996), 199–200. The final revelation that a main character is divine is also not atypical in *nō*.

Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō

The *jōruri* play *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* [Ishiyama Temple in Ōmi Province: Genji kuyō] (1676) depicts the *Genji* origin story at Ishiyama temple found in the *nō*, and adds dramatic twists such as a literary competition between Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon (ca. 965), highlighting issues of humility, pride, and social expectations with regards gender and literary production. The *kuyō* ceremony appears almost as an addendum and is conducted for reasons distinct from earlier *Genji kuyō* stories. This, in addition to the motley nature of the play – with its sensational flourishes obviously intended for maximum entertainment on the *bunraku* stage – aligns it strongly within a uniquely *bunraku* tradition and is likely why it has not been the object of much scholarship on *Genji* reception.⁴³ However, the differences of *Gōshū Ishiyama dera* from earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, including *Genji kuyō nō*, show the development of the Murasaki-in-hell narrative into a complete celebration of Murasaki Shikibu.

The play begins, as do many accounts of the *Genji* author of the time, with praise of Empress Shōshi (988–1074). Murasaki Shikibu is listed amongst her large and impressive salon of attendant women, which includes other renowned Heian women writers like Akazome Emon (ca. 964–1021), Izumi Shikibu (fl. ca. 1000), and Sei Shōnagon. The last in fact served Empress Teishi (977–1001), but in popular literature of the time is often depicted alongside her contemporaries in Shōshi's rooms.⁴⁴ In the *jōruri* Murasaki Shikibu is singled out as a “noble poet” whose “intelligence in matters of Japanese and Chinese are unparalleled now as in the past.”⁴⁵ When Shōshi receives a letter from the Great Kamo Priestess (Senshi 964–1035) soliciting a new tale, she deems the duty best suited for Murasaki. The latter humbly declines, at which point Sei Shōnagon takes the opportunity to volunteer her own work, *Makura no sōshi* [The Pillow

⁴³ *The Tale of Genji* has not been as influential on *jōruri* as medieval *gunki mono* [war tales] such as *Heike monogatari* [The Tales of the Heike] in mid-thirteenth century, and *nō*, though some schools used references to *Genji* in an attempt to elevate their art. Masaru, “Genji monogatari to jōruri,” 177–79.

⁴⁴ In fact, Sei is often depicted as an attendant to Shōshi, rather than to Teishi. I am grateful to Gergana Ivanova for this confirmation.

⁴⁵ *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, in *Kojōruri shōhonshū Kaga no jō 1*, ed. Kojōruri shōhonshū kankōkai (Kyoto: Daigakudō shoten, 1989), 21.

Book]. The Empress decides to turn this into a contest, commanding Murasaki to complete her own original tale as well.

When Murasaki's husband Nobutaka hears of this momentous assignment, he arranges to steal *The Pillow Book* to assess the competition. This plan centers on a hired thief, disguised as a dog, who is promptly sidetracked from his mission when he becomes enamored by Sei's beauty. He makes his advances but is immediately rejected by a horrified Sei Shōnagon. Thus, the would-be-thief fails, both in his endeavor to steal *The Pillow Book* and to woo its author, and is ultimately executed by Nobutaka who wants to hide his connection to the whole ordeal. Murasaki, without giving any opinion on the matter, then cloisters herself in Ishiyama temple to write the tale; here we return again to the Ishiyama *Genji* origin legend. Murasaki completes the tale in sixty-four days. The narrative, which identifies it as "*Tale of Shining Genji (Hikaru Genji monogatari)*"⁴⁶ confers ornate accolades upon the tale, comparing it to *Shiki* [*Ch. Shi ji*, Records of a Historian] and *Nihongi* (or *Nihon shoki*) [Chronicles of Japan] (720).

When both Murasaki and Sei's works are presented, the priest Seikaku, designated by the Empress to act as judge, first reads *The Pillow Book* and deems it clearly praiseworthy, its words "elegantly refined (*yasashiku taketakaku*)."⁴⁷ But then he reads Murasaki's offering and cannot help but to name it the clear winner:

After reading [*The Tale of Genji*] thoroughly, for a while [Seikaku] remained in awe. Noticing this, Shōshi asked: "how is it?" Though it was in front of Her Highness, without hesitation he suddenly clapped his hands together. The beauty of the prose, the flow of the *waka*, it is alluringly refined (*en ni yasashiku*). It not only holds its mysterious awe, but leads to the deep meanings of Buddhism.... It is an exceptional *monogatari*." Raising it three times to his head, he looked to be extremely moved indeed.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., 29. This nomenclature is common.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Murasaki soon asks Seikaku to pray for the tale's characters.⁴⁹ Though moved by this request, it is not until he has a vivid dream of Shining Genji suffering in hell for his treatment of women that the priest hastens to conduct services. The *kuyō* again includes recitation of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku*. In attendance at Ishiyama temple to witness the service are Empress Shōshi, Murasaki Shikibu, and other ladies of the salon. In the conclusion of the play, Genji and others from the tale appear together with a declaration that they have attained Buddhahood.

The *jōruri* within *Genji kuyō tan*

This *jōruri* retains key aspects of earlier *Genji kuyō tan*; first and foremost, the text includes the performance of a *Genji kuyō*, conducted by Seikaku. This priest and his father Chōken are the religious institutional figures who appear individually to conduct *kuyō* rites in most versions of the *Genji kuyō tan*, including *Genji ipponkyō* and the *nō* play. The *jōruri* continues in this tradition, though Seikaku is accorded the added authority to judge the quality of *The Tale of Genji*. One significant element shared with the *nō* is the inclusion of the Ishiyama legend, but another is the recitation of *Genji monogatari hyōbyaku*. As it has often been discussed, the *hyōbyaku*, while closing with a reference to the sins of *kyōgen kigo*, is itself quite ornate in its lyricism.⁵⁰ Clearly the notion that *Genji* is sinful because of its form and content cannot be taken literally, and in fact the extended poem facilitates memorization of *Genji* chapter titles, thereby promoting an important aspect of the tale's popular dissemination. The *Genji hyōbyaku*, far from simply condemning the tale, lauds it as an effective vehicle to Buddhist understanding, and functions similarly to the reference to Bo Juyi's declaration of *kyōgen kigo* in *Genji ipponkyō*. This ultimate celebration of *Genji* is fundamental to *Genji kuyō tan*, though it is

⁴⁹ This may also refer to the people on which the characters are based.

⁵⁰ Yuasa Yukiyo, "Genji monogatari hyōbyaku," in *Genji monogatari to Bukkyō: butten, koji, girei*, ed. Hinata Kazumasa (Tokyo: Seikansha, 2009), 235–236. In comparison to Chōken's other known *hyōbyaku* there is far less decorative language, perhaps precisely because the text admonishes the literary work of *Genji*. Komine, "'Hōei bungei' to shite no Genji kuyō – hyōbyaku kara monogatari e," *Genji monogatari to waka o manabu hito no tameni*, eds., Katō Mutsumi and Kojima Naoko (Kyoto: Sekai shinsōsha, 2007), 244.

not until the *jōruri* that its author becomes fully and unapologetically celebrated.

Though the *jōruri* is thus clearly marked as belonging to the *Genji kuyō* tradition, there are also several peculiarities. For instance, the hired thief in dog's clothing has little to do with *The Tale of Genji* except to highlight the competition between Sei's camp and that of Murasaki. The elaborate scene in hell of Genji being 'haunted' by the women he has wronged is also unique (in the *kuyō nō* play the audience is also told that he is in hell, but this is not dramatized). Clearly these additions are meant to make the most of the *jōruri* stage, functioning as *miseba*, or highlights of the play worthy of viewing. Parts of the Suma and Akashi chapters are also staged as if above the waters of Lake Biwa, using a technique repeated in later *jōruri* plays.⁵¹ Though I do not elaborate on this any further here, *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* clearly belongs to the *bunraku* theatrical tradition.⁵²

In this *jōruri*, it is also notable that Shōshi and her entire salon are together for much of the narrative. In *Genji kuyō tan*, the archetypal *Genji* reader – first represented in *Genji ipponkyō* by the sponsoring nun – is notably female, but the *jōruri*'s united community of women further and more absolutely genders the tale's transmission. Though Murasaki writes in solitary confinement, the tale is precipitated, evaluated, and prayed for in the illustrious company of the Empress and her closest female attendants. The notion of a female-gendered audience to *Genji* is not new; after all, Takasue's daughter recounted in *Sarashina nikki* (*Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1059) that the tale was shared amongst female readers, and *Mumyōzōshi* (*Nameless Book*, ca. 1200)⁵³ depicts only women evaluating *Genji* and other tales. But it is also significant that the male priest Seikaku has such an integral part in the tale's assessment and its characters' salvation. Though

⁵¹ Hayashi Kumiko, "Jōruri no kabuki ka – Iwase bunkobon 'Genji kuyō' o megutte," *Jōruri no sekai*, ed. Sakaguchi Hiroyuki (Tokyo: Sekai shisōsha, 1992), 225–226.

⁵² Features like the hired *ninja* thief and *michiyuki*-like listing of place names make the *jōruri* 'typically *kinsei* [early-modern].' Uesaka Nobuo, *Genji monogatari tensei: engekishi ni miru* (Tokyo: Yūbun shoin, 1987), 70–74.

⁵³ Attributed to the "daughter" of Fujiwara no Shunzei (Shunzei no musume, ca. 1170–1250), who was in fact his granddaughter.

scholars have importantly demonstrated that the *Genji* commentarial tradition was not limited to men,⁵⁴ the *jōruri* is one example of the popular depiction of *Genji* being critically assessed by a male authority figure while read predominantly by women.

More clearly deviating from earlier *Genji kuyō tan* is the prominent narrative position given to Sei Shōnagon. A tendency to speak of her together with Murasaki Shikibu was prevalent by 1703, when Andō Tameakira aggressively declared that they could not even be compared.⁵⁵ This comment was extremely influential for Meiji intellectual critics who maligned Sei in favor of Murasaki.⁵⁶ As it is evidenced, however, the assessment of Murasaki's work as superior was not unique to Tameakira, even if the effect of the *jōruri* is not to disparage *The Pillow Book*, since it too receives high accolades.⁵⁷ Murasaki herself is also depicted as giving no negative opinions – or any opinions, for that matter – regarding her so-called rival. In fact, she is clearly depicted as being forced into the competition by the Empress. And though she does express curiosity in *The Pillow Book*, it is her husband who arranges for its burglary. She does not stop his plans, but neither does she play a part in it, and instead is portrayed as obediently following her husband. Murasaki remains above the fray, and

⁵⁴ For example, Christina Laffin examines the significant critical work of Nun Abutsu in *Rewriting Medieval Women: Politics, Personality and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ In *Shika shichiron* [Seven Essays on Murasaki] (1703): "It has long been the custom to speak of Murasaki and Sei Shōnagon as two of a kind. But Sei Shōnagon's talent is so limited and slight, and her intellectual pretensions so obvious that her work is often distasteful. These two women can hardly even be compared." Andō Tameakira, *Shika shichiron*, in *Kinsei shintō ron, zenki kokugaku, Nihon shisō taikēi* 39, eds. Taira Shigemichi and Abe Akio (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 422–41. Introduction and partial translation by Naito in *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 392–411.

⁵⁶ Discussed by Gergana Invanova, "Heian Writers as a Tool for Gender Training," Lecture, Association for Asian Studies, March 27, 2015.

⁵⁷ In fact the early thirteenth-century *Mumyōzōshi*, mentioned above, concluded that while *The Pillow Book* is an excellent work, Sei was not a great poet, though it does not explicitly declare that Sei is inferior to Murasaki.

she is calm despite the chaos that surrounds her. This is just one attribute that adds to her image in this *jōruri* as a faultless woman.

Faultless Murasaki

A major contribution to the image of Murasaki as an exemplary woman is found in the *jōruri*'s use of the Ishiyama temple legend. As recounted above, this story tells that Murasaki wrote her tale as mandated by the Empress and thanks to divine inspiration; this, then, allowed her to be cleared from the responsibility of writing a fictional tale of lascivious content, effectively negating any liability as an individual author who creates from her own genius and intention. The *nō* uses this effect but simultaneously has her commit the sin of failing to atone for writing the tale on the back of the *Great Wisdom Sutra*. In the *nō* it is also only after the *kuyō* recitation declares that Murasaki is to be saved that we are told she was in fact the Bodhisattva Kannon. Hence, as the narrative order is concerned, she has to be saved before she is revealed to be divine. In the *jōruri*, however, Murasaki Shikibu is not made to take any misstep, and she needs not be saved at all. This depiction of the *Genji* author as being completely free of culpability – a characterization that became prominent in popular culture at the time – is the most significant development of the *Genji kuyō tan* found in the *jōruri*.

Instead of Murasaki Shikibu, in the *jōruri* it is the character Genji who has sinned. This assessment of the character as morally depraved is seen much earlier outside of *Genji kuyō tan*.⁵⁸ In the *jōruri*, Genji is alone in his sins, and does not share them with the author.⁵⁹ Though he and the other characters are censured, the tale itself is not deemed problematic; thus, there is no prolonged discussion of it containing *mōgo* or *kigo*, as was the case in earlier *Genji kuyō* texts. In the *jōruri* the performed *kuyō* recitation ends with the words: “Help the Shining Genji’s next life”⁶⁰ – and

⁵⁸ One example is *Mumyōzōshi* (*Nameless Book*, ca. 1200).

⁵⁹ As Shirakata Masaru phrased it, “when the sin is shifted to Genji, that of the author is forgotten” (*Genji monogatari to jōruri*, 184).

⁶⁰ *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, 34. Use of the phrase *Hikaru Genji* [Shining or Radiant Genji] does not necessarily point to the character, since the tale at the time was sometimes identified as *Hikaru Genji no monoagatar* [Tale of the Shining Genji]. Here the context makes clear that the phrase applies to the character.

the recitation is meant for the character Genji, not the *tale Genji*. While *Genji kuyō* texts had before shown a *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron*, here it is quite literally a *Hikaru Genji daraku ron* instead.

In the *jōruri*, Murasaki Shikibu is not ‘in hell’ but rather is alive and well. Significantly, in earlier *Genji kuyō tan*, it is always the *Genji* author’s spirit that is depicted as suffering. In contrast to her female Heian contemporaries – particularly Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, popularized in medieval legends as leading degenerate ends to their lives – when Murasaki is damned, it is after her death.⁶¹ But in the *Genji kuyō jōruri*, she is seen as not even deserving this after-life of destitution. Moreover, Murasaki is not an incarnated deity, as was the case in the *nō* play. Though she may have been assisted by superhuman powers in writing the tale, she herself is still very much human. She is simultaneously greatly idealized; this is in keeping with the popular image of the *Genji* author in texts such as *jokunsho* (instructional books for women) and *ōraimono* (primers) for women of the time, wherein she is predominantly depicted not just as an extraordinary writer, but also a humble, chaste, and beautiful woman, venerated in both Confucian and Buddhist contexts.⁶² While within *Genji kuyō tan* the image of a faultless *Genji* author stands out, the *jōruri*’s textual and visual depiction of Murasaki Shikibu could easily be found in such popular texts for women of the time. The combination of Murasaki’s image as an exemplary woman and the *Genji kuyō tan* tradition is significant because of the origins of the latter in the Murasaki-in-hell narrative. The *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*’s characterization of

⁶¹ On the various apocryphal stories of notable Heian women including Murasaki Shikibu in various *Genji kuyō*, see R. Keller Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Centre for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan): 1–27.

⁶² For a discussion on Murasaki Shikibu in Early Modern popular texts for women, see Satoko Naito, “Beyond *The Tale of Genji*,” *Early Modern Women* 9/1 (2014): 47–78. Outside of Japanese literature, the construction of a humble, non-ambitious and quiet female writer is perhaps most famously seen with Jane Austen, frequently referred to as the unmarried ‘Aunt Jane’ who cared little for money or fame, whose image and letters were “whitewashed.” Emily Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 5.

Murasaki Shikibu is unrecognizable when compared to that found in *Genji ipponkyō*. What began as Buddhist apologia for *The Tale of Genji* that had the *Genji* author paying penance for writing fiction of amorous content is eclipsed by the new popular narrative that greatly idealizes the figure of Murasaki Shikibu.

From Purifying *Genji* to Celebrating Murasaki's Name

More than four centuries separate *Genji ipponkyō* and *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* and the entirety of *Genji kuyō tan* covers an even longer period of history.⁶³ As discussed above, *Genji kuyō tan* and the Murasaki-in-hell narrative first emerged, in the form of *Genji ipponkyō*, as Buddhist apologia for the tale during a time when prose fiction was regarded with suspicion by the religiously devout. As Ikegami Jun'ichi put it, particularly during the time of the Genpei Wars (1180–85), it was simply necessary for Murasaki Shikibu to fall into hell.⁶⁴ And though there is evidence that the nun depicted in *Genji ipponkyō* was the wife of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204), it was also written a generation before he made his famous judgment in 1193 that all poets must know *The Tale of Genji*.⁶⁵ This declaration was instrumental in the initial canonization of the tale and came to represent the most accepted manner of *Genji* consumption and evaluation which identified it as a handbook for *waka* poetry composition.⁶⁶ But *Genji ipponkyō*, appearing before Shunzei's proclamation, makes no

⁶³ Discussion of *Genji kuyō* can be extended into the modern period, most notably with Mishima Yukio's modern *nō* play "*Genji kuyō*" and Hashimoto Osamu's response to it. Tamura Keiko, "Futatsu no 'Genji kuyō'—Mishima Yukio no yōkyoku to Hashimoto Osamu no essei o megutte," *Kindai bungaku ni okeru Genji monogatari, Kōza Genji monogatari kenkyū* 6, ed. Chiba Shunji (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2007): 286–310.

⁶⁴ Ikegami Jun'ichi, "Genji monogatari no kyōkaiteki hyōron," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 14/1 (1969), 22.

⁶⁵ Translation by Gian Piero Persiani and Lewis Cook, *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 603.

⁶⁶ On the association of *Genji* with *waka* poetry composition, see *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 158–176. For an overview on the history of *Genji* reception, see Shirane, "*The Tale of Genji* and the Dynamics of Cultural Production: Canonization and Popularization," in *Envisioning The Tale of Genji*: 1–46.

such connection and instead declares every aspect of *Genji*, from its composition to its consumption, to be problematic. It thus relies on the authority of Bo Juyi and of the *Lotus Sutra* to declare the tale a means to Buddhist enlightenment. Soon after, however, the text was on its way to becoming a standard poetic resource, and anxieties regarding the consumption of the tale became less pronounced. All the while, the narrative of Murasaki-in-hell continued to spread, showing a persistent ambivalence with the text as well as a fascination with its author's fate and a pervasive Buddhist notion that women were a root of sin and suffering.

By the time the *nō* play was first performed in the mid-fifteenth century, Shunzei's pronouncement had long been taken for granted, and *The Tale of Genji* had continued to gain reputation as a singular text. It was prized not just for poetry composition, but was popular amongst warrior lords as cultural commodity connecting them to the imperial court of the Heian period. Production of *Genji* commentaries that included identification of literary and historical references as well as narrative interpretation was in full swing, and this tradition clearly deemed the tale as worthwhile of serious study.⁶⁷ Such scholarship had also suggested the possibility that *Genji* was to be read didactically, and indeed in *Genji kuyō nō* we are told that the intention of the author – who in fact was Bodhisattva Kannon – was precisely to those ends.

As times changed and the *kuyō* narrative developed further, the sins and the sinners continued to be transformed, suggesting decreased anxieties and expectations regarding *The Tale of Genji*. It is not surprising that of the *Genji kuyō tan* texts discussed here, the *jōruri* shows the least resistance to fictional tales like *Genji*. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and the advent of mass print publication, there was a surge of old and new literature, particularly in Edo, Kyoto and Osaka. Anxieties about writing – let alone reading – fiction, comparable to medieval ideas of *kigo*, were hardly widespread. The *Genji* also became available for the first time to a wider audience thanks to print technology. Greatly influential was *Genji monogatari Kogetsushō* [The Tale of Genji Moon on the Lake Commentary] (1673)⁶⁸ by Kitamura Kigin (1624–1725), published only

⁶⁷ Most noteworthy was the *Kakaishō*, but contemporaneous to the *Genji kuyō nō* was Ichijō Kanera's (or Kaneyoshi, 1402–1481) *Kachō yosei* [Intimations of Flowers and Birds] of 1472.

⁶⁸ Harper, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 368–370.

three years before *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, it allowed access to the entirety of the original tale to a vastly larger audience.

By the early modern period, the tale was comfortably on its way to uncontested canonization. To be sure, there were some detractors, like Sinologists who found the tale unfit for general women's readership.⁶⁹ Some scholars of *kokugaku* (nativist learning) also continued to find fault with elements of the tale that seemed to denigrate the imperial throne.⁷⁰ In the late seventeenth century when the *jōruri* was first performed, we had yet to see some of the most influential arguments defending the tale such as that of *mono no aware* by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801).⁷¹ But Norinaga clearly came after a long tradition of *Genji* scholars who found the tale both in need of defense and worthy of celebration. And as discussed, the Ishiyama temple legend had long claimed that *Genji* was created under imperial sanctions and Buddhist auspices, and the story became even more widely repeated after the publication of *Kogetsushō*. By this time *The Tale of Genji* was also being widely disseminated in various other deconstructed and reconstructed forms; the list of chapter titles and select poems were frequently included not only in *Genji* digests but also in instructional texts for women. The tale was also 'rewritten' in several ways, most famously in

⁶⁹ P. F. Kornicki, "Unsuitable Books for Women? *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* in Late Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60/2 (2005): 147–193.

⁷⁰ *Mono no magire*, or *onkoto* – the 'incident' in which Genji and Fujitsubo's affair results in their offspring ascending the imperial throne. Andō Tameakira's *Shika shichiron*, mentioned above, transforms this sequence of events, previously deemed the most problematic component of *The Tale of Genji*, into its most important plot development and lesson. Kobayashi Masaaki, "Genji monogatari no bunka genshō – kyōgeki suru taishūka to kenryoku sayō," *Genji monogatari kenkyū no genzai, Kōza Genji monogatari kenkyū 1*, ed. Ii Haruki (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2006), 73.

⁷¹ Norinaga's *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* [The Tale of Genji, A Little Jeweled Comb] (1799) reads the tale as a fully literary text, and one that should be appreciated primarily for its portrayal of human feelings. He was championed in the Meiji period as having modern sensitivities, most famously by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935) in *Shōsetsu shinzui* [Essence of the Novel] (1885–1886). See introduction and translation by Harper, *Reading The Tale of Genji*, 411–506.

a loose parody by Ihara Saikaku in *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* [Life of a Sensuous Man] (1682).⁷² In short, though it did have detractors, the *Genji* was being widely consumed in one way or another.⁷³ Murasaki Shikibu was not considered to be in need of saving, nor was the tale in any true need of validation.

Genji kuyō tan is at its core a discourse on the justification of *The Tale of Genji* and its place within Japanese literature, and the study of *Genji kuyō* texts, is crucial to understanding the complex reception history of *Genji* and its canonical status. This paper has given an overview of *Genji kuyō tan* with a focus on the often-overlooked text *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō* to highlight the changes in the presentations of Murasaki Shikibu. *Genji kuyō tan* is said to have been born of the separation between the *Genji* reader and its author, and indeed already by the time of *Genji ipponkyō* new readers of *The Tale of Genji* no longer lived in the world of Murasaki Shikibu. Clearly with each passing generation the potential and actual *Genji* reader, as opposed to Murasaki's contemporary audience, is separated even further from the author – temporally, linguistically, and otherwise. But within *Genji kuyō tan* it is only after *Genji ipponkyō* that Murasaki Shikibu is beatified and truly separated from her readers. The *Genji kuyō* texts discussed here show crucial developments in the relationship between the *Genji* reader and writer and the *daraku ron* narrative. Early on, readers are exonerated of the 'sin of reading *Genji*' and are no longer made to pay penance alongside the *Genji* author. The *Genji kuyō nō* suggests that readers can be further freed of the responsibility of saving Murasaki Shikibu.

Finally in the *Gōshū Ishiyama dera Genji kuyō*, the *Genji* author is herself completely absolved of all sins to do with writing *Genji*. This transformation is particularly crucial considering that the *Murasaki Shikibu daraku ron* was from inception concerned with the author's ultimate salvation. And yet, the initial, even if provisional, presentation of the *Genji* author as committing some sort of sin is a significant part of much of *Genji*

⁷² Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600–1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 42–57.

⁷³ For a discussion on various forms of *Genji* consumption in the Edo period, see *Genji monogatari to Edo bunka: Kashika sareru gazoku*, eds. Kojima Naoko, Komine Kazuaki, and Watanabe Kenji (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2008).

kuyō tan's narratives. It is with the *jōruri* that Murasaki Shikibu is cleared of all wrongdoings and made to be an exemplary woman and writer, one that deserves as much praise and canonical status as her tale. In fact, the compulsion to apologize for the Shining Genji's actions as illustrated in the *jōruri* – that is to say, the persistent need to defend the prose content of *The Tale of Genji* – suggests that Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji*'s author, is an icon that transcends her tale.

**NIHILISM AND CRISIS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF YU DA-FU'S *SINKING*
AND AKUTAGAWA RYŪNOSUKE'S *RASHŌMON***

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Overview

This article argues that nihilism, generally understood as a Western philosophical concept popularised by thinkers such as Nietzsche, was equally in evidence in both China and Japan during the turbulent early decades of the twentieth century. I argue that during these years, Northeast Asian writers embraced nihilism – understood simultaneously as an interrogation of traditional moral values and their ultimate rejection – as a response to internal and external crises faced by their respective nations. While scholars such as Shih Shu-mei and Donald Keene have hitherto considered the literary production of China and Japan in terms of a bilateral interaction between China and the West, or Japan and the West, few have examined domestic factors that might have given rise to nihilistic tendencies in Chinese and Japanese literatures of the period.

Through close readings of Yu Da-fu's (郁达夫) short story "Sinking" (沉沦) and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's (芥川龍之介) "Rashōmon" (羅生門), written respectively in 1921 and 1915, and traditionally understood as examples of Western literary influence, I suggest that nihilism, together with decadence, its cultural expression, are not unique to Europe but are universal responses to crisis. I further argue that the Japanese nation, long-regarded as an Asian superpower following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, underwent a crisis of identity in the early decades of the twentieth century comparable to, although different from, the crisis faced by China over the same years.

Introduction

The early twentieth century was one of the most tumultuous times in world history. Between 1914 and 1918, Europe experienced the devastation of the First World War. From 1917 to 1927, China embraced its "May Fourth era,"¹ and during the same years, Japan was rising to world

¹Shih Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917–1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 49.

prominence as an industrial nation after the Meiji restoration, fuelled by growing national confidence.² War and the new imperatives of global commerce radically transformed the horizons of the individual, and intellectuals became increasingly exposed to foreign culture through foreign study programmes and secondments. The Chinese author Yu Da-fu (1896–1945), for example, was sent to Japan to study between 1914 and 1922 on a Chinese government scholarship, translating numerous Japanese works during his sojourn.³ The Japanese writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke likewise travelled to China as a “special correspondent” of the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*⁴ for four months. The correspondence between Ezra Pound, Mary Fenellosa, Katue Kitasono and other Japanese poets, meanwhile, reveals the profound influence of Chinese and Japanese aesthetics on Pound’s poetry.⁵ These examples clearly illustrate the fact that cultural movements should never be seen as one-way traffic, but rather as intersecting moments of cultural transference – instances of what Karen L. Thornber has termed the process of “transculturation” whereby artistic cultures are forced to interrogate their own (national) identity as a result of trans-national events, such as war and trade.⁶

Despite this, there has been a strong tendency to place Chinese and Japanese writers of the period in the same category as Western decadent writers. Yu Da-fu has been labelled a British decadent writer by Shih Shu-mei,⁷ while C. T. Hsia⁸ claims that his works “stem from the Japanese and

² Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 62.

³ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 116.

⁴ Donald Keene, “Akutagawa Ryūnosuke,” in *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 571.

⁵ Sanehide Kodama, ed., *Ezra Pound & Japan: Letters & Essays* (London: Black Swan Books, 1987).

⁶ Karen L. Thornber, “Collaborating, Acquiescing, Resisting: Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Transculturation of Japanese Literature,” in Richard King, Cody Poulton and Katsuhiko Endo, eds., *Sino-Japanese Transculturation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 99.

⁷ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 110.

⁸ C. T. Hsia, *A History of Chinese Modern Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), 103.

European decadent writers.” Akutagawa Ryūnosuke meanwhile has been understood by Kinya Tsuruta as simply a “voracious reader”⁹ whose stories were inspired in “form and subject matter” from the West.¹⁰ This article takes issue with such reductive readings and seeks to place the works of both writers in the wider context of historical circumstance: to read their works as a negotiated response to both personal crisis and to the class, cultural and national redetermination which so profoundly coloured their understanding of themselves – both as citizens of the wider polity and participants in its ongoing process of self-definition. Their works, often imbued with a sense of human darkness and moral interrogation (sometimes perceived as moral decay), a function of the relatively low class and limited power of both authors,¹¹ can, in fact, be usefully viewed in terms of nihilism.

This article will seek to demonstrate that similarities between contemporary writers from widely different cultures are not merely a result of stylistic imitation (as Shih et al. would have it) but rather authentic responses to personal, social and political crisis that draw on a common lexicon of despair. To date, there have been few studies of the pervasiveness of nihilism in global literary cultures, with most Asian scholars categorizing Chinese and Japanese literary production as imitative of Western movements.¹² Hence, I hope to show, through close readings of

⁹ Kinya Tsuruta, “Akutagawa Ryunosuke and I-Novelists,” *Journal of Monumenta Nipponica* (1970): 13–27.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Akutagawa’s early years were particularly difficult: his mother, who was insane, died young and he was subsequently maltreated by his stepmother. He lived in poverty during his early career. See Satoru Miyasaka, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: hito to sakuhin* (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 1998). Yu came from a poor family, receiving a traditional Chinese education before going to Japan. See Hsia, C. T (op. cit) for a biographical overview. See also Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 102–111.

¹² See, for example, Bonnie S. McDougall who sees Yu’s early works as “modelled on Japanese confessional fiction” and Donald Keene who considers Akutagawa’s fiction to borrow from European styles. Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997), 105–109; Keene, “Akutagawa Ryūnosuke,” 556–593.

two works by Yu Dafu and Akutagawa, how nihilism was an authentic literary response to political and social crises in Southeast Asia – rather than a matter of stylistic imitation – and thereby to map out an alternative approach to the study of wartime comparative literatures.

Nihilism in Europe

In a notebook entry of 1885, Nietzsche defined nihilism as the proclivity of “the highest values [to] devalue themselves.”¹³ The term, which gained currency from the middle of the nineteenth century, became a central pillar of the intellectual response to the French revolution of 1789, often associated, by extension, with modernism and even existentialism. For Nietzsche, however, nihilism was a product of three principle tenets: unity, purpose, or aim and truth.¹⁴ Any person who espoused these values would inevitably be led to question political structures, such as class hierarchies and educational systems, and also deconstruct and dismantle existing knowledge. Indeed, a state of nihilism has been described as one “in which man rolls from the centre towards X.”¹⁵

In this formula, the capitalization of the letter X suggests that something unknown gradually rules both physically and mentally over individuals. Since this unknown can neither be solved nor resolved (according to Nietzsche), any attempt to understand it is *ipso facto* meaningless. This concept of nihilism clearly resembles Heidegger’s later formulation of Nichts – literally, “*there is nothing left*.”¹⁶ For both Nietzsche and Heidegger, humanistic modes of thought and established moral and political systems were in crisis, poised “at the moment of decline.”¹⁷ In Heidegger’s terms, it was a crisis that necessitated the devaluation and “revaluation of all values.”¹⁸

¹³ Shane Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1985), 19.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹⁸ Daniel W. Conway, *Heidegger, Nietzsche, and the Origins of Nihilism* (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 1992), 20.

Crisis has been defined by Anne Wright as “not merely the perception of change [...] and accelerating deterioration in the quality of life [but also] the fracturing or dismantling of personal relations, of social institutions, of civilization.”¹⁹ These were conditions amply furnished by Europe of the late eighteenth century: if the French revolution had destroyed all accepted social norms, industrial revolution alienated individuals from their traditional habitat and radically reorganised the very business of living, with massive shifts from country to city.²⁰ The subsequent rise in the population of cities, and the sharp increase in the cost of staple foods only exacerbated the gap in living conditions between the rich and the poor.²¹ Charles Baudelaire prefaced his *Flowers of Evil* (French: *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857) with a poem entitled ‘To the Reader’ (French: *Au Lector*):

Folly and error, avarice and vice
Employ our souls and waste our bodies’ force
As mangey beggars incubate their lice,
We nourish our innocuous remorse.²²

His ringing indictment of bourgeois moeurs and the savage grotesquerie they masked; the acute alienation of author and reader, individual and society, can be read as symptomatic of this modernist fracturing. Indeed, the poem reads as a catalogue of Nietzschean decadence. The poet, challenging and devaluing the old system of hierarchies as traditional society disintegrates – the nihilist response to crisis – is himself left isolated as he struggles to flee the reassuring constraints of majority morality.²³

¹⁹ Anne Wright, *Literature of Crisis, 1910–1922* (*Howards End, Heartbreak House, Women in Love and the Waste Land*) (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press, 1984), 3.

²⁰ See Christopher Harvie and H. C. G. Matthew, *Nineteenth Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²¹ Philip T. Hoffman, et al., “Real Inequality in Europe since 1500,” *Journal of Economic History* 62 (2002).

²² Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), trans. Roy Campbell (London: The Harvill Press, 1952), 4–5.

²³ Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 26–28.

Debilitated by his struggle, he sickens and his opposition to ruling norms is perceived as decadent. Guy de Maupassant's *The Devil* (French: *Le diable*, 1886) can be read, in fact, as a questioning of moral values per se. The doctor upholds traditional moral principles, insisting that the dying mother of Honore should be well cared for. Honore, however, values his wheat more highly than his mother's life. The nurse, employed by Honore, disguises herself as a devil to menace the mother to death in order to not waste the money.²⁴ The theme of the selfish pursuit of wealth and the neglect of human need can be seen as a reflection of the decay in moral values brought about by structural societal change. Honore never mourns for the death of his mother, and the nurse never feels guilty about the deliberate murder.

Traditional Christian values have been summarily dismissed – it is as if they never existed in the minds of Honore or the nurse. Maupassant's story maps out the comprehensive dismantling of society's supreme values – God and morality – neatly illustrating what, in Freudian terms, would be read as the collapse of the superego and the resulting uncontrolled *id*. It was this, perhaps, that Nietzsche had in mind when he wrote, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."²⁵

Asian Nihilism in Pre-Modern Ages

Yet if nihilism and decadence were responses to social and political crisis, they were hardly peculiar to the West. The process of modernity in southeast Asia presented similar problems for the individual, giving rise here too to a radical re-evaluation of accepted norms – Heidegger's de- and re-evaluation of social parameters. Nihilism, that is, was as much a function of the individual's response to crisis in Southeast Asia as it was in the West. So if it left its mark on contemporary Chinese and Japanese literary production, this was not a consequence of Western literary influence but a symptom of the individual and social crises that marked its context of production. Nihilism, that is, was not a uniquely Western philosophical response but a universal one.

²⁴ Guy de Maupassant, "The Devil," *Classical Literature*, trans. Albert M.C. McMaster (accessed November 12, 2014, <http://classiclitter.about.com/library/bl-etexts/gdemaupassant/bl-gdemaup-devil.htm>).

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 203.

The universality of nihilism as a literary phenomenon has been explored by Ikuho Amano in her *Decadent Literature in Twentieth-Century Japan*, where she points to numerous instances of decadence in traditional Japanese literature, which nonetheless have their own culturally-specific modes of expression.²⁶ One early example is that of *The Ise Stories*, written in the mid-tenth century.²⁷ Episodes 7, 8 and 9 of the Ise Stories, show Narihira leaving the capital in a mood of political disenchantment:²⁸

Episode 7: 京にありわびて, he is lonely in Kyoto;

Episode 8: 京や住み憂かりけむ, he feels dejected in Kyoto

Episode 9: 身をえうなき者に思ひなして京にはあらじ, he feels useless and leaves Kyoto.

His dejection and sense of disempowerment are not simply the “rendition of [his] alienated position in the political mainstream”, however, but also a pessimistic response towards society as a whole, as indicated by his self-exile to the east in Episodes 8 and 9. The ninth and tenth centuries in Japan saw the rise of the Fujiwara family who successfully manoeuvred to “exclude outsiders from important public offices.”²⁹ Narihira and his family were victims of Fujiwara political machinations and saw their careers suffer accordingly. His recognition of his political impotence, lack of social worth and his consequent sense of isolation and hopelessness are classic presentations of the decadent response to social and political crisis. Similar responses can be found in early Chinese literature. Take, for example, Li Bai (李白)’s *A Drinking Song*, written around the mid-eighth century:³⁰

²⁶ Ikuho Amano, *Decadent Literature in Twentieth-Century Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 42.

³⁰ Li Bai, “A Drinking Song,” in Soame Jenyns, et al, trans., *Selections from the Three Hundred Poems of the T’ang Dynasty* (London: Murray, 1940), 37.

If you would taste of life and enjoy it to the limit,
 Do not let the golden goblet stand empty under
 the moon.
 All talents come from heaven and they must be
 used.
 If ten thousand gold pieces are scattered to the
 winds, yet
 Are you not repaid?

The poem speaks on the surface of a poet encouraging others to enjoy an instant of material joy and freedom. Upon close examination, however, it reveals Li Bai's despondency towards the political turmoil currently destroying the nation and his failure in office. Despite his best efforts, Li Bai had both failed to secure a job in government and failed in the Civil Service Examination (*Ke ju*); he had experienced, moreover, the devastation of the An Lu-shan Rebellion.³¹ This poem is, in reality, a rhetorical question – why is it so hard to secure a position in government under the public examination system? This pertains to the devaluation of the tradition, for example, and at the same time, it is an embrace of hedonism and decadence (collapse of the superego, and the free reign of the id).

Indeed, it is also possible to trace Chinese nihilism back even further, to the third century. *Speaking My Mind*, a poem composed by Ruan Ji (AD 210–263), one of the Seven Sages in the Bamboo Forest, once again uses the trope of play to express despair at the turbulence of society:³²

When I was thirteen or fourteen
 I delighted in the study of history and the odes.
 My plain clothes covered a heart of jade.
 In morals I was greater than Yen and Ming.
 [...]
 I occupied myself with the study of great books,
 And now I laugh at this folly.

³¹ Arthur Waley details the literary life of Li Po in Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po, 701–762 A.D.* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1950).

³² Ruan Ji, "Speaking My Mind," in Yang Chi-sing, trans., and Robert Payne, ed., *The White Pony: An Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1947), 128.

In the present age, Ruan Ji suggests, conventional moral teachings have lost their usefulness: he laughs at his previous studious endeavours. Pessimism as a literary trope in fact recurs time and again throughout Chinese history, whenever the nation experienced war or misgovernment. But these brief examples make clear the fact that nihilism as an intellectual response to social crisis was not new to the nineteenth century; nor was it the privileged domain of the West. But under what terms did it present itself in the 1910s and 1920s in Southeast Asian nations?

Beset by both internal and external crises,³³ China found itself, at the turn of the twentieth century, in a state of “semicolonialism,” with the looming threat of complete colonization.³⁴ At the same time, however, a new sense of patriotism was emerging as intellectuals bolstered their crippled sense of national identity by turning to the achievements of the past – Confucianism and the teachings of the sages, artistic and literary achievements, and glorious passages in China’s long history. I argue that it is precisely the conflict between Western learning and these traditional values and teachings, that led to the “nihilism and irrationality” of Chinese modern literature.³⁵

Yu Da-fu’s *Sinking*

Although many Chinese intellectuals continued to travel to Europe after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 (both independently and as part of government missions), more began to make their way to Japan. This led to a rapid acceleration in intercultural exchange between the two countries. The most prominent literary movement in China, the May-Fourth Movement of 1919 – a concerted

³³ The Opium War of 1842 marked a critical moment in China’s modern history. Thereafter, the Taiping War 1851–64, the Boxer Uprising of 1900, and the failure of a series of domestic reforms forced China to sign a number of unequal treaties, open a number of ports and pay a huge sum of indemnity. For more details, see Rana Mitter, *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction*, in particular Chapter 2. C. T. Hsia notes that intellectuals’ cultural superiority began to be challenged after the Opium War. See Hsia, *A History of Chinese Modern Fiction*, in particular, the Appendix, “Obsession with China.”

³⁴ See Shih Shu-mei’s definition of semicolonialism in *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917–1937*, 35–36.

³⁵ Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 536.

response to domestic perceptions that China had become a 'weak nation' – was driven by writers who had studied either in the West or Japan. While some of these writers such as Guo Mo-ruo (郭沫若) (1892–1978) foresaw China rising from the ashes like a phoenix,³⁶ others, such as Yu Da-fu focused on the pathological elements of China's situation, which Yu represented in the person of the morally corrupt protagonist. Shih has argued that tropes of desire and its repression in Yu, seen as metaphors of China as a whole, which can be read as signs of disappointed patriotism.³⁷ I take this analysis a step further by arguing that Yu's nihilism and his ultimate moral decadence strengthen such an idea.

One of Yu's most famous stories, *Sinking* (1921), took as its subject matter the isolation and solitude the author experienced as a student in Japan:

Lately he had been feeling pitifully lonesome. His emotional precocity had placed him at constant odds with his fellow men, and inevitably the wall separating him from them had gradually grown thicker and thicker.³⁸

It is possible to interpret this sense of solitude as part of a "national inferiority complex."³⁹ Elsewhere Yu writes, of his Japanese peers: "I am a Chinaman; otherwise why didn't they even look at me once?"⁴⁰ But it also reflects archetypal Chinese feelings of distance and isolation from more successful nations, Europe and Japan: China was perceived as a sick nation, cut off from other more powerful nations, as the wall in the story cuts off the protagonist from his Japanese peers. Read in this light, the text becomes nationally allegorical in Jamesonian terms.⁴¹

³⁶ In his first collection of poetry *The Goddesses* (女神) (1921), Guo likens the reborn phoenix to a new China, a nation bathed in brightness and hope.

³⁷ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 117.

³⁸ Yu Da-fu, "Sinking," (1921) in *Modern Chinese Stories And Novellas 1919–1949*, trans. Joseph S. M. Lau and C. T. Hsia, ed., Joseph S. M. Lau, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 125.

³⁹ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 117.

⁴⁰ Da-fu, "Sinking," 128.

⁴¹ Fredric Jameson, *Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), 69.

At the opening of the story, the protagonist is reading Wordsworth and other Western poetry – a symbolic interrogation of Chinese traditional values. But he finds himself unable to build a bridge – translate – between the two cultures: “What kind of translation is that? [...] why bother to translate?”⁴² This refusal to engage in translation suggests Yu did not only suspect the viability of the Chinese language, but also devalued it; all Chinese people, he believed, should learn Western languages because the beauty of poetry would be lost once rendered into their own language. His opposition to the project of translation does not signify, however, that he had other alternatives. With this last resource gone, his melancholy only increases.⁴³ The world becomes ‘lifeless’⁴⁴ and he feels only “intolerable loneliness.”⁴⁵ The language echoes that of Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*: “when you realize that there are no goals or objectives, then you realize, too, that there is no chance.”⁴⁶ The same nihilistic attitude extends, beyond the individual, to the Chinese nation as a whole: without direction, without a unifying leader, “split into rival regions ruled by militarist leaders,”⁴⁷ and without hope. Yu’s despair was that of a whole generation of intellectuals.

In the beginning of the second section, the male protagonist imagines himself as Zarathustra – the eponymous voice of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (TSZ) written between 1883 and 1885. *The Drunken Song*, one of the many poems in TSZ, concludes with the following lines:

Joy-deeper than heart’s agony:
Woe says: Fade! Go!
But all joy wants eternity,
Wants deep, deep, deep eternity!⁴⁸

The poem apparently encourages the reader to leave behind the sorrow of this world and to pursue eternal joy. The preceding lines, however, state

⁴² Da-fu, “Sinking,” 126.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 201.

⁴⁷ Rana Mitter, *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 31.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 258.

“The world is deep,”⁴⁹ suggesting rather than yearning for another world, the desire for an ideal world with only joy and no woe. Read in this light, it is true (as Michael Tanner proposes) that Nietzsche’s thought was deeply imbued with nostalgia.⁵⁰ Nostalgia is indeed one of the principal themes of Yu’s *Sinking*, and it seems likely that Yu had read Freud and Nietzsche’s work.⁵¹ Yet Yu’s nostalgia for his motherland was further complicated by other feelings such as self-hatred and a “megalomania [which grew] in exact proportion to his hypochondria.”⁵² Megolomania and hypochondria were identified and explained in Freud’s “On Narcissism” (ON).⁵³ The complexity of the protagonist’s emotions is captured in the following soliloquy:

Why did I come to Japan? Why did I come here to
pursue my studies? Since you have come, is it a
wonder that the Japanese treat you with contempt?

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 53.

⁵¹ Yu also read a number of philosophical works and in his diary of 1932, he mentioned that he had a number of Nietzsche’s works to hand, respected his talent greatly wanted to write a novel with Nietzsche as the protagonist. See Ko Kintei, “Yu Dafu’s Acceptance of Foreign Ideas and Cultures,” [郁達夫における外国思想・文化の受容] *Journal of the Institute for Language and Culture* 3 (1999): 115–122. Nietzsche’s works caught the attention of the Chinese literati in the early twentieth century and were frequently translated into Chinese, appearing in both books and journals. See Zhao-yi Zhang, *Nietzsche in China 1904–1992: An Annotated Bibliography* (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, 1992). Freud’s works first spread to Japan in the 1920s – at the same time as they were gaining readerships in Europe. The first Chinese translations of Freud were published in 1920. For more details, see Ning Wang, “Freudianism and Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature,” in Tao Jiang and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *The Reception and Rendition of Freud in China: China’s Freudian Slip*, (New York: Routledge, 2013): 3–23.

⁵² Da-fu, “Sinking,” 127.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” in Joan Riviere, trans., *Collected Papers Vol. IV* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1956): 30–59.

China, O my China! Why don't you grow rich and strong? [...] I shall be wholly content if you grant me an Eve from the Garden of Eden, allowing me to possess her body and soul.⁵⁴

The protagonist's struggle between his desperate yearnings for a stronger China and his disappointment at the country's current powerlessness was, to some extent, the dilemma faced by every Chinese intellectual during their overseas study. On the other hand, however, the metaphor of Eve and the Garden of Eden conveyed his inability to think constructively about the issue of "Japanese ascendancy in China as an imperialist power."⁵⁵ The biblical metaphor, on the literary level symptomatic of Yu's aspirations towards Western culture rather than a committed Christian allusion, was intended to convey the idea – not of original sin – but of available womanhood.⁵⁶ Abandoning hopes of Chinese political power, Yu distracted himself from the failure of the mother nation through fantasies of the mythical mother of humanity.

The passage actually trawls through several levels of the protagonist's thinking process. Interrogating the meaning and purpose of his every act, his interrogation slips from the level of personal to political and national identity. His impotence to provide constructive answers to his own questions propels him into that Nietzschean state of X, in which the individual wants "neither knowledge nor fame."⁵⁷ Consequently, having

⁵⁴ Da-fu, "Sinking," 128.

⁵⁵ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 117.

⁵⁶ Bible translation and the spread of Christianity exercised significant influence on May fourth writers. Yu Da-fu himself was educated in several Christian schools. See Jian-long Yang, *The Influence of Christian Culture over May Fourth New Literature Taiwan* (Taipei: Xinruiwen chuang, 2012), 263. Chinese writers used biblical allusions simply as a "eulogy to the spirits of Christ" and showed little concern with concepts of Original Sin. The naming of the Creation Society, the literary group to which Yu belonged, also referred to the work of creating new spirits and new thoughts just as "God created the world," in Jian-long Yang, "The Christian Influence in May Fourth Movement" *Journal of The Institute of Chinese Studies* 16 (1993): 88.

⁵⁷ Da-fu, "Sinking," 128.

deconstructed everything in his mind, he reconstructs his own utopian world, one in which he can release his sexual libido – or what we see in the society as moral decay, at least from our “moral interception of phenomena”⁵⁸ – the moral lens through which we view our activities.

The third section of the story furnishes the biographical details of the protagonist, his family background and the traditional Chinese education system within which he was raised. It is here that we see some of the reasons for his subsequent descent into moral decadence and nihilism. His elder brother, for example, is “forced to resign his position in Peking”⁵⁹ on account of his moral uprightness while his second brother abuses his military rank for financial gain, illustrating the cruel fact that conventional morality is now meaningless. Corruption was rife and civil wars between various warlords frequent. The worst fate, the protagonist reflects, is to “belong to a swarm of subject, powerless people who have no sense of belonging together.”⁶⁰

Both his brothers exemplified, in their different ways, the powerlessness of subjecthood in a society that has no direction. Thus, while he had been raised with the belief that he would live his life in accordance with conventional notions of right and wrong, governed by the dictates of custom, the very concept of traditional morality had been shattered.⁶¹ His preliminary response is therefore to isolate himself in study – to turn his back on the world. It is in the passivity of this response that we glimpse the initial “seeds of hypochondria”⁶² with all its various Freudian symptoms: the withdrawal of interest and libido from the outer world, the focus on the pathology of a particular bodily organ,⁶³ here allegorised in the protagonist’s blind obedience to his elder brother’s order to study medicine. In a broader sense, however, his commitment to study also points to the problematic legacy of the 1300-year-old imperial examination system (*Keju*), once the only way for scholars to serve in government and to advance in the world. The “eight-legged essay” (*Baguwen*) had long been

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 104.

⁵⁹ Da-fu, “Sinking,” 129.

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 73.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶² Da-fu, “Sinking,” 129.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

criticized as out of touch with current political and military realities.⁶⁴ Thus the protagonist himself belongs to that body of Chinese students who valued study as the unique route to worldly success.

In Freudian terms, their primary drive (id) overrides their secondary response (ego). The protagonist's early history is to some extent autobiographical: scholars have pointed out similarities with Yu's own childhood.⁶⁵ Yet it also functions as an interrogation of the old education system. This is significant because the publication of *Sinking* coincided with the wave of literary reforms that were currently transforming the Chinese literary landscape. Yu's fiction was written in loose vernacular Chinese and included references in other languages (some of the English poetry Yu quotes in his fiction, for example, is given without Chinese translation).

Particularly, it is the sight of his elder brother's suffering in the story that triggers his subsequent abandonment of the strictures of conventional morality: he spies on a Japanese girl bathing and goes to a brothel, narrative moves which mirror the Freudian "surplus of unutilized libido."⁶⁶ His failure to suppress his libidinous desires in turn reflects the fact that conventional concepts of good and evil no longer hold any relevance for him. Was it the Japanese who branded all Chinese as "Chinamen" (*Zhinaren*) who were at fault or the powerlessness of China itself? His shame, that is, is no longer uniquely personal: he simultaneously bears the burden of shame of China as a nation.

Sinking, therefore, cannot be read independently of its context of its production: it bears the marks of its political and social background.⁶⁷ Whether Yu deliberately set out to write political fiction is to some extent irrelevant: in the re-telling of the personal suffering which led to his nihilistic outlook, he inevitably reflects contemporary social and political issues. The individual narrative – the gradual descent into decadence –

⁶⁴ See Chapter 6 of Liu Hai-feng and Li Bing. *Zhongguo ke ju shi* [The History of Chinese Imperial Examination] (Shanghai: Dong fang chu ban zhong xin, 2004) for a detailed account of problems with the examination system as well as reasons behind the repeated failure of reforms.

⁶⁵ Anna Dolezalova, *Yu Ta-Fu: Specific Traits of His Literary Creation*, trans. P. Tkac (Prague: Hurst Paragon, 1971), 12.

⁶⁶ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 116.

⁶⁷ Jameson, *Third-World Literature*, 72.

becomes analogous with the larger political narrative of a society in collapse. The protagonist's embrace of nihilism in its Nietzschean sense thus serves as a criticism of China itself. Nietzschean paradigms of human motivation – "to desire pleasure [or] to ward off displeasure" – in fact extend like a canopy over the whole narrative.⁶⁸ Japan's use of its rising international status to bully the Chinese can be read as a signifier of the Nietzschean desire for pleasure at a national level; the protagonist's (ab)use of his financial power to purchase the Japanese prostitute is the same signifier operating at the individual level.

His ultimate submissiveness to the tormenting "dull and dry"⁶⁹ mundanity of daily existence after his indulgence in physical pleasure, and his growing recognition of the "suffering"⁷⁰ of many other Chinese people, reflects the Nietzschean concept of eternal return. Pain and shame, he realises at the end of *Sinking*, have patterned his life "in the same series and sequence"⁷¹ for the past twenty-one years. He must accept that there is no antidote, no solution: beyond the inevitable fate of any Chinese persons, it is the broader human condition. Society was terminally corrupt and in decline, and "all possible modes of thought,"⁷² the threads of Confucian morality, the vast literary legacy of the classics were no more than the jetsam and flotsam of the past. His final weary exhortation, "[China,] I wish you could become rich and strong soon," carries little conviction.

The surface narrative of *Sinking* maps out the career of an individual whose damaging experience of life leads him to a state of nihilism where sexual depravity provides a temporary escape from the meaninglessness of contemporary reality. At a deeper level, however, the descent into nihilism can be read as an allegory of contemporary anxieties about society, modernity and the political prospects of the whole Chinese nation. The fact that Nietzsche was widely translated and discussed in China in the early twentieth century clearly exerted a powerful influence upon Yu,⁷³ but his response differed markedly from that of most writers. Where others such as Li Shicen were content to simply manipulate elements

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 77.

⁶⁹ Da-fu, "Sinking," 141.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 249.

⁷² Ibid., 258.

⁷³ Shu-mei, *The Lure of the Modern*, 58–59.

of Nietzschean philosophy as tools of reform and change, Yu embraced nihilism both as a consequence of social collapse and a tool of political criticism.⁷⁴ Yu's protagonist, beset by impotence and inaction, can be understood, in fact, as a Chinese embodiment of the German philosopher.

Akutagawa's *Rashōmon*

A major theme of *Sinking* is Japan's growing dominance over China as well as its emergence on the global political stage, which was equally problematic for Japanese intellectuals. The country's abrupt transformation after the Meiji reforms of 1868, from feudal state to the only superpower in Asia, bolstered by military victories over China in 1894 and Russia 1904,⁷⁵ brought with it a radical re-evaluation of the issue of national identity.⁷⁶ The birth of a new "political consciousness"⁷⁷ at a popular level gave rise to new political and cultural movements. Westernization and nationalization became the subjects of heated debate. Did modernity mean to simply imitate Western nations, or could it go hand in hand with the retention of traditional Japanese values? It was a dilemma faced at both individual and national levels. Should Japan be regarded as an ally of Western powers, or invest in East Asian political alliances?⁷⁸ Between 1901 and 1914, the year when Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Rashōmon* was published, a number of socialist and radical political

⁷⁴ In *Life's Philosophy* [人生哲學] first published in 1926, the Chinese philosopher and writer Li Shicen sees Nietzsche as a great admirer of the life of art and considers art as a way to survive and acquire immortal life. See Li Shicen, "Similarities and Differences in Responses to the Problems of Life in East and West Philosophy," [東西哲學對於人生問題解答之異同] in *Rensheng zhexue* (Taipei: The Horizon Publishing Company, 1972): 100–470.

⁷⁵ For more details about the course of Japanese modern history, see Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁷ Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status" in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 5* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 1989), 730.

⁷⁸ Shikano Masanao, *Kindai Nihon shisō annai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 84.

movements emerged.⁷⁹ In particular, issues of national identity (as constructed by the government) and its imbrication on individual identities left few untouched.⁸⁰

Akutagawa was no exception. Through the careful selection of old Japanese tales reinterpreted in the light of contemporary imperatives, he exposed some of the contradictions of Japan's modern plight. An "exemplary Taisho intellectual"⁸¹ who "distance[d] the world of his fiction from that of his own experience,"⁸² Akutagawa's *Rashōmon*, set in the Kyoto of the twelfth century, was a perfect vehicle for the expression of his nihilistic attitude towards the Japan of the present. The story originally derived from two one-page passages in *Tales of Times Now Past*⁸³ (or *Konjaku Monogatari*) written during the early half of the twelfth century but Akutagawa elaborated the narratives by providing a more detailed background setting, greater focus on the mental states of the hero and by changing the status of the male protagonist from thief to servant.

These are significant modifications. Akutagawa's *Rashōmon* depicts a society in collapse, torn by wars and plagued by natural disasters.⁸⁴ It is this shattered world – a world that goes unmentioned in the original – that forms the background to the servant's moral dilemmas. The

⁷⁹ Peter Duus and Irwin Scheiner provide a detailed account of socialist and radical movements from 1901 to 1931 in "Socialism, Liberalism, and Marxism, 1901–1931" in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 1989).

⁸⁰ See Carol Gluck, "The Late Meiji Period" in *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985). Gluck examines the construction of the new nation through the promulgation of the constitution and establishing a national religion. In *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*, Takashi Fujitani (1998) explains how monarchy was created in Japan by inventing new rituals and ceremonies.

⁸¹ Ibid., 84.

⁸² Ibid., 87.

⁸³ The English translation I use here is from Marian Ury's *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* published in 1979 by University of California Press.

⁸⁴ Akutagawa Ryunosuke, "Rashōmon," in Rubin Jay, trans., *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), 3.

original *Konjaku Monogatari* episode simply introduces the protagonist in the following terms: “At a time now past, there was a man who had come to the capital from the direction of Settsu Province to steal.”⁸⁵ Akutakawa’s allusions to social and political disarray, however, provide a rationale for his own protagonist’s sense of incapacitating confusion: “his thoughts wandered the same path again and again, always arriving at the same destination.”⁸⁶ The circularity of the servant’s thoughts – his conviction that he is destined to “become a thief”⁸⁷ – echoes the classic Freudian topos of the struggle between the libido and the super-ego. More significantly, for our purposes, however, it evokes the Nietzschean concept of the eternal return, in particular the ultimate submission to conventional codes of morality – what Nietzsche called the “herd instinct.”⁸⁸ A product of the deeply entrenched hierarchical system of the Heian period, the servant has been indoctrinated to obey his lord and to conduct himself within the limits of his station. The collapse of the system and the consequent dissolution of the traditional mechanics of society presents him with a conflict: he must either starve to death or release himself from the herd and give free rein to his instinct for survival.⁸⁹

Read in Jamesonian terms, the dilemma of the servant in *Rashōmon* can be seen as an allegory of the crisis faced by Japan herself in the early twentieth century: to abide by traditional indigenous codes of morality or to modernize in line with European models. It is the same conflict mapped out so poignantly by Yu in *Sinking* – the willingness to sacrifice indigenous culture for the sake of a politically stronger China. Superficially similar, the crises faced by the two neighbouring countries were ultimately different however. For Japan, the speedy transformation of the nation from a third world nation in 1868 to a first world nation in 1904 and its technological successes may have propelled it onto the world stage,⁹⁰ but intellectually and culturally the nation struggled with its new identity. Akutagawa’s *Rashōmon*, illustrating the moral dilemma of the servant – to abandon outmoded codes of conduct and become a thief or to

⁸⁵ Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past*, 182.

⁸⁶ Akutagawa, “Rashōmon,” 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 102.

⁸⁹ Akutagawa, “Rashōmon,” 5.

⁹⁰ Jameson, *Third-World Literature*.

die – neatly encapsulated the conflict faced by Japan as a nation and its people. Nietzschean patterns of thought evident in the narrative were not imitative of Western literary styles, they were part of the intellectual tools with which Japanese intellectuals sought to understand and articulate the crisis of modernity.⁹¹ Particularly, Akutagawa's reinterpretation of an old story in terms of Western notions of psychological motivation gave birth to a new Japanese literary style which embodied, in its merging of old and new, native and foreign, the dilemma of a nation.

At the same time, however, *Rashōmon* also illustrates the Nietzschean process of the deconstruction of good and evil. In the original account, upon seeing the old woman plucking the corpse's hair, the thief addresses a few words to her, then "stripped the corpse and the old woman of the clothes they wore and stole the hair. He ran to the ground and made his getaway."⁹² Akutagawa elaborates the psychological state of both the old woman and the servant/thief significantly. Catching sight of the woman plucking at the corpse from his vantage point on Rashōmon gate, the servant initially feels revulsion for the old woman.⁹³ His sudden awareness that her life in fact lies immediately within his control leads to a surge of "pride and satisfaction,"⁹⁴ mixed with a certain pity. But when her response to his question is so "ordinary" he feels "disappointed" – disappointed, that is, in her bestial acceptance of the way things are – and his own internal conflict between "starving to death or becoming a thief" disappears.⁹⁵ He strips her of her robe, gives her a kick, and runs away. The account of the servant's rationalisation of the situation has strong Nietzschean echoes.

In the first place, the servant is held hostage to conventional moral principle – he is clear that his impulse to become a thief is wrong, that the old woman's deed, moreover, is "an unpardonable evil"⁹⁶ But his clear moral judgement becomes blurred when the sudden awareness of his ability to control his own life comes to dominate his whole mind: he experiences the shift from impotence – a jobless man on the brink of starvation – to the

⁹¹ Keene, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke," 559.

⁹² Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past*, 183.

⁹³ Akutagawa, "Rashōmon," 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

sense of superiority of the “free-doer”⁹⁷ intent on his own “gratification.”⁹⁸ Akutagawa’s fiction may have drawn on personal experience, as Keene and Lippit have argued: it also embraced larger political issues. The transformation in the servant’s apprehension of his world clearly maps out the now familiar Nietzschean shift of morality/authority from the centre to X: this same centrifugal shift served as a powerful allegory of the political and ethical choices faced by Japan on its road to modernization. Read in these terms, the servant protagonist is the embodiment of Akutagawa’s own nihilism and his despair at the political immaturity of modern Japan.

But Akutagawa’s despair was also a product of the dissolution of conventional societal bonds. Up until the Meiji period, Japanese society had been strictly structured around status differentials – principally those of samurai, farmer and, at the bottom of the system, merchant.⁹⁹ The breakdown of this structure following the Meiji reforms and the adoption of a Western capitalist system was traumatic for many – conventional markers of identity had been swept away. Akutagawa’s servant, despised by his aristocratic masters and gradually taking responsibility for his own conducts, was an expression of the author’s anxiety towards the contemporary regime. A whole new era of politics had been ushered in following the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912.¹⁰⁰ During the 1910s there were a series of radical anarchist and communist movements, the cities saw the rise of new middle class of white-collar workers.¹⁰¹ The past no longer served as a guide to the present, traditional societal mores had been discarded, and the individual, like the servant, was left to fend for himself. It is hard not to recognise in the servant’s decision to become a thief the Nietzschean moment of modernity:

Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom
has hitherto always first been accounted a *bad man*:
but when, as did happen, the law could not
afterwards be reinstated and this fact was accepted

⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 91.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹⁹ David L. Howell, “Territoriality and Collective Identity in Tokugawa Japan,” *Daedalus* (1998), 118.

¹⁰⁰ Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*, 70.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

the predicate gradually changed; history treats almost exclusively of these *bad men* who subsequently became *good men*!¹⁰²

Akutagawa's originally concluded the story with: "The thief told someone what had happened, and whoever heard his story passed it on."¹⁰³ He subsequently altered it to read, "What happened to the lowly servant, no one knows."¹⁰⁴ He leaves us with the possibility, that is, that the servant's actions are not punished, and that his transgression ushers in a new regime.

Nihilism in Asia with various causes

Read in socio-political terms, as products of their historical context, Yu's *Sinking* and Akutagawa's *Rashōmon*, superficially dissimilar, become surprisingly congruent. This only underscores the point made by Said that Asian literary works cannot be understood in the absence of a proper social and historical context of production. A straightforward formalist reading will always prove inadequate to the task of interpretation.¹⁰⁵ In the case of China, intellectuals such as Yu dwelt extensively on the nation's defeat at the hands of imperial nations. Their hopes that the country would re-gather and emerge stronger faded as they were confronted with the reality of a corrupt political regime. Akutagawa was actually sent to China as a reporter in the very year that *Sinking* appeared, and was aghast at the dirt as well as the number of beggars lining the streets of Shanghai.¹⁰⁶

Even from an outsider's perspective, China was a chaotic, disordered and impoverished nation. Contemporary Chinese intellectuals were acutely aware of the need for social reform, but the path towards prosperity remained unclear. Yu's *Sinking* can be read as an expression of his despair over China's political situation. His sense of cultural inferiority, exacerbated by his time in Japan, ultimately led him to the point where he

¹⁰² Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reader*, 91.

¹⁰³ Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past*, 183.

¹⁰⁴ Akutagawa, "Rashōmon," 9.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 2.

¹⁰⁶ Joshua A. Fogel, "Novelists, Poets, Critics and Artists," in *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 250–275.

abandoned those codes of conduct which had informed his old world, liberating his free-will and libido.¹⁰⁷

But if Japan's military successes succeeded in demonstrating to other nations that she was on a par with other European superpowers, the Japanese themselves, beset by "the problem of self,"¹⁰⁸ were less assured of their national identity. Debate over the way forward was rife, whether to remain secluded from the other nations or be more engaged with superpowers. Naoki Sakai described it as "the imperialist superiority complex...as the strange coexistence of an uncritical identification with the West and an equally uncritical rejection of the West."¹⁰⁹ This conflict between old and new is, in fact, embodied in Akutagawa's modern psychological exploration of traditional Japanese stories – a strategy which, while in one sense was radically different from Yu's negation of Chinese traditional culture, was nonetheless, premised on the same nihilistic response to the agonizing problems of modernity. Akutagawa originally concluded his story "The thief told someone what had happened, and whoever heard his story passed it on"¹¹⁰ to "what happened to the lowly servant, no one knows"¹¹¹ is to hint at the possible escape from the law, and to leave mental space for readers to reconsider the concept of morality in case the custom vanished or was reordered.

Conclusion

The works of Yu and Akutagawa demonstrate that nihilism, conventionally understood as a Western philosophical trend, emerges wherever and whenever people experience social and political change such as civil war or regime transition. In *Sinking*, Yu firstly looked to classical Chinese culture for a solution to his troubles, but ultimately rejected the wisdom of the past and in a spirit of despair turned to venal pleasures. Beset

¹⁰⁷ A number of Japanese literary works were translated into Chinese at this period, illustrating the contemporary importance of Japan in the Chinese mind. See Thornber, "Collaborating, Acquiescing, Resisting," 99–117.

¹⁰⁸ David Pollack, *Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in Japanese Novel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 40.

¹⁰⁹ Naoki Sakai, "Subject and/or Shutai and the Inscription of Cultural Difference," in *Translation and Subjectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 117–152.

¹¹⁰ Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past*, 183.

¹¹¹ Akutagawa, "Rashōmon," 9.

by guilt, the vicious cycle of suffering then began again, in line with Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence. Akutagawa, for his part, expressed the moral dilemma faced by both Japan and the Japanese as the nation emerged from its "sense of isolation, insecurity and lack of direction"¹¹² to become the only "non-white"¹¹³ power to emerge as an international player. Despite their dissimilarities, both works ultimately describe the rejection of traditional values and the attempt to reconstruct new values fit for a new world. It is this process of rejection and reconstruction that characterises much of the literary production of the 1910s and 1920s, as intellectuals embraced nihilism as a response to changes in their respective social and political systems.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status," 778.

**PIVOT TOWARDS CHINA:
JAPAN'S RENEWED SECURITY STRATEGY IN ASIA**

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Introduction

Since Deng Xiaoping's adoption of open reforms in 1979, the international community has witnessed the growth and development of China into an economic power. Based on rapid growth, China has not only become an economic power over the past decade, it has also come to exert more influence on both the global and regional levels. Yet the implication of China's rise is not necessarily agreeable to the world. Over the past decade, while China has come to occupy center stage of the global economy, its open intent to secure "core interests" in the South China Sea and the East Sea (Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands) challenged the thesis that China's rise will be peaceful. Besides growing confrontations against the U.S. in many aspects, Sino-Japanese relations is an often-cited example of the paradox in China's rise.

Although economic relations continue to expand between China and Japan, in terms of foreign policy and regional security, Japan remains vigilant over China's expanding influence. Since Shinzo Abe's return as Japan's new prime minister in 2012, Tokyo has undertaken a series of actions aimed at containing China. Besides Abe's "Three Arrows", Japan subsequently pushed forward its containment strategy by strengthening relations with the U.S., Burma and India. Japan's participation in the U.S.-led Transpacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations and improvements in Japan-Burma and Japan-India relations make up an offensive that challenges China's growing influence in the region. As an inter-regional trade liberalization architecture – proposed by the Obama administration in 2008 to re-establish Washington's economic influence in Asia and reconnect the US with its regional allies – the TPP plays a critical role in the U.S. rebalance strategy towards Asia.

This article is an attempt at making clear of Japan's new strategic offensive in Asia and its implications for Sino-Japanese relations. Departing from domestic leadership change and geopolitical developments in the

region, this article focuses on how the second Abe administration responds to China's continuing rise in the new century. The central argument is that the new Abe administration has adopted a two-pronged approach towards containing China's expanding influence in Asia. On the one hand, Japan seeks to strengthen relations with India and Burma through security and economic cooperation in order to contain Chinese influence from the South. On the other hand, should the TPP be realized in the near future, together with the U.S. and other Southeast Asian states, the TPP would essentially reinforce Japan's relations with member states and counter balance Chinese influence from the Pacific. By taking into account both economic and geopolitical initiatives adopted by the Abe administration, the author seeks to place Japan's recent moves onto the strategic level and distinguish the discussion from purely political, economic or geopolitical considerations of Japanese foreign policy.

Japan's New Security Strategy: Driving Forces

Since the end of World War II, Japan's security strategy took on a unique path incomparable to most countries in the world. Deemed as the culprit responsible for initiating war in the Asia Pacific, Japan's war making ability was subsequently taken away by a revision in its constitution supported by the general atmosphere in the international community. Henceforth, Japan became an "abnormal" state, stripped of the right to carry out a military offensive – a privilege usually regarded as the most important capability of a state. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan, concluded in 1951, would become the mainstay of Japanese security policy over the next six decades.

Regardless of limitations befallen by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty granted Tokyo several possibilities in terms of security strategy, from relying on Washington's security umbrella and completely abandoning the Japanese military to investing in military development and pushing for an eventual revision of the constitution. In the new century, while domestic debates on the future of Japan's security policy continues to rage on, the U.S. remains a centerpiece in Japanese security.

Because of shifting balance of power in Asia emanating from China's rise, Tokyo and Washington moved closer in terms of security cooperation in recent years. Following Shinzo Abe's return to office in 2012, Japan's security strategy seemed to have taken a major turn towards more assertiveness on the international stage. By taking into account both

domestic changes in Japan and regional changes in the Asia Pacific since 2008, we can identify three key factors that have shaped Tokyo's new security strategy: leadership changes in Japan, including Abe's return to power; China's rise and growing aggressiveness; and the U.S. return to Asia.

Leadership Change in Japan

In terms of domestic changes, it is important to note Shinzo Abe's re-election to office. Since Junichiro Koizumi had stepped out of office in 2006, Japan became prone to frequent leadership changes. Instability in domestic politics led to incoherence in many aspects of Japanese foreign policy, most notably found in different policy emphasis of respective leaderships. To a certain extent, the 3/11 Earthquake in 2011 not only brought about lethal damages to Japanese society and economy, but it also contributed in part to the short-lived Kan and Noda administrations, which struggled in dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake, among other issues.¹ The Japanese public's low opinion of both Kan and Noda established the stage for the return of Abe, who was imbued with a general aspiration for "change."

Since the inauguration of the Abe administration, Japan seemed to begin turning away from its "weak" image in recent years and towards making a stronger presence in Asia. Perhaps as an effort to maintain popular support, Abe undertook many bold moves that surprised observers around the world. Economically, Abe introduced wide-ranging macroeconomic reforms – Abenomics² – that aimed to rescue Japan from

¹ See Waseda Institute of International Strategy, "*Tou nihon daishinzai go no nihon gaikou no houmensei*" [The Direction of Japanese Foreign Policy after the Tohoku Earthquake], Ministry of Foreign Affairs Research and Investigation Report (2012); Ishihara Tadahiro, "*Dongriben dadizhen liangzhounian: chongjian zhi lu de jihui yu tiaozhan*" [Two Year Anniversary of the Tohoku Earthquake: Opportunities and Challenges of Reconstruction], *Strategic and Security Analyses* 96 (2013): 14–20; "*Tokushuu: tou nihon dai shinzai go no nihon seiji keizai jousei*" [Special Issue: Japan's Political and Economic Situation after the Tohoku Earthquake], *Issues and Studies (Japanese)* 41 (2012).

² See "*Abe naikaku no keizai zaisei seisaku*" [Abe Cabinet's Economic and Financial Policy], Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, June 30, 2015

the deep crevice of lost decades. In addition, on July 23, 2013, Japan joined the U.S.-led TPP negotiations, temporarily quelling major debates within the country.³ On the foreign policy front, the Abe administration has reached out to countries as wide apart as India, Russia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar in an attempt to strengthen Japan's foreign relations. In Africa, Abe pledged 3.2 trillion yen (32 billion USD) in development assistance.⁴ In short, it is clear that Japan under the Abe administration seems to be taking more initiatives towards defining its status on the world stage.

China's Rise and U.S. Return to Asia

Regarding regional changes, developments towards a growing bipolar structure defined by Sino-U.S. relations should be noted. From the view of Japan, the issue can be further separated into two factors: China rising and the U.S. returning to Asia. The rise of China was a major reason that prompted America's return to Asia; both events contributed to a shift in the balance of power, caught up in a clash of titans increasingly forced to consider their policy in terms of power behavior. In other words, the policy space of power is shrinking, as is the case for Japan. The China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle is useful for thinking about the formation of Tokyo's security strategy in the new century.

Regardless of historical animosities, Japan was one of the first to identify China's rise and Beijing's potential to challenge regional order. In 1990, Tomohide Murai of Japan's National Defense Academy published an article under the title "New China 'Threat' Theory"⁵ in the conservative

(accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai1/abenomics/abenomics.html>).

³ "Kan taiheiyō partnership (TPP) dai juuhachi kai kaigō media seimei" [Media Report of 18th Round of TPP Negotiation], Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Japan, July 25, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/tpp/pdf/2013/7/130725_tpp_joint_statement.pdf).

⁴ Tetsuya Kageyama, "TICAD: Africa shien 3.2 cho en shushō, hyōmei e" [TICAD: 3.2 Trillion in Aid to Africa, Announces the PM], *Mainichi Shinbun*, June 1, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, <http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20130601k0000m010131000c.html>).

⁵ Tomohide Murai, "Shin chugoku kyoī ron" [New China Threat], *Shokun* 22 (1990): 186–197.

publication Shokun. Murai's article is generally acknowledged as the pioneer work that inspired a series of similar works both inside and outside Japan.⁶ Despite Beijing's efforts to placate international concerns over China's rise with proposals such as "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan*) and "harmonious worldview" (*hexie shijieguan*),⁷ Tokyo remains vigilant and unsettled over Beijing. In the eyes of Tokyo, China's continued belligerence in both the East China Sea and South China Sea and ambitions over Taiwan are strong evidences for Japan to keep itself at arm's length with China.

Economically, China continues to serve as the most important market for Japanese exports. In 2011, Sino-Japanese trade reached 344.9 billion USD, with exports to China contributing to 20.6% of Japan's total exports abroad; China has served as Japan's top trade partner since 2007.⁸ Therefore, in terms of bilateral relations, Japan came to find itself mired in a "love and hate" relationship with China that demonstrates economic attachment with the mainland and wariness over Beijing's security and political ambitions. For Tokyo, such a relationship could only be

⁶ Such works include: Satoshi Amako, ed., *Chugoku wa kyoiki ka* [The China Threat] (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1997); Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998). For a full discussion of the development of the China threat theory in Japan, see Hsuanlei Shao, "Zhongguo weixie lun zhi jixi: yi riben xiangguan yanjiu wenxian weili" [On 'China Threat': Perspectives in Japanese Literatures], *Mainland China Studies* 55 (2012): 85–105.

⁷ For a full discussion of the concepts of "peaceful development" and "harmonious worldview," see Tung-Chieh Tsai, Ming-Te Hung and Tony Tai-Ting Liu, "China's Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia: Harmonious Worldview and its Impact on Good Neighbor Diplomacy," *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia* 10 (2011): 25–42.

⁸ Dong Jiao, ed., "Zhongguo lianxu wunian wei riben zuida maoyi duixiangguo" [China as Japan's Biggest Trading Partner for Five Years in a Row], *Xinhua News*, February 20, 2012, (accessed August 5, 2015, http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/world/2012-02/20/c_122725063.htm); "Rizhong liangguo jiaoliu yu hezuo gaikuang" [Summary of Exchange and Cooperation between Japan and China], Embassy of Japan in China, October 2012 (accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/bilateral/koryu0603.htm#2>).

burdensome, as trade figures suggest growing economic dependence on a regional power that harbors strong antagonism towards Japan. China's displacement of Japan to become the world's second largest economy in 2011 adds to Japan's regional insecurity.

Meanwhile, from a broader regional point of view, China's rise caught the attention of the U.S. and encouraged the latter to pursue a return to the Asia Pacific after 2008. Since the inauguration of the Obama administration in 2008, Washington pivoted towards Asia and actively engaged China's neighbors. Besides Obama's visit to Korea, Japan, India, Indonesia and Burma, the U.S. strengthened military cooperation with Korea, Japan and Australia and entered into regional forums such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). While Washington continues to engage Beijing through the hosting of joint summit meetings and an open invitation for China to participate in the TPP negotiations, Sino-U.S. competition in various regions continues to suggest disquieting undercurrents beneath bilateral good will.

For example, in Southeast Asia, Washington re-balanced towards the region by participating in the ARF and EAS and signing the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea with ASEAN, both events that were long carried out by Beijing. At the 17th ARF in Vietnam in 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton responded to territorial disputes in the South China Sea by announcing that the peaceful resolution of competing sovereignty claims in the region is a U.S. "national interest" and Washington "supports a collaborative diplomatic process by all claimants for resolving the various territorial disputes without coercion."⁹ Washington's aspiration towards a mediator role generated Beijing's displeasure, as China's vice foreign minister Cui Tiankai responded by asking the U.S. "to leave the dispute to be sorted out between the claimant states."¹⁰ Strategic competition aside, the TPP proposal reinforced Washington's pivot strategy and made clear America's determination to regain its influence in Asia.

For Japan, the U.S. return to Asia provides Tokyo with support and justification to respond more forcefully against Beijing's growing

⁹ Hung Ming-Te and Tony Tai-Ting Liu, "Sino-U.S. Strategic Competition in Southeast Asia: China's Rise and U.S. Foreign Policy Transformation since 9/11," *Political Perspectives* 5 (2011), 110.

¹⁰ Ibid. Cui currently serves as Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. under the Xi Jinping administration.

influence. Notwithstanding Japan's role as one of Washington's most important allies in Asia, U.S. pivot strategy provides Japan with an opportunity to regain some of its regional influence lost to China in recent years. In contrast to hedging strategies under the Kan and Noda administrations, Japan under the Abe administration seemed to be moving towards a more conservative approach in foreign policy. Despite strong trade relations with China, as Richard Samuel suggests, Japan is moving towards a balancing strategy towards Beijing supported by stronger cooperation with the U.S.¹¹

As early as the immediate aftermath of Abe's re-election to office, Japan's new leader pledged to strengthen bilateral relations with the U.S., a step that was deemed critical to turning Japan's security and foreign policy around.¹² On May 9, 2013, Japan and the U.S. held the first Japan-U.S. Cyber Dialogue in Tokyo and concluded on a joint statement after the conference that urged for cooperation on exchanging cyber information, national cyber strategies and cyber areas related to national defense and security policy.¹³ Initiation of cyber cooperation may be a reaction to U.S. claims to Chinese cyber-attacks in February 2013.¹⁴ In terms of traditional security, on August 23, 2013, Japan participated in a joint air drill hosted by

¹¹ Richard Samuels, "Evolution of Japan's Grand Strategy," *East Asia Forum*, June 4, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/06/04/evolution-of-japans-grand-strategy/>).

¹² In Abe's own words, "the first step in turning Japan's foreign and security policy around is reinforcing *kizuna* – bonds of friendship – once more under the Japan-U.S. alliance, which is the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy." See: Shinzo Abe, "*Heisei 24 nen 12 gatsu 26 nichi abe naikaku souridaijin shuunin kishakaiken*" [Press Conference of Prime Minister Abe's Inauguration], Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, December 26, 2012 (accessed August 5, 2015, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2012/1226kaiken.html).

¹³ "Joint Statement Japan-U.S. Cyber Dialogue," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) Japan, May 10, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page22e_000001.html).

¹⁴ See Gerry Smith, "Anonymous Helps Researchers Link Hackers to Chinese Army," *Huffington Post*, February 19, 2013; and Ellen Nakashima, "Confidential Report Lists U.S. Weapons System Designs Compromised by Chinese Cyberspies," *Washington Post*, May 27, 2013.

the U.S. and included the participation of South Korea and Australia,¹⁵ all Major allies of Washington in the Asia Pacific that jointly encircle China. With Japan-U.S. relations strengthened, the Abe administration has moved forward to carry out bold foreign policy moves aimed to contain China.

Around the Great Wall: India, Burma and TPP

Since Abe's inauguration, Japan has taken bold actions along China's frontiers in an attempt to "fence in" the latter. Japan's new containment strategy comes in twofold: strengthening relations with both India and Burma and entering the U.S. led TPP initiative. By reinforcing relations with both India and Burma, Japan poses as a challenge against China by making an effort to establish a common front along the latter's southern border while closing in on China's growing influence in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, joining the TPP negotiations puts Japan in a potentially strategic and economic network that excludes China. As TPP possesses the potential to balance and even override Asia's current progress in regional integration centered on the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA), Japan has strategic reasons to enter the initiative despite domestic challenges.

Improved Relations with India

Despite a long history of established interactions with India, Japan-India relations remain an under researched area compared with popular attention on India and China's competition for great power status and conflicts between India and Pakistan. Yet Japan-India relations have important strategic implications in the face of China's rise. For example, despite Japan's provision of large amounts of official development assistance (ODA) to China, India was the first country Japan ever extended an ODA loan to back in 1958, and since 2003-2004, India has been the single largest recipient of Japanese ODA.¹⁶ The year 2012 marked sixty years of diplomatic relations between India and Japan.

¹⁵ "Uneasy Partners S. Korea, Japan Join U.S. Air Drills," *Asahi Shimbun*, August 22, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201308220091).

¹⁶ Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Japan and India's Growing Embrace," *The Diplomat*, January 12, 2013 (accessed August 5, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/01/12/japan-and-indias-growing-embrace/>).

Since the signing of the Japan-India Joint Declaration in 2001 that initiated high-level dialogue and economic and security cooperation, Tokyo and New Delhi quickly expanded their relationship over the past decade. In 2005, Japan and India signed the Joint Statement on “Japan-India Partnership in the New Asian Era: Strategic Orientation of Japan-India Global Partnership.” The partnership agreement would become the cornerstone of bilateral relations between Japan and India. In terms of security cooperation, Tokyo and New Delhi advanced their strategic relationship through the adoption of the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between India and Japan in 2008.

For Japan, India is a particularly important strategic partner for several reasons. First, similar to Japan, India possesses traditional sovereign disputes with China in the Aksai Chin region. Sovereign disputes provide common grounds for Tokyo and New Delhi to cooperate and remain alert over Beijing’s growing influence. Second, in terms of geopolitics, India lies beside the Indian Ocean, critical waters that connect the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Malacca. Japan relies on the transport route through the Indian Ocean for much of its energy supply. Third, as a democratic country, India provides further ideological grounds for Japan to base its bilateral cooperation. Therefore, Japan, India and the U.S. form a strategic alliance that has great implications for the balance of power in Asia.

With China in mind, the second Abe administration has noticed two main themes in its partnership with India. Principally, Tokyo has re-emphasized its democratic connection with India and has sought to strengthen bilateral relations as part of a multilateral front that was founded on democratic values in Asia. Japan’s “value driven diplomacy” (*kachi no gaikou*) was first introduced under the Taro Aso administration and later embodied in the strategic concept so called “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” (*jiyuu to hanei no ko*), with India deemed as an important connection point in the arc.¹⁷ On December 27, 2012, immediately after his

¹⁷ Taro Aso currently serves as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in the Abe administration. For a full discussion of Japan’s value driven diplomacy and the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, see Ken Jimbo, “*Nihon gaikou anzen hosho seisaku no outreach: jiyuu to hanei no ko nigou-niin-ni NATO kankei*” [Japan’s Diplomatic and Security Policy Outreach: the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, Japan-Australia Relations, Japan-India Relations, and Japan-NATO Relations], *Research Institute of*

re-election to office, Shinzo Abe capitalized on Aso's rhetoric and introduced his own strategic vision titled "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond."¹⁸ Not shy to reveal China as the main target of the concept, Abe proposed the establishment of a security diamond in Asia mainly based on cooperation among the four democracies of Japan, India, Australia and the U.S. It is clear that India serves as a critical piece in the strategy.¹⁹

Second, following from Abe's Security Diamond concept, Tokyo has come to emphasize cooperation with India in the realm of maritime security. Speaking at the Indian Parliament in his first term in 2007, Abe called for the formation of a "broader Asia" and "confluence of the two seas" – the Indian and Pacific Oceans.²⁰ Although much of Abe's "Two Seas" speech merely elaborated on the general enhancement of cooperation between Japan and India, the speech paved the way for the emphasis on maritime security in Abe's "Security Diamond" proposal. In his latter proposal, Abe pointed out that peace, stability and freedom of navigation between the Indian and Pacific Oceans are interconnected, an important reason for Tokyo and New Delhi to join hands in furthering maritime cooperation.²¹

Since Abe's second inauguration, Japan has moved quickly in boosting maritime cooperation with India. January 29, 2013, Japan and India commenced the first meeting of the Maritime Affairs Dialogue between the two countries in Delhi, India.²² Tokyo and New Delhi

Economy, Trade, & Industry, April 23, 2007 (accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/events/bbl/07042301.html>).

¹⁸ Shinzo Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012 (accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>).

¹⁹ J. Berkshire Miller, "The Indian Piece of Abe's Security Diamond," *The Diplomat*, May 29, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/05/29/the-indian-piece-of-abes-security-diamond/>).

²⁰ Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas – Speech by H.E. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India," MOFA Japan, August 22, 2007 (accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>).

²¹ Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond."

²² "Daiyikai ni-into kaiyou ni kansuru taiwa no kaisai" [Opening of First Round of Japan-India Dialogue on Maritime Affairs], MOFA Japan,

discussed a range of issues for cooperation, including non-traditional security threats, shipping and transport, marine sciences and technology, marine biodiversity and multilateral forums. Four months later (May 30, 2013), in the Japan-India leadership summit in Tokyo, both countries pledged to further improve maritime exercises between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Indian Navy, as well as to establish a Joint Working Group on the US-2 amphibious aircraft.²³ The Abe administration's intention to bolster cooperation in maritime defense between Japan and India is clear.

Breakthrough in Burma

East of India, Japan took actions as well. On May 24, 2013, Shinzo Abe made an official visit to Burma and became the first Japanese Prime Minister to call on the country in 36 years.²⁴ Abe's visit came almost a month later from Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to Japan in April. To some extent, Abe's visit was a good will gesture undertaken in response to Aung's trip to Japan. Aung, the Chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD), has not visited Japan in 27 years.

Despite Burma's continued military rule, the Burmese authority has taken steps that hint at the central government's willingness to liberalize the country. Besides the lifting of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest, the military government accepted the NLD and Aung's participation in the national by-election, in which Burma's biggest opposition party claimed 44 of 45 open seats. In an interview with the *Washington Post* prior to the election,²⁵ Burmese President Thein Sein revealed the government's

January 28, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/25/1/0128_02.html).

²³ “*Manmohan Singh shushou no hounichi (gaiyou to hyouka)*” [Summary and Evaluation of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Visit to Japan], MOFA Japan, May 30, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/page3_000194.html).

²⁴ “*Abe souridaijin no Myanmar houmon (gaiyou to hyouka)*” [Summary and Evaluation of Prime Minister Abe's Visit to Myanmar], MOFA Japan, May 27, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/page3_000186.html).

²⁵ Lally Weymouth, “Burma's President Gives His First Foreign Interview,” *Washington Post*, January 19, 2012.

determination to end domestic tensions, adopt reforms and strive for economic development. Burma's liberalization not only facilitated U.S. President Obama's reciprocal visit to the country on his first trip overseas since re-election in 2012, it also encouraged the U.S., European Union and Australia to subsequently relax sanctions on the once hermit state.

The Abe administration reached out to Burma in the context of a general détente between the international community and Burma. Several reasons encourage Japan to reinforce relations with Burma. First, in terms of geopolitics, Burma reserves access to the Indian Ocean. China, a long supporter of isolated Burma, has picked up on the latter's strategic importance in recent years and aims to establish a land bridge through Burma that would connect Yunnan Province with the ports of Yangon and Thilawa.²⁶ The Indian Ocean is an important sea connecting Japan to energy supplies from the Middle East. Second, Burma is an energy rich state abundant in resources such as coal, oil, gas, hydropower and biomass. According to a report conducted by the Asian Development Bank in 2012, Burma held an estimated 2 million tons of coal, 447.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 206.9 million barrels of oil.²⁷ Burmese energy may help to quench a part of Japan's energy thirst. Third, if progress towards democratization and economic development continues, Burma may become an attractive market for Japanese investments and a country that complements Japan's Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.

Through the three-day summit in Burma, Tokyo and Naypyidaw reached a joint statement that would serve as the foundation to new friendship between the two countries. Besides the consolidation of diplomatic ties, Japan pledged to support Burma's democratic transition, economic reform and efforts towards the enhancement of the rule of law and national reconciliation.²⁸ In terms of economic relations, Japan and

²⁶ Toshihiro Kudo, "China's Policy toward Myanmar: Challenges and Prospects," IDE-JETRO, September 2012 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Research/Region/Asia/pdf/201209_kudo.pdf).

²⁷ Asian Development Bank, *Myanmar: Energy Sector Initial Assessment* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2012), 4.

²⁸ "Joint Statement between Japan and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar: New Foundation for Mutual Friendship," MOFA Japan, May 26, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000006671.pdf>).

Burma agreed to facilitate the signing of a bilateral investment agreement and the joint development of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone. Tokyo also pledged to provide 51 billion yen (498.5 million USD) in loans towards Naypyidaw that would facilitate poverty reduction, project upgrade and infrastructural development in Burma.²⁹ Furthermore, Japan confirmed to write off Burma's remaining debt of 176.1 billion Yen while promising the provision of 2.4 billion Yen for water management in Yangon and scholarship for young Burmese officers.³⁰ In short, Japan under the second Abe administration has made its strategic intentions clear in Burma.

The TPP Strategy

On July 23, 2013, Japan announced its participation in the TPP, becoming the 12th member to enter the negotiations.³¹ Japan's decision came almost five years after U.S. President Barack Obama first referred to the initiative in his speech at Tokyo's Suntory Hall in 2008. Besides the economic and political devastation wrecked by earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Japan was reluctant to participate in the U.S.-led TPP initiative due to the economic implications of trade liberalization, particularly on the agricultural sector. Opponents of the TPP argued that complete liberalization of the Japanese economy would eventually wipe out the agricultural sector among others and leave the country ever more reliant on imports – a fact that has long been a problem for resource poor Japan. As farmers constitute a powerful voting bloc in Japan, debates over the TPP caused the issue to become a political topic over time and even led some pessimistic observers to make claims to Japan's downfall if the TPP is signed.³² Nevertheless, in contrast to dissenting opinions, there are two

²⁹ "Signing of Exchange of Notes concerning Yen Loan to Myanmar," MOFA Japan, May 26, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015 http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press6e_000094.html).

³⁰ "Debt-Relief Measure for Myanmar," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan," MOFA Japan, May 26, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press6e_000096.html); "Exchange of Notes Concerning Grant Aid to Myanmar," MOFA Japan, May 26, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press6e_000097.html).

³¹ Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Japan, op. cit.

³² Perhaps the most salient observer of the pessimistic camp is Takeshi Nakano. See: Takeshi Nakano, *TPP boukoku ron* [Death by TPP] (Tokyo:

major reasons that support Japan's entry into the TPP negotiations. First, in terms of economics, the impact of TPP remains to be assessed despite pessimistic views. The pessimists are balanced by an equally strong camp of supporters for the TPP. For example, in a joint study report on the TPP released by the Canon Institute for Global Studies in 2011, academics dismissed negative views on the TPP and argued for Japan's potential to stabilize China by increasing its negotiation position in trade through the TPP.³³ More importantly, the negotiations by the TPP have the strategic function of embedding Japan into the U.S. re-balance strategy towards Asia.

Although Japan has long played an important role in the U.S. hub and spoke strategy in Asia, in terms of economic policies, especially policies concerning regional integration, Japan has not always pursued the same options as the U.S.³⁴ Participation in TPP negotiations has

Shueisha, 2011). The intense debate that the TPP generated in Japan can be gauged from the great number of publications that criticize the negotiations, with some of these works using rather strong language and suggestive of U.S. conspiracies at work. For example, see Kazuyuki Hamada, *Kowareru beki TPP no shoutai America no yinbou wo abaku* [The Formidable Nature of the TPP: Exposing America's Conspiracy] (Tokyo: Kadogawa Marketing, 2011); Yoshinori Kobayashi, *Communism senken special han TPP ron* [Communist Manifesto Special: Anti-TPP] (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2012); Takeshi Nakano, ed., *TPP kuroi jiyoyaku* [TPP: A Black Treaty] (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2013).

³³ "TPP no ronten (TPP genkyukai houkokusho saishuupan) [On the TPP (Final Report of the TPP Research Group)]," *Canon Institute of Global Strategy* (accessed August 8, 2015, http://www.canon-igs.org/research_papers/pdf/111025_yamashita_paper.pdf). Besides the 2011 Canon report, which included specialists Fukunari Kimura and Keiichi Umada among others, many other studies hold a positive opinion of the TPP. For example, see Manabu Matsuda, *TPP koukoku ron* [Arguing for the TPP] (Tokyo: Longsellers, 2012).

³⁴ For example, in the midst of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, Japanese financial authorities proposed the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) as regional crisis relief mechanism. Japan eventually aborted the initiative under political pressure from Washington. See: Phillip Y. Lipsky, "Japan's Asian Monetary Fund Proposal," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3 (2003): 93–104.

strengthened Japan's relationship with the U.S. and hints at Tokyo's recognition of common security interests with the U.S. The strategic implication of the TPP negotiations for Japan is worth emphasizing.

Despite the TPP's clear economic nature, from a strategic standpoint, the TPP has served as a mean for the U.S. to reinforce its hub and speak strategy in Asia, which was founded on an economic and security nexus. Since the introduction of the TPP proposal in 2008, Washington has subsequently reinforced security relations with its partners to the TPP negotiations, including Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, as well as other countries that have expressed an interest in the negotiations, such as South Korea, Philippines and Thailand. Japan is the latest addition to the lineup, completing a line of defense that stretches from the Korean Peninsula to Southeast Asia. For Japan, such a common front not only increases its security, but it may also serve as the foundation for political elites to adopt innovative proposals that complement the network.

Conclusion: Japan's New Security Strategy and its Implications for Sino-Japanese Relations

As explained in this analysis, under the leadership of the new Abe administration, Japan seems determined to rebound from economic recession since the 1980s and reconsolidate the country's leadership role in the region through economic reforms. Besides Japan's slumbering economy, perhaps a more important factor for the adoption of bold moves by the Abe administration was the economic challenge brought forth by China's replacement of Japan as the second largest economy in the world. Coupled with the collateral damage done by the Tohoku earthquake, Abe may have understood that unless the Japanese economy could restart its engine, he might be looking at another fleeting term in office. Abe's boldness could also be seen on the security front as well, as seemingly independent moves such as Japan's engagement with India and Burma and the TPP could all be tied together under Asia's Democratic Security Diamond. Abe's allusion is clear, as China (and North Korea) remains far from the dominant, western definition of a democratic state. Through geopolitical containment and economic confrontation, the Abe administration seeks to encircle China and stifle its rapid growth, particularly political influence.

There are two implications that could be drawn from Japan's increased willingness to adopt a more forceful action in Asia. First, strategic competition between China and Japan can be expected to elevate. The Abe

administration's subsequent engagement with India and Burma are testament to a renewed strategic offensive by Japan. In historical perspective, besides territorial disputes at sea, since the end of the Koizumi government, Japan has remained relatively quiet for a decade in terms of geopolitics. Japan's geopolitical silence may be the result of domestic political instability, a factor that severely undermined the ability of Japan's leadership to introduce and put in place a mid- to long-range strategy that responds to China.

At the moment, the Abe administration seems determined to correct Japan's strategic situation. Not only has Tokyo actively engaged India and Burma, efforts are made to reconcile relations with Russia and resolve the territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands, and boost cooperation and investment in Africa in an attempt to balance China's increasing influence on the continent. If Tokyo continues to improve its relations with China's neighbors, tensions between China and Japan may be difficult to avoid. On the other hand, as East Asia moves towards bipolarity with America's return and China's rise, Beijing may have more reason to regard Japan as a vanguard for any U.S. strategy and respond ever more forcefully against Tokyo's actions. After all, Japan is not the U.S. and historical memory provides China with enough legitimacy to respond accordingly to Japan. In short, Sino-Japanese relations have the potential to become more paradoxical and further complicate the already difficult situation in Asia.

Moreover, "regional integration" in Asia may become a second front for strategic competition among major powers. As previous discussions pointed out, deeper political and strategic calculations may be involved in the TPP negotiations re-initiated by the U.S. The TPP not only provides the U.S. with a reason to return to Asia in search of economic opportunities, but the initiative also provides an opportunity for the U.S. to balance China's growing influence. Although Japan is caught between two powers, it has adopted a hedging strategy similar to many Southeast Asian countries by participating in both the RCEP and TPP negotiations, a unique characteristic of Japan that hints at other implications in its strategy.

In contrast with other Asian countries, Japan is an economic power that was only surpassed recently by China, a fact that entails Japan's potential ability to challenge China again in the near future. Japan's economic power is also evident in the fact that in the mid-1990s, the country was at the helm of the development of regional integration in Asia; the ASEAN plus Six – the prototype of the RCEP – was originally proposed by Japan. Therefore, to a certain extent, Japan's hedging strategy may also

consist of calculations for institutional balancing against China. Meanwhile, China has yet to respond directly to the TPP, but instead, it has re-proclaimed its approval of ASEAN and support for the RCEP, as the dominant scheme for regional integration in Asia. It remains to be seen whether competition between China and Japan or China and the U.S. shall elevate as well in terms of regional integration.

REVIVING THE POWER OF STORYTELLING: POST-3/11 ONLINE “AMATEUR” MANGA

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Prose writers, of course, can be very evocative, and I appreciate what they do, but I find there is nothing like thrusting someone right there. And, that’s what I think a cartoonist can do.¹

– Joe Sacco, comics journalist

There is, or used to be, this concept of the ‘objective reporter’ who goes out and records the facts. But that’s bullshit.²

– Sarah Glidden, creator of graphic novel

How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less

Introduction: Comics Respond to Japan’s Triple Disaster

Japan’s triple disaster – the massive earthquake on March 11, 2011 that caused the tsunami and the subsequent nuclear meltdown – prompted vexing questions about postwar national policies and the economic structure, raising citizens’ awareness of social and political concerns after a long period of “depoliticization.”³ The catastrophe, collectively referred to as “3/11,” triggered a massive civic demonstration not seen since the 1960s’ Anpo opposition movement.⁴ The 3/11 disaster also has prompted cultural

¹ Joe Sacco, “Underground(s): Robert Williams’ Presentation from 2002 UF Comics Conference,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, 2004 (accessed November 3, 2013, http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v1_1/sacco).

² Sarah Glidden, “Meanwhile...Comics Journalism and Sarah Glidden,” *Bad at Sports: Contemporary Art Talk*, May 12, 2013 (accessed October 13, 2013, <http://badatsports.com/2013/meanwhile-on-comics-journalism-and-an-interview-with-sarah-glidden>).

³ Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, “Introduction,” in Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, eds., *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁴ For the post-disaster anti-nuclear demonstration, see Piers Williamson, “Largest Demonstrations in Half a Century Protest the Restart of Japanese

production by artists in diverse fields through which they urged us to reflect on what the 3/11 disaster brought to the victims, local people, the nation, and beyond.⁵ Such responses have not been limited to socially established “art” forms. Some artists have chosen more familiar and everyday forms of cultural expression such as street performances, graffiti, and cover songs.⁶ Japanese comics or *manga* is also one of such vernacular media employed in response to this disaster.

In Japan, where manga are embraced by the public, it is not surprising that manga would be one of the cultural outlets for narrating, discussing, and examining the 3/11 disaster and its aftermath. In fact, several Japanese *manga-ka* (comics artists) produced works to give shape to their sorrow, confusion, and frustration as well as the compassion that they felt for disaster victims. Within a couple of years after the disaster, several manga about 3/11 were published, including: Shiriagari Kotobuki’s *Anohi kara no manga* [Manga from That Day], Hagio Moto’s *Nanohana* [Cole Flowers], Hirai Toshinobu’s *Higashi Nihon daishinsai: Kimi to mita fūkei* [Great East Japan Earthquake: The Scenes I Saw with You], Suzuki Miso’s *Boku to Nihon ga furueta hi* [The Day I and Japan Trembled], and Imashiro Takashi’s *Genpatsu genma taisen* [Nuclear Plants: The Great Battle with Genma].⁷ Some of these manga employ the generic conventions of fantasy or speculative fiction; others document the disaster through “reportage manga,” based on the artists’ own experience and research.⁸ All of these

Nuclear Power Plants,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 10 (2012) (accessed August 8, 2013, http://www.japanfocus.org/-Piers_Williamson/3787).

⁵ In her essay for *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, Akiko Mizoguchi introduces eight Japanese artists, including novelists, painters, and filmmakers, who created artwork as a response to Japan’s triple disaster.

⁶ Ethnomusicologist Noriko Manabe documented how music was utilized in the anti-nuclear demonstration after 3/11. In addition, Jon Mitchell discusses an anonymous graffiti artist “281_Anti Nuke” who has been active around Tokyo.

⁷ Japanese names in this paper are used in Japanese order – family names followed by given names – except when authors prefer Western rendering of their names in their essays in English.

⁸ It should be noted here that we also witnessed the swift rise of international responses and alliances made *through* this popular medium.

manga, which I call “post-3/11 manga,” visually narrate how the authors experienced the crises and confusion as well as the post-disaster reality in which people were struggling to recover from the devastation while worrying about the dangers of nuclear power pollution.

While many of these cartoonists are professionals with a relatively long career of working with commercial publishers, many amateur and/or non-professional cartoonists have also produced and self-published their works of manga online. Some of these authors quickly gained a large following of readers who subsequently shared links and comments to the online manga via social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Mixi, and others. Before long, a few exceptional works of the self-published online manga were re-published in book form by commercial publishers and sold at bookstores, reaching a much wider readership.

This paper discusses post-3/11 online manga, created by “amateur” or non-professional cartoonists who mobilized social media such as websites, blogs, and social network services (SNS) for production, publication, distribution, and communication.⁹ My interest in these non-

Within six months of the disaster, French artist/editor Jean-David Moravan started a comics anthology project, *Magnitude 9: Des Images pour le Japon*, which includes both Japanese and American cartoonists’ works and illustrations. In the UK, the *Comics Alliance* also initiated a comics anthology, *Spirit of Hope*, in which domestic and international artists contributed their short comics/manga works. Within Japan, cartoonist Adam Pasion, who lives in Nagoya, started a similar comics project, *Aftershock: Artists Respond to Disaster in Japan*, through the online fundraising website Kickstarter. The project was successfully funded for publication, collecting about \$3,800, over \$1,000 more than the goal. These comics publishing projects, initiated by a few individuals located in geographically different places, were connected and developed into a collective project, demonstrating domestic and international cooperation through comics production beyond linguistic and national borders. These domestic and international examples testify again to the fact that comics exist not only as a form of entertainment or of individual expression but also as a medium for communication as well as one that shapes solidarity and cooperation.

⁹ Although the word “amateur” might be generally associated with “unskilled,” it does not necessarily apply to these two artists. The term “non-commercial” might be more precise, but, as I shall discuss later,

professional cultural productions stems from a couple of the following reasons. First, their works offer personalized and local responses to 3/11 from an individual standpoint and, therefore, provides multiple experiences of the disaster, often including empathetic responses to the victims. Their visual narratives recorded and/or gave shape to the creators' emotional reactions to what happened in the disaster from the perspectives of the "ordinary" citizen, which constitute a "cultural repository" of the tragedy from individuals (in contrast to the disaster narratives by the state or the mass media). Second, their works were produced and circulated through non-conventional routes, different from the already-established publication and distribution system in Japan; thus, their online manga are relatively free from commercial and institutional demands, restraints, and censorship.

Third, in relation to the previous point, readers who have played the role of distributor and commentator via various social media also shared their online manga. The use of social media by the readers resulted in a much wider circulation of the online manga than was initially foreseen, some of which go beyond manga's narrowly defined, compartmentalized fandom communities.¹⁰ Using the term "media convergence," media scholar

Kizuki (and possibly Misukoso, too) have produced and sold their works at manga/fanzine events, which can be considered as a commercial activity. For this reason, I use "amateur" or "non-professional cartoonist" in this essay.

¹⁰ Manga scholar Jaqueline Berndt discusses the importance of exploring "manga's sociocritical potential," stating that Japan's triple disaster "suggest[s] the need to reconsider what role manga may play in contemporary Japanese society besides serving short-sighted economic and national purposes, or affective interest of (sub)cultural groups." After pointing out some methodological problems of manga criticism, she claims that "the real task (of manga criticism)" is "not only to foreground the affective aspects of manga culture as such but also to highlight their fundamental relationality, involving creators, editors, and readers, generic genealogies, and sites of media consumption. My paper partially responds to this assertion by examining the alternative, non-traditional way of manga production and circulation. See Berndt, Jaqueline, "The Intercultural Challenge of the 'Mangaesque'," in Jaqueline Berndt and B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, eds., *Manga's Cultural Crossroads* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Henry Jenkins discusses this sort of cultural production and circulation that “depends on consumers’ active participation.”¹¹ Unlike Jenkins, my focus lies not so much in the entertainment industrial practice or its connection to a new business model, but rather in the phenomenon of citizens’ deployment of manga along with new technological media in the context of Japan’s catastrophic disaster and its recovery.

In the following sections, I will examine two representative examples of such post-3/11 online manga by non-professionals: Misukoso’s *Itsuka nanohana batake-de* [Field of Cole: Remember the Great East Japan Earthquake] and Kizuki Sae’s *Shinsai nanoka-kan* [Seven Days in the Disaster].¹² In principle, both online manga, respectively created by two different women, portray people (including the cartoonists themselves) who were directly and indirectly affected by the 3/11 disaster. These works of manga were first serialized or published online, and then instantly circulated and shared by its readers. Before long, commercial publishers recognized the popularity of these manga and began publishing them in book format. Particularly, I will focus on demonstrating how these online manga resist the so-called “information fatigue,” which consists of the psychological tiredness that comes from desensitization to repeated exposure to media, in addition to the rising amnesia that affected people soon after the disaster. Based on Walter Benjamin’s theory about the nature of “storytelling” and how significant information about people can be portrayed, I will expand on the effectiveness of graphic storytelling, its resilience to the mass mediated images and information, as well as its ability to maintain human empathy towards the disaster victims.

Non-Professional Online Manga by Misukoso and Kizuki

Japan’s 3/11 disaster brought about sizable destruction and the loss of many lives in the Tohōku region. The rest of us also “experienced” the disaster through mass media and other sources, feeling stunned, saddened, and powerless at the sight of painful images of the devastation and victims.

¹¹ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

¹² The English translation of Misukoso’s *Field of Cole* is available on Amazon Kindle. When a publisher asked to publish her manga, she proposed the condition that her manga would be translated and published in English with the hope that non-Japanese readers would also remember the disaster victims.

Yet, we also witnessed the swift rise of domestic and international cooperation, alliance, and solidarity in the relief efforts and assistance, which also attested to the resilience and compassion of the people, who were affected both directly and indirectly by the disaster. In her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, American critic Susan Sontag writes about compassion toward the suffering of others: “Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated.”¹³

One such example of Sontag’s claim is Misukoso’s online manga titled *Field of Cole: Remember the Great East Japan Earthquake*. Misukoso is a pseudonym used by Ishizawa Mihoko, a graduate student living in Tokyo, who had been managing her own blog called *Misukoso!* on which she had posted her mini-manga series before the disaster. The opening episode in the book edition of *Field of Cole* explains her initial motive for creating manga about the people who were afflicted in the disaster.

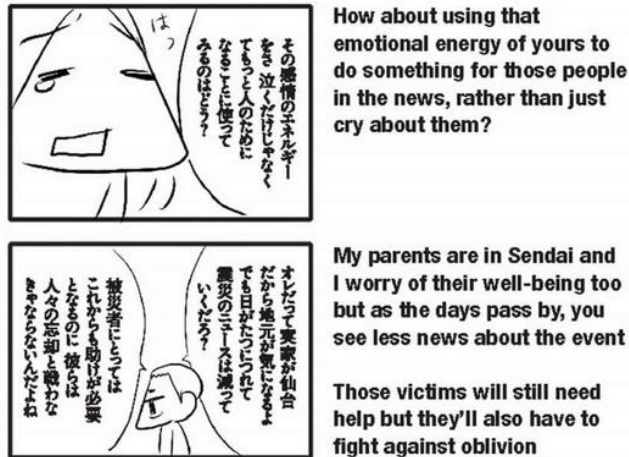


Figure 1. Misukoso, *Field of Cole*, English-language Kindle version

¹³ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2004), 101.

Like many of us, Misukoso learned of the disaster in the Tōhoku region from the mass media such as TV, radio and newspaper. Facing the relentlessly painful images and horrible stories that were continuously pouring in, Misukoso was psychologically overwhelmed, only able to sob over the disaster victims. One day her partner set spurs to Misukoso by encouraging her to express her feelings and emotions about the disaster victims in the form of manga, rather than just sit passively responding to the news in a counter-productive manner. She began to collect personal stories and experiences from diverse sources and serialized them into a short-narrative manga on her own blog. To put it another way, Misukoso *translated* her compassion into action, as Sontag suggests, by narrativizing the memories and experiences of the suffering of the disaster victims in the form of manga and transmitting them to her readers.

Though her visual style is simplistic and even cartoony with constant ellipsis of background depiction, Misukoso’s manga still conveys vivid and emotionally appealing narratives about some of the victims: an elderly woman who died while saving her grandson from the tsunami, children who lost their parents and became orphans, an elderly couple living within seven kilometers of the nuclear plants who decided to live (and die) there, and people who sacrificed themselves for the well-being of others. Once her graphic narratives about the disaster victims were posted on her blog, her manga about the 3/11 disaster quickly attracted readers from all over Japan, which led to “30,000 views in the first week.”¹⁴ Such a high number of page views within a short period was attained by the use of social network services by which the readers posted links and added comments on her manga. Such rapid popularity online prompted a commercial publisher, Fusōsha, to publish her manga in a 168-page manga book in 2011.

Another post-3/11 online comic that follows a similar pattern of production, circulation, and publication is Kizuki Sae’s *Seven Days in the Disaster*. Kizuki is a housewife who sometimes works as a freelance cartoonist/illustrator for local businesses. Unlike Misukoso, Kizuki herself was a disaster victim. On the day of the disaster, she was living in Sendai,

¹⁴ Chris Cooper, “Japan’s Tsunami, Quake Spurs Manga Novel,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 27, 2012 (accessed October 8, 2013, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-05-27/japan-s-tsunami-quake-spurs-manga-novel-for-forgotten-victims>).

Miyagi Prefecture, where the effects of the earthquake were severe. As the title indicates, she documented the earlier days of her experience in the crises and visualized it as a 32-page manga on “Pixiv,” a Japanese-language illustration/manga sharing online community, an equivalent to English-language online community “deviantArt.” Kizuki’s work depicts her struggles in the post-disaster condition, her life with the lack of basic lifelines, the fear of aftershocks and radiation poisoning, the townspeople’s suffering, and the eventual evacuation from her beloved town. Similar to Misukoso’s case, Kizuki’s work also gained much attention via social media, which has received more than 170,000 views to date.¹⁵ When she posted her manga on Pixiv on April 4, 2011, less than one month after the disaster, it was drafted only in pencil because, according to Kizuki, she was afraid of making mistakes if she penned it in ink due to the dizziness she felt due to post-disaster stress and the constant aftershocks.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the unfinished state of her manga added a sense of urgency and authenticity to her depiction of the crisis and the stressful condition of the disaster victims. This further stimulated the circulation of her manga, which was labeled by her readers as “a manga created by a disaster victim.”

Behind the advent of these “amateur,” non-commercially produced post-3/11 online manga, there is a rich and dynamic subcultural activity/practice in Japanese manga culture: manga *dōjinshi* (fanzine) events. Typically, a manga *dōjinshi* event refers to a grassroots-organized fair among manga fans to exhibit, sell, and purchase their self-published manga works. The biannual “Comic Market” in Tokyo is a representative example. Scholars and researchers have often discussed this “worlds’ largest regular gathering of comic fans” in Tokyo,¹⁷ but similar, smaller-sized events also have been developed and organized all over Japan. Historically, this amateur participatory culture became prominent in the early 1970s when the “cheap and portable offset printing and photocopying facilities rapidly became available to the public”¹⁸ but it has now extended to online communities such as Pixiv and other digital content-sharing

¹⁵ As of December 15, 2013.

¹⁶ Sae Kizuki, *Shinsai nanoka-kan* (Tokyo: Prevision, 2011), 112.

¹⁷ Fan-yim Lam, “Comic Market: How the World’s Largest Amateur Comic Fair Shaped Japanese *Dōjinshi* Culture,” *Mechademia* 5 (2010), 232.

¹⁸ Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 140.

websites with the rise of new media technologies such as scanner, illustration software, and Web 2.0 technologies.¹⁹



Figure 2. Kizuki Sae, *Shinsai nanoka kan*. The image is taken from the draft sketch of the manga posted on Pixiv.net

¹⁹ By social media, I refer to the Internet-based interactive and communication websites or applications through which users can exchange and share information and self-created contents.

The growth of manga *dōjinshi* has cultivated a fertile ground for empowering the cultural industry of manga in general, as exemplified by the fact that several professional cartoonists have emerged from this participatory culture.²⁰ In one of her earlier manga episodes, Misukoso depicts herself as actively participating in amateur manga production and its community, including the Comic Market. Similarly, in *Seven Days in the Disaster*, Kizuki also presents herself as being dedicated in amateur manga “sale and exhibit” events such as “Super Comic City” in Tokyo or “Adventure Project (ADV)” in Fukushima Prefecture.

It is no accident that these online manga were created by female cartoonists. Particularly, in the manga *dōjinshi* subculture, the majority of amateur or semi-professional creators are female like Misukoso and Kizuki.²¹ According to Shimotsuki Takanaka, one of the founders of the Comic Market, approximately 90 percent of participants at the first Comic Market in 1975 were female middle- or high school students.²²

The 1970s is chronicled in Japanese manga historiography as the “Golden Age” of shōjo manga when several innovative young artists, who were later called “*24nen gumi*” – such as Hagio Moto, Takemiya Keiko, and Ōshima Yumiko – appeared. Their untraditional works accompanied by diverse stylistic and narrative experimentation enthralled young female readers and, simultaneously, inspired them to produce their own manga. Although the ratio of male cartoonists in fan events has increased in recent years, the DIY-spirited, gender-oriented manga *dōjinshi* subculture has still offered a venue for female non-professional cartoonists.

²⁰ Several professional manga artists to emerge from this participatory culture include the popular cartoonists Togashi Yoshihiro, Kōga Yun, CLAMP, Yoshinaga Fumi, Ono Natsume, etc.

²¹ According to Kinsella, until 1988, “approximately 80 percent of *dōjinshi* artist attending Comic Market were female, and only 20 percent male... During the 1990s, however, male participation in Comic Market increased to 35 percent.” See Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 112. From a more recent statistic from “Comic Market 35th Year Survey: A Report,” as of August 2010, the number of staff and attendees occupies more than half of the total number, and among the category of manga creator groups, 34.8% are male creators, while 65.2% are female creators.

²² Shimotsuki Takanaka, *Komikku māketto soōseiki* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2008), 16.



Figure 3. Kizuki Sae, *Shinsai nanoka kan*

Another gender-oriented characteristic of Misukoso and Kizuki's online manga is that they inherited the generic conventions of *essei manga* or “essay manga.” An essay manga typically depicts the mundane life of the protagonist – often the cartoonist herself – from a subjective point of view, with simplistic and even “super deformed” drawing style. According to Japanese manga scholar Yoshimura Kazuma, this genre has been cultivated “predominantly [by] women” and because essay manga have often appeared in non-manga magazines (women's fashion and information magazines) as well as newspapers, essay manga have been well-embraced not only by avid manga fans but also by “regular” adult women readers.²³

²³ Yoshimura Kazuma, “*Essei manga no tokuchō*,” in Shimizu Isao, et. al., eds., *Manga no kyōkasho* (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 2008), 197. While as a genre, essay manga has been cultivated mainly by female cartoonists, in recent years several male cartoonists have produced highly acclaimed

With life-like characters in everyday environments, the short narrative form of essay manga often details the author/protagonist's mundane affairs, including daily moments of happiness, wonder, and frustrations. These subject matters about the daily life of the author/protagonist foster an affective intimacy with its targeted reader.²⁴ In particular, both online manga by Misukoso and Kizuki follow both thematic and stylistic conventions of essay manga; however, unlike a typical essay manga, their post-3/11 online manga foreground a condition in which their "everyday" reality has been utterly changed by the disaster.

As mentioned earlier, neither Misukoso nor Kizuki are professional cartoonists. What enabled these "ordinary" citizens to produce, circulate, and publicize their manga is the availability of social media such as Pixiv and online blogs. In Japan, the diffusion rate of mobile technologies (cellphones with video camera devices) is very high, and social media is well embraced by youth and adults. Since 3/11, social media has received much more attention because it was one of the dominant technologies used in the moment of crisis. Cultural anthropologist David Slater and others posit that 3/11 was "the first natural disaster fully experienced through social media," stating that, "almost everything we know now...was significantly shaped by social media."²⁵ In fact, we saw the vivid, terrifying images and scenes of destruction caused by the earthquake and tsunami, such as the washing away of houses, buildings, and towns on such media sources, and many of which were images and

works such as Azuma Hideo's *Disappearance Diary* and Fukumitsu Shigeyuki's *Uchi no tsumatte dō desho?* [What Do You Think of My Wife?].

²⁴ Japanese popular culture scholar Sugawa-Shimada claims the socio-critical aspect of some essay manga by saying that, through the humor and comedic trope, essay manga can address "taboo themes, such as alcoholism, divorce, and death." See Sugawa-Shimada, Akiko, "Rebel with Causes and Laughter for Relief: 'Essay Manga' of Tenten Hosokawa and Rieko Saibara, and Japanese Female Readership," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 2 (2011), 172.

²⁵ David Slater, Keiko Nishimura, and Love Kindstrand, "Social Media in Disaster Japan," in Jeff Kingston, ed., *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 94.

clips contributed by individual citizens who used their own mobile devices to record the disaster.

Some of those clips were broadcast on major television news programs immediately after the disaster hit. In other words, the 3/11 disaster revealed that mass media also had become dependent on social media. Compared to the conventional mass media in which information flows from the center to the periphery, social media has no centralized structure; its rhizomatic structure has enabled a “many-to-many” multidirectional flow of information. Both Misukoso and Kizuki take advantage of the powerful technological innovations to produce, distribute, and publicize their manga as well as to receive feedback from readers.



Figure 4. Misukoso's manga on her blog

These two post-3/11 manga, powered by social media, can be aligned with “comics journalism” that has become prominent in the field of American comics in recent years. Like “new journalism” in the 1960s and 1970s, comics journalists report non-fictional events not matter-of-factly but create graphic narratives about them by deliberately including creator’s

observations, subjective interpretations, and criticism on what they report. Although Misukoso and Kizuki are not self-appointed comics journalists, such as Joe Sacco, Ted Roll, or Sara Glidden, their works have played a similar role. For instance, while Misukoso was located in Tokyo, she was collecting and selecting information based on her own interests from different sources to produce her graphic narratives. Later in 2011, she also reported her own experience of joining a volunteer program to help disaster victims in Otsuchi-chō, Iwate Prefecture, where the tsunami washed away many homes, buildings, and people. In this “manga reportage,” Misukoso not only details the devastated condition of the visited town but also visualizes the slow recovery process and the psychological impact of the local residents by the disaster.

Likewise, Kizuki’s manga, labeled as a “documentary manga,” details her own experiences of the disaster from the perspective of a housewife and presents learned practical knowledge about how to deal with the post-earthquake hardships from the perspective of an individual or a family. In this regard, we can consider their manga a form of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism is an act of journalism not by professionals but by average citizens who are “playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information.”²⁶ Mobilized by affordable technologies such as smart phones, digital video cameras, and the Internet, we have witnessed the effective use of social media in citizens’ movement in recent years (i.e. The Arab Spring in 2010). Different from professional journalism, citizen journalism often adopts personal and interpersonal views in the form of a narrative.

Whereas typical professional journalism often requires accuracy, objectivity, and detachment prompted by institutional demands, Misukoso and Kizuki’s works reflect the artists’ personal, subjective filters, and interpretations, including their own empathetic responses to others’ sufferings. Such an emphatic attitude found in their graphic narratives has prompted readers to share their work with other readers – sending the link to their friends, their friends’ friends, and strangers – to shape a collective memory of 3/11.

²⁶ Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis, *We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information* (Reston, VA: The American Press Institute, 2003), 9.

Mass Media vs. Comics Powered by Social Media

The choice of social media for their publication by Misukoso and Kizuki is also important in relation to the limitations of Japanese manga publishing industry. In her book, *Adult Manga*, Sharon Kinsella analyzes the industrial structure of Japanese mass media: whereas Japanese mass media such as newspaper, radio, and television “have been produced by large media conglomerates which have more binding relations with the government,” publishers “never need to apply for government licenses and have had more freedom than other media corporations.”²⁷ This indicates that, in Japan, the major mass media corporations can be more susceptible to the state control and demands. On the other hand, the publishing industry has maintained relative autonomy and independence from the state, staying away from, if not completely avoid, direct governmental control.²⁸ In fact, Kinsella observes how manga “has displayed a special responsiveness to the changing political current of society.”²⁹ Manga’s political proclivity, particularly its potential of social and political criticism, was observed more in the late 1960s’ and 1970s’ *gekiga*, a type of manga with serious themes for adults, when Japan saw the rise of counterculture.³⁰

However, such political responsiveness seems to have gradually diminished, if not completely disappeared, from manga by the late 1970s, as Kinsella observes that manga had gone from “being an anti-establishment medium” to a “pro-establishment medium”³¹ in parallel with the depoliticization of the Japanese society in general. This transformation, she analyzes, was caused by the industrial restructuring in which editors with a middle-class background predominantly oversaw and managed the cartoonists in their manga production. Moreover, during this period, the

²⁷ Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 6.

²⁸ For the censorship of Japanese manga, see Yoshiyuki Nagaoka, *Manga wa naze kisei sareruno ka?* [Why Are Manga Censored?] (Tokyo: Heibonsha shinsho, 2010).

²⁹ Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 6.

³⁰ As for *gekiga* and its social and political criticism, see Shige CJ Suzuki, “Tatsumi Yoshihiro’s Gekiga and the Global Sixties: Aspiring for an Alternative,” in Jaqueline Berndt and B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, eds., *Manga’s Cultural Crossroads* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

³¹ Kinsella, *Adult Manga*, 10.

relative autonomy of the publishing industry had weakened with the rise of increasing numbers of tie-ins with other mass media industries, in particular, via a commercial strategy called “media mix.” Known as the “transmedia franchise” in Anglophone countries, media mix is a marketing strategy that aims to create a “synergy effect” to increase profits by adapting one cultural product into multiple media platforms. As Marc Steinberg documents in his book *Anime’s Media Mix*, it has been practiced by Japanese companies since the postwar period and became a common business model in the 1980s.³² This business practice can increase the potential for profitability, fostering close relations between not only different corporations but also different industries, shaping a community of interest. However, it also potentially undermines the autonomy and freedom of each industry and company, as I shall discuss below, some of which were manifested immediately after the 3/11 disaster.

In general, a crisis is an occasion in which invisible or latent social problems become visible. One of the problems that surfaced during the 3/11 crisis was the limited autonomy and freedom of the current mass media structure in Japan, including manga publishing industry. After the disaster, it is known that censorship, or more precisely, self-imposed restrictions, were quickly put in place. For instance, Inoue Tomonori’s science fiction manga, *Coppelion*, serialized in *Kōdansha’s Weekly Young Magazine* that depicts a post-apocalyptic Tokyo after a nuclear disaster caused by an earthquake came close to cancellation, most likely due to the fictional content’s uncomfortable resemblance to the untimely disaster. Its anime adaptation was also planned before 3/11, but the Fukushima nuclear disaster led to its cancellation. Creator Inoue implies that he was pressured not only by the publisher but also by distributors to suspend the magazine serialization immediately after the disaster (but this was averted).³³ The animation broadcast, however, was eventually cancelled.³⁴ Another

³² Marc Steinberg, *Anime’s Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), viii.

³³ See Tomonori Inoue’s Twitter @inotomo2009, March 13, 2011 tweet (accessed May 5, 2012, <https://twitter.com/inotomo2009/status/47143200196009984>).

³⁴ There was no official statement about the anime series after the cancellation until 2013. In October 2013, the anime series was re-planned and broadcasted on NHK-BS.

example is a *yakuza* (Japanese gang) manga series called *Hakuryū: rejendo* (Hakuryū: The Legend), serialized in *Weekly Manga Goraku* published by *Nihon bungei-sha*, which was suspended with the outbreak of the nuclear disaster. The announcement on the publisher's websites simply reads: “Considering the disaster condition caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake on 11 March, the 18 March issue (1 April on sale) will be the last chapter of the series.”³⁵ The chapter of this manga serialized at this time was titled “The Nuclear Energy Mafia,” which *fictionally* details the Japanese mafia presence behind an electric company. The name of this fictional electronic company is “*Tōto denryoku*,” which inevitably reminds us of “*Tokyo denryoku*” (Tokyo Electric Power Company, TEPCO).

The main story of the manga chapter develops around the idea of corporate corruption, secretive acts, and the exploitation of human lives, all of which became evident, to some degree, after 3/11. In both cases, the real reasons for the cancelation of Inoue's manga series were not clear. One can surmise it was likely canceled in part out of respect or concern for the disaster victims. However, such self-censorship, known as *jishuku* in Japan, has been culturally ingrained; for instance, most Japanese mass media voluntarily refrained from broadcasting some entertainment TV shows just after the crisis. However, it should be noted here that the publisher's announcement never mentions, but instead rather discreetly circumvents, the terms “nuclear plant” or “nuclear accident.” Addressing the nuclear issue was and still remains taboo in Japanese mass media and the publishers have less agency and autonomy compared to previous decades.

Another problem exposed by the disaster is the media control and technocracy. After the meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant, the Japanese mainstream media were excessively faithful to the sources of the “authorities” such as the government and TEPCO, thereby failing to provide enough critical perspective of the “authorities.” This resulted in downplaying the situation.³⁶ In addition, after the meltdown of the nuclear

³⁵ See the publisher's official announcement: “Notice of ‘White Dragon – LEGEND,’” *Nihon bungei-sha*, May 17, 2011 (accessed May 5, 2012, <http://www.nihonbungeisha.co.jp/info/20110317/index.html>).

³⁶ In his book, Japanese media studies scholar Itō Mamoru analyzes the mass media discourse, claiming that the TV media shaped the “optimistic view” immediately after the nuclear accident in Fukushima. See Mamoru

plants, information from the news media was inundated with scientific terminology and complicated measurement units, both of which are unfamiliar to “regular” citizens. The invited “specialists” and “commentators” on news programs also offered conflicting prognoses about the condition of the nuclear reactors and the dangers of radiation. This situation, along with the information overload, generated distrust, confusion, and information fatigue among citizens, even causing traumatic psychological damage due to the sheer volume of information.³⁷

At this juncture, Misukoso and Kizuki’s works, I would argue, maintained their resilience and strength in sustaining human concerns and compassion through the power of graphic storytelling. In “The Storyteller” (1936), Benjamin claims the importance of storytelling is its “ability to share experiences” as countering information from news media (the “newspapers” in his age).³⁸ He writes of the power of storytelling:

The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.³⁹

Benjamin’s claim is intended to praise the “craft” of the storytellers in the modern period who are capable of reviving (or retaining the “ideal” form of) pre-capitalist “mouth-to-mouth” communication and the collective nature of sharing the experience through storytelling because, for Benjamin, the information from news media only offers the immediate impressions of the lived moment (*Erlebnis*), while storytelling serves to communicate human experience (*Erfahrung*). In other words, compared to information that is easily thrown into oblivion, storytelling, for Benjamin, entralls readers; and even after a long period, it revivifies lived experiences.

Itō, *Terebi wa genpatsu jiko wo dō tsutaeta no ka* [How Did the TV Media Report the Nuclear Accident?] (Tokyo: Heibon-sha shinsho, 2012), 65–67.

³⁷ Kayama Rica, *3 11 go no kokoro o tatenaosu* [Rebuilding the Mind of Post-3/11] (Tokyo: Besutoserāzu, 2011), 113.

³⁸ Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 143.

³⁹ Ibid., 148.

Unlike the ephemerality of news or information from the mass media, Misukoso’s and Kizuki’s online manga re-activate the viable function of storytelling in the form of graphic narratives. Media theorist Marshall McLuhan once wrote that comics are a “cool” medium, which is “a highly participational form of expression.”⁴⁰ Comics creator and theorist Scott McCloud also claims the reader’s participation in the production of the narrative with the term “closure,” which fills in the gaps between each frame.⁴¹ Inviting the readers in the generation of the narrative, both online manga make the reader re-experience what happened to the disaster victims; to use comics journalist Joe Sacco’s phrase, they “thrust the reader right there.”⁴²

These two online manga also prompted their readers to share stories of other lived experiences that they learned from these graphic narratives. It is often pointed out that Benjamin’s attitude toward the rapid proliferation of modern technologies in the early twentieth century was ambivalent, but the current, twenty-first century multimedia (or transmedia) environment and communication technologies might realize what Benjamin was hoping for; that is, a potential of storytelling to share lived experiences as a collective.

In the Benjamin’s essay, he compares “story” with “novel” stating, that while a novel produces an isolated reader, a story possesses a collective and participatory nature: “A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship.”⁴³ This idea is similar to what happened with the two online manga shared by the readers via social media. Every time a link to one of their manga was posted online by the readers, the reader’s commentaries – praise, review, or criticism on the manga – were also attached.

These works were shared and circulated among readers located in various places using different kinds of social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, Mixi, and blogs, etc.), which goes beyond a narrowly-defined subcultural,

⁴⁰ Marshall McLuhan, “Comics: Madvestibule to TV,” in Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, eds., *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium* (Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 107.

⁴¹ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1994), 66–68.

⁴² Sacco, “Underground(s).”

⁴³ Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 156.

sometimes highly compartmentalized, taste community. Collectively shared, these post-3/11 online manga sustain the concerns and compassion for the people who are afflicted by the disaster, and demonstrate the “ability of exchanging experiences” which Benjamin claims is the power of storytelling.

「震災7日間」/「槻月 沙江」の漫画 [pixiv]

http://www.pixiv.net/member_illust.php?mode=medium&illust_id=17905695

pixivに投稿された「槻月 沙江」の漫画です。「まだ余震でペン入れ無理でした。」

タグ 10点じゃ足りない *2010ベストマンガ もっと評価されるべき クリック推奨 希望
本当に無事でよかったです *東日本大震災 *漫画 震災実録



sukekyo @sukekyo

フォローする

これはおもしろかったな。震災にあった7日間のドキュメンタリーマンガ。 / 「震災7日間」/「槻月 沙江」の漫画 [pixiv]
<http://htn.to/JBLVUB>

返信 リツイート お気に入りに登録 2011.04.19 10:01



佐々木真宏 @SasakiTakahiro

フォローする

作品の中の“線”は少しも揺らいでいない。 / 「震災7日間」/「槻月 沙江」の漫画 [pixiv]
<http://htn.to/5ntesR>

返信 リツイート お気に入りに登録 2011.04.19 10:18



谷分章優 @taniwake

フォローする

わかっててやってるな、最後の3ページ。しかし肝は「希望」と答えた息子の無邪気な笑顔と違いますか。 / 震災7日間（槻月沙江 / 32P） <http://htn.to/oXyv4g>

返信 リツイート お気に入りに登録 2011.04.19 10:20



水無瀬 なぎさ @kumoato

フォローする

震災7日間 | 槻月 沙江 #pixiv [pixiv.net/member_illust...](http://www.pixiv.net/member_illust...)
漫画にして残すのは良いこと！ でも感想を書いている人達とすごく温度差を感じた。そっかーこれが目新しく見えるのかー。地震なかった地域じゃ分かんないもんねって。

返信 リツイート お気に入りに登録 2011.04.19 10:21

Figure 5. Readers' comments on Kizuki's manga on Twitter

Postscript: 3/11 is Not Over

This paper has focused on only two representative works of post-3/11 online manga, but there are other similar attempts.⁴⁴ For instance, Nakayama Naoko, a housewife living in Ishimaki, Miyagi, began her own blog site in which she has documented what happened to her family since 3/11 and how they have been coping with the post-disaster life. She set up a website called *Sanriku kozakana netto* [Sanriku kozakana net] with the intent to record her family’s history and memory of 3/11. As part of this project, she also published (first online) a 22-page manga *Neenee shittetaa?* [I Know What Happened] scripted by Nakayama and drawn by Masuda SIN.⁴⁵ In an interview, Nakayama explains her motive: “[a]fter all, the experiences we are sharing are very small. They are just everyday parent and child stories that may not seem like important news. But if the manga or my blog triggers something in people so that they can look back on a tragedy and go on, or learn to trust and believe in their family members, I hope they will keep on reading.”⁴⁶ In contemporary mass media, it is not uncommon to find “human interest stories” in the newspapers or TV news programs. However, they are inadequate or often marginalized due to the limited space and time and filtered through institutional and commercial screenings and inspections. In contrast, like Misukoso and Kizuki, Nakayama details the personal, familial, and communal experiences of the

⁴⁴ Another example is the one by Ōtsuka Hisashi, an elementary school teacher in Fukushima, who produced a manga about the high school students who have gone through life-changing experiences due to the disaster. It was scripted by his colleague Satō Shigeki. Available from: “Manga comics,” Yomiuri.co.jp, November 19, 2012 (accessed May 5, 2013, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/eq2011/information/20120926-OYT8T00685.htm>).

⁴⁵ This manga was first posted on the website managed by Nakayama for free access. See her website, “Great East Japan Earthquake,” Kozakana, 2011 (accessed May 5, 2012, <http://www.kozakana3.justhpbs.jp/index.html>).

⁴⁶ Ibid. Currently, the booklet format of the manga is available online. Nakayama’s interview was taken from an English-language news article: Kris Kosaka, “Mom Who Blogged about Tsunami Wants People to Remember,” *The Japan Times*, July 5, 2013 (accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/07/05/our-lives/mom-who-blogged-about-tsunami-wants-people-to-remember>).

locals since 3/11, which otherwise would not be taken up as major news media. What is common in these efforts of the “ordinary” citizens is a strong determination to render their personalized and local memories of 3/11 in a form of graphic narrative. What their manga demonstrated is a potential to share lived human experiences together with the readers.

As early as December 2011, the government officially declared a “return to normal” (“*shūsoku sengen*”) regarding the Fukushima nuclear accident. This governmental attempt seems to sweep the disaster under the proverbial rug since solutions to the immense amounts of nuclear waste and polluted water continue to remain unresolved.⁴⁷ More than three years have passed since the 3/11 disaster and residents in Tokyo seem to be back to a “normal” life, away from the disaster where many citizens are still unable to return home (or for some, their hometowns are utterly wiped away). If a collective amnesia might be seeping into the minds of the people, these two manga urge us to revisit the moment of 3/11 and to think and rethink in both cognitively and emotionally engaged ways about the disaster victims and post-3/11 Japan.

⁴⁷ This “declaration” was retracted by the next ruling party in March 2013.

JAPAN'S NEW ENGLISH EDUCATION REFORM PLAN: ADVANCE (OR STEP BACK) TO 1904

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Overview

On September 7, 2013, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected Tokyo as the host of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. An opportunity to organize the world's largest international sporting event has renewed Japan's determination to improve their underperformance in English. The heightened interest in English was not lost on the Ministry of Education, which rolled out a reform plan just three months later, overhauling the current curriculum for middle and high schools. Though the government has been proposing initiatives in English education since 1986, this one stands out as truly innovative and groundbreaking. However, these reform efforts have neglected one important part of the curriculum for decades: the "Five Sentence Patterns" (*Gobunkei*), a syntactic analysis made by a British grammarian in 1904 that has since fallen into disuse everywhere. Except for Japan. This paper is an inquiry into why the teaching establishment, from bureaucrats to teachers, espouses this century-old construct.¹

Introduction

In January 2000, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō announced an ambitious action plan for teaching English in *The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium*. It proposed that, "[even] if we stop short of making [English] an official second language, we should give it the status of a second working language," and stated that all children should acquire "a working

¹ Author's Note: The author of this paper owes an immense debt of gratitude to Jim Unger, Masaki Shibata, Mizuki Mazzotta, Mark A. Katz, Willie P. Kandler, Clarence McCoy, and the staff of the office of Interlibrary Loan at Georgia State University (Sheryl Williams, Mary Ann Barfield, Brenda Mitchell, Melissa Perez, and Jena Powell). I also wish to thank the individuals at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) who assisted me in locating important government papers, although most of them may not be pleased with my final conclusion.

knowledge of English” so that “by the time they take their place in society as adults” they can speak it routinely side by side with Japanese. The report also called for the bilingual publication of government announcements and websites. To achieve this goal, the report suggested hiring more “foreign teachers of English,” allowing language schools to “handle [the job of teaching] English classes,” and improving the “training and objective assessment of English teachers.”²

Mr. Obuchi’s ambition to transform Japan into a bilingual country met with criticism from right-wing organizations determined to defend the “purity” of the Japanese language, as well as from leading scholars in the fields of language education and linguistics, and, though it had arisen in response to the critical lack of progress in improving the nation’s proficiency in English, it came to naught. However, the fundamental idea behind the proposal, one that had been mooted since the Meiji Restoration, endured: almost fourteen years later, in December 2013, it took the form of another challenging educational scheme, called *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding [sic] to Globalization*, to be fully implemented in 2020.³ Not only does it make English classes mandatory in the fifth and sixth grades, it also requires that, in a radically immersive departure from the current classroom practice, the language of instruction be exclusively in English in all middle and high school English classes.

At first, opposition to early English education by the Ministry of Education and the Central Council for Education led to it nearly being shelved, but overwhelming support from the National Parent Teacher Association assured that, in the end, it would become official policy.⁴ As

² “The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium,” *Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century*, *Kantei*, January 2000 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/21century/report/htmls/>).

³ “English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization,” MEXT, January 23, 2014 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/1343591.htm>); the translator of this report should have rendered what is “corresponding to” here as “in response to.”

⁴ Manabu Satō, “Gengo riterasii kyōiku no seesaku to ideorogii” [Policy and Ideology of Language Literacy Education], in Yukio Ōtsu, ed., *Kiki ni tatu Nihon no Ego kyōiku* [Crisis in Japan’s English Education] (Tokyo: Keiō Gizyuku Daigaku Syuppankai, 2009): 240–277.

innovative and revolutionary as these plans may seem, what has not changed for generations is a now superannuated syntactic analysis of English, the so-called “Five Sentence Patterns,” found in the *Educational Curriculum Guidelines* (Gakusyū Sidō Yōryō), a legally binding set of standards issued by the Ministry of Education. In this paper, I will discuss the inadequacy of this long-outdated grammatical framework, first propounded by the British grammarian C. T. Onions, and explore the reason why the policy makers as well as educators remain committed to it.

Advanced English Syntax (1904)

In English linguistics, the nineteenth century was a transitional period, one in which scholars became aware of the inability of traditional grammars to describe the language scientifically. The necessity of examining the structures of English afresh spawned the writing of a series of seminal works, such as Rasmus Rask's *Engelsk formlære, udarbejdet efter en ny plan* (English Grammar Written According To a New Plan) in 1832 and Henry Sweet's *A New English Grammar: Logical And Historical* in 1891. This was also the period in which the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the most comprehensive descriptive dictionary of a single language, was compiled.

One of the late products of this era was Onions' *An Advanced English Syntax* (1904), a work designed to provide a complete analysis of English sentence patterns. In his introduction, the author listed five predicate patterns: (1) a verb alone; (2) a verb, followed by a predicate adjective, a predicate noun, or a predicate pronoun; (3) a verb, followed by an object; (4) a verb, followed by two objects, one indirect and the other direct, in this order; and (5) a verb, followed by an object and a predicate adjective or a predicate noun. Within less than a century, some of Onions' technical terms had become obsolete and some of his sentence analyses had been revised. For instance, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, one of the two most authoritative modern guides to the descriptive grammar of English, added to the elements of SUBJECT, VERB, OBJECT and COMPLIMENT (= predicate adjective or noun), a fifth, ADVERBIAL, expanding as a consequence the predicate types from five to seven.⁵ The other volume, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, used phrase-structure trees,

⁵ Randolph Quirk, Sydney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1985): 49–59.

not simple linear representations to depict sentence structures.⁶ Most importantly, the five forms of predicates are no longer staples of instruction in today's classrooms, regardless of whether English is taught as a native language or a second language – except in Japan.

Japanese educators first learned of Onions' five predicate types through the 1917 work of the linguist Hosoe Ikki. They have gained such currency over the years that, under the designation "The Five Sentence Patterns" (*Gobunkei*), nearly all English grammar textbooks introduce and treat them as standard forms, and high school or college entrance exam preparation books, almost without exception, begin with their presentation.⁷ Through its inclusion of them in its *Educational Curriculum Guidelines*, specifying what materials are to be taught in primary and secondary schools, the Japanese Ministry of Education has sanctioned the acceptance of the *Gobunkei*. The first *Educational Curriculum Guidelines* was published in 1947 and, seven revisions later,⁸ the most recent version was issued in 2011; since the beginning, Onions' framework has appeared prominently in the section entitled "Sentence Structures." Although predicate adjectives and nouns are now referred to as COMPLEMENT, the sentence types are practically identical to what Onions put forth more than 100 years ago:

- (1) Subject + Verb (SV)
- (2) Subject + Verb + Complement (SVC)
- (3) Subject + Verb + Object (SVO)
- (4) Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object (SVOO)
- (5) Subject + Verb + Object + Complement (SVOC)⁹

⁶ Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁷ Miyawaki Masataka, "On the Origins of the 'Five Sentence-Patterns': Beyond C. T. Onions, *An Advanced English Syntax* (1904)," *Studies in the Humanities: Journal of the Senshu University Research Society* (March 2012), 437.

⁸ Seven revisions from the following years: 1951, 1958, 1968, 1977, 1989, 1998, and 2008.

⁹ "Section 9: Foreign Languages," *Current Curriculum Guidelines*, MEXT, March 2009, (accessed October 20, 2015, http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/eiyaku/1298356.htm).

Inadequacies of the “The Five Sentence Patterns”

Japanese high school English teachers have long taught their students that knowing the “Five Sentence Patterns” is key to the understanding of English syntax; yet, in fact, the inadequacies of the “Patterns” are both manifest and manifold. As Ikegami Yoshihiko discusses at length, chief among them is the marginal status accorded to prepositional phrases. Consider the following sentences:¹⁰

- (1) a. He went to the station.
b. He reached the station.
- (2) a. He looked at the girl.
b. He saw the girl.

Although the two sentences in each pair are not equivalent in meaning or in usage, they denote roughly the same preposition, but by different means: the prepositional phrase *to the station* in (1a) is as crucial to the completion of the meaning of *went* as the noun phrase *the station* is to that of *reach* in (1b); and the phrase *at the girl* in (2a) is as necessary to the completion of the meaning of *looked* as *the girl* is to that of *saw* in (2b). However, since a prepositional phrase is not an object or a complement (i.e., predicate noun or predicate adjective), the “Five Sentence Patterns” places *to the station* and *at the girl* outside the scope of analysis, classifying the first sentence of each pair as an example of the Subject + Verb (SV) pattern. In effect, this scheme lumps them in with those that are genuinely SV types not only in form but also in substance, such as *Day dawns* or *He died*.¹¹

Also, compare the two sentences in (3), the predicates of which consist of a verb followed by a prepositional phrase:¹²

- (3) a. I live in Tokyo.
b. He died in Paris.

¹⁰ Yoshihiko Ikegami, *Eibunpō o Kangaeru* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1995), 26–27.

¹¹ C. T. Onions, *An Advanced English Syntax* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd, 1904), 6.

¹² Hidehiko Itō, “Rethinking of the Five Sentence Patterns,” *Nature-People-Society: Science and the Humanities* 46 (2009), 122–123.

As is the case with (1) and (2) above, the currently used classification format ignores the prepositional phrases altogether and categorize both (3a) and (3b) as Subject + Verb (SV). However, in the former, the prepositional phrase following the verb *live* (in the sense of “to have a home in a particular place”) is obligatory, while the one following the verb *die* in the latter is not:

- (4) a. *I live.
b. He died.

These are only a few of the examples that demonstrate the fallacy of the “Five Sentence Patterns,” that is, their unfounded bias against prepositional phrases. In other words, if a predicate constituent of a sentence is a noun phrase or an adjective phrase, it is recognized as an object (O) or a complement (C); but if it is in the form of a prepositional phrase, then it is seen as an irrelevance, regardless of the thematic role assigned to it.

Finally, pigeonholing all sentences into five compartments may fail to encourage learners to recognize important internal differences among identically formed sentences. To summarize the argument presented by Ikegami, consider the sentences below:¹³

- (5) a. A cat bit a rat.
b. John crossed the bridge.
c. John had blue eyes.

All these sentences belong to the type Subject + Verb + Object (SVO), but that is the extent of the similarity between them. The divergent internal structure of each sentence reveals itself when one attempts to convert it into passive (6) or progressive (7):

- (6) a. A rat was bitten by a cat.
b. ?The bridge was crossed by John.
[Well-formed only if the event was memorable.]
c. *Blue eyes were had by John.
(7) a. A cat was biting a rat.
b. John was crossing the bridge.
c. *John was having blue eyes.

¹³ Ikegami, *Eibunpō o Kangaeru*, 38–56.

Clearly, parsing the meaningful string of words that is a sentence in such a cookie-cutter manner is far from sufficient to master these differences; yet, instructors rarely teach word usage and collocation that would encourage students to evaluate sentences beyond their superficial resemblance.

The “Five Sentence Patterns” Continues to Thrive

History of English Teaching in Japan

The weight given to the “Five Sentence Patterns” in the English curriculum may seem disproportionate, but there are two factors that have facilitated its continued dominance: government language policy, and the lack of proficiency of English language teachers. To understand the current government policy, a brief survey of the history of Japanese English education is necessary. Before the nineteenth century, foreign language study consisted almost exclusively of the mastering of Chinese classics, but the government was awakened to the utility of a knowledge of English after a series of turn-of-the-century violations of Japan’s national sovereignty, in particular, the Nagasaki Harbor Incident in 1808, in which Japanese coastal defenses proved to be no match for a British ship that had audaciously trespassed into the harbor by the ruse of flying a Dutch flag.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the formal teaching of English (along with its attendant Arabic numerals and horizontal way of writing) became part of Japan’s modernization efforts. For a nation whose immediate and vital concern was to westernize itself rapidly in order to avoid the fate of its fellow Asian nations who had fallen or were falling victim to colonization, it was natural that the study of English (among other European languages) would become chiefly a means with which to obtain the knowledge of law, military tactics, science and technology, and that the cultivation of everyday conversational skills would not be stressed. Although students attained some degree of success in “learning *in* English and *through* English,” under the exigent circumstances of national insecurity, teaching methods therefore gravitated heavily toward grammar and translation.¹⁴ This led in turn as Nitobé Inazō, an agricultural scientist and philosopher, observed in a 1923 article, to a propensity in Japanese schools to treat English and other modern languages the same way Americans and British treat Greek and Latin; 90 years later, one can still

¹⁴ Sir H. Vere Redman, “English Teaching in Japan,” *Oversea Education: A Journal of Educational Experiment and Research in Tropical and Subtropical Areas* (1930), 79.

feel an undercurrent of this inclination. The problem is, as Nitobé put it succinctly, “the languages we study are not yet dead.”¹⁵

Nowadays, despite advances in transportation and communication, relative geographical and psychological isolation has kept Japan a virtual monolingual nation. An uninformed visitor, upon witnessing the familiar presence of English in public places, might be deceived into believing that it has been adopted as the second official language. However, such “public English” is “not used by people to communicate, to carry out any of their life’s business. It is purely emblematic.”¹⁶ Its primary function is “decorative,” that is, to create an attractive image that leaves a sophisticated impression, something both visually pleasing and superficial, and therefore it does not matter if it is not read at all, much less understood.¹⁷ This explains why “public English” is so frequently rife with flaws, ranging from innocent deviations, like incorrect spellings and grammatical errors, to downright absurdities, the utterly nonsensical or enigmatic, zen kōan-like, expressions that are often the objects of mockery in English-language blogs and publications. Few teachers and students, however, would be discomfited by the ridicule (if they knew it) since “all English is just as peripheral to the real business of life”;¹⁸ even the best instructors are hard put to motivate children who feel no real need to use English for communication.

Educational Curriculum Guidelines and Textbook Authorization

Since the Meiji Restoration, language education in Japan has been both highly centralized and standardized at the national level. For instance, school textbooks, although written by private publishers, must be approved by Textbook Approval Research Council of the Ministry of Education prior to publication: the Council first examines the contents of a submitted draft and makes revision recommendations in accordance with the Textbook Examination Standards; if the revised manuscript is judged satisfactory, it is then formally accepted for publication. There are two requirements that any

¹⁵ Inazō Nitobé, “The Teaching and Use of Foreign Languages in Japan,” *The Sewanee Review* 31/3 (1923), 338.

¹⁶ Barbara Hyde, “Japan’s Emblematic English,” *English Today* 18/3 (2002), 15.

¹⁷ John Dougill, “English as a Decorative Language,” *English Today* 3/4 (1987), 33–35.

¹⁸ Hyde, “Japan’s Emblematic English,” 16.

textbook manuscript must satisfy: it must be in conformity with the aims and objectives as set forth in the Basic Act on Education (Act No. 120 of 22 December 2006) and with the *Educational Curriculum Guidelines*. Understandably, publishers wishing to win a seal of government approval must ensure that they adhere to the *Guidelines* – among them the “Five Sentence Patterns.”

The *Educational Curriculum Guidelines* is not just a manual – it has the force of law. There was a 20-year-long debate over its legal status, a dispute finally ending on January 18, 1990 when the Supreme Court ruled that it is legally binding.¹⁹ Nevertheless, one should not look upon the *Guidelines* as “sacred and inviolable,” for it has already undergone seven revisions within less than 70 years, usually necessitated by changes in linguistic theory and pedagogy, as well as in social and political environments. In linguistics, there have been significant advances over the years, and the majority of theoretical frameworks – including Onions’ – judged valid at the time of the original *Guidelines* in 1947 have now become historical relics. In defense of the Education Ministry, however, Koike Ikuo and Tanaka Harumi have argued that the government cannot innovate at the same pace that change occurs: the Ministry must discuss everything thoroughly and plan everything meticulously, then conduct experimental studies and public opinion surveys. Even when all has gone according to schedule, any new *Guidelines* may have to wait several years before it is actually implemented.²⁰

Nonetheless, it is still puzzling that educators have not questioned the soundness of teaching something now considered archaic. Supporters of the “Five Sentence Patterns” claim that they are still taught because they raise awareness of differences in word order.²¹ To be sure, William Rutherford found that Japanese speakers learning English do show a higher degree of consciousness of how English word order signals grammatical

¹⁹ See reference in Japanese: “Supreme Court of Japan,” Courts, August 1, 2013 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.courts.go.jp/hanrei/pdf/20130801131248.pdf>).

²⁰ Ikuo Koike and Harumi Tanaka, “English in Foreign Language Education Policy in Japan: Toward the Twenty-First Century,” *World Englishes* 14/1 (1995), 22–24.

²¹ Japanese is a SOV language. Etsuo Nitto, “On The Semantic Role of Obligatory Constituent in a Sentence,” *Tōyō Daigaku Kiyō* 46 (2010), 381.

relations between sentence constituents than speakers of Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish. However, Rutherford concluded that Japanese learners' greater attentiveness to English word arrangements is a product of the tendency of their native language to "utilize word order to signal...grammatical relationships." In other words, it is a result of "typological transfer" (i.e., transfer of skills to use one's native language to a second language), not prior training based on Onions' study.²² So, is there a more plausible reason for the privilege that the "Five Sentence Patterns" has continued to enjoy? The answer may lie in the level of fluency in English among school teachers themselves.

Proficiency in English among Japanese School Teachers

Eleven years after the end of World War II, William Cullen Bryant II, a Columbia University professor (and descendent of the nineteenth-century poet with the same name), published a report about his observations of English language education in 20 middle and high schools in Japan. His paper, nearly 60 years old but still fresh, is a reminder of the consequences when instructors lack the ability to speak a foreign language. He noted that most of the Japanese teachers had neither heard spoken English, nor received sufficient training in teaching it. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were unable to "maintain an English language atmosphere" in the classroom.²³

Though finding native speakers is far easier now than in the past, the resources for additional and improved language teacher trainings are still wanting. This is obvious when one looks at the statistics released by the Ministry of Education in 2006: among the 17,627 teachers, from 3,779 high schools, who took the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), only 48.2% scored higher than 550 on the paper-based test (PBT) or 213 on the computer-based test (CBT).²⁴ Similarly dismal figures, showing that the

²² William Rutherford, "Language Typology and Language Transfer," in Susan M. Gass and Larry Selinker, eds., *Language Transfer in Language Learning* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1983), 366–367.

²³ William Cullen Bryant II, "English Language Teaching in Japanese Schools," *PMLA* 71/4 (1956), 33.

²⁴ See reference in Japanese: "English Education Improvement Implementation Status Survey," WARP (Web Archiving Project), October 21, 2009 (accessed October 20, 2015, http://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/286184/www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/19/03/07030811/003.htm).

average scores of middle school and high school teachers in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) were 560 and 620, respectively, prompted a well-known management consultant to cynically comment that they should be learning English, not teaching it.²⁵ Certainly, standardized English test results are not the only gauge of proficiency, but there have been reported a host of embarrassing and humiliating episodes involving a poor showing of Japanese teachers of English.²⁶

In Ikegami's view, it is natural that teachers with limited English proficiency would favor grammar-centered lesson plans assigning students the simple task of classifying sentences or rewriting them.²⁷ Such a strategy of adapting to, or compensating for, a weakness would explain why the teaching of the five sentence categories has been a fixture for more than half a century. Bryant II observed that one of the most widely used practices in English classes was to rearrange words in a sentence "by numbering their grammatical elements to fit Japanese structural patterns, following the traditional approach to Chinese classics."²⁸ For example, in the sentence *This is a book*, the words *this*, *is*, *book* were assigned the numerals 1, 3, and 2, respectively.

Although this system of reading English as if it were Japanese has long been abandoned, the mechanical processing of sentences has not. Teachers continue to compartmentalize a variety of sentences into just a handful of categories, and to drill and quiz about the subject, verb and object in each: they need not explain structural, semantic, and stylistic differences among sentences belonging in the same category. Without such explanation, however, one cannot hope to learn, for instance, why some SVO-sentences cannot be passivized or why some verbs are awkward if used in the progressive form. Grammar-heavy teaching was given the priority in the post-Meiji Restoration era because the nation needed it, but

²⁵ See reference in Japanese: "Japan's English Teacher TOIEC Average of 560 Points," *News-PostSeven*, February 16, 2011 (accessed October 20, 2015, http://www.news-postseven.com/archives/20110216_12823.html).

²⁶ Yukio Ōtsu, *Kiki ni tatu Nihon no Eego kyōiku* [Crisis in Japan's English Education] (Tokyo: Keio Gizyuku Daigaku Syuppankai, 2009), 58–61; Takayoshi Terashima, *Eego kyōiku ga horobiru toki* (Tokyo: Akasi Syoten, 2009), 76–77.

²⁷ Ikegami, *Eibunpō o Kangaeru*, 19.

²⁸ Bryant II, "English Language Teaching," 34.

today it is preferred simply because teachers are reluctant to venture beyond the range of their competence. Their anxiety is evident in a study conducted by Charles Browne and Minoru Wada: 63% of the teachers surveyed were English majors in college, the most popular field of study among English-teachers-to-be in Japan, but 92% of them felt they were not “adequately prepared for their duties as English teachers.”²⁹

Avid supporters of mandatory English lessons in elementary schools do not seem at all concerned about instructors being out of their depth. One of them even goes so far as to say the new action plan does not necessarily call for a high degree of proficiency; all that is needed are fun-loving schoolteachers who can, with games and songs and the like, show children the joy of communicating in a foreign language.³⁰ Such an approach may be appropriate in the embryonic stage of learning, especially when there is a wide linguistic divide between the native and the target language, but it will become progressively problematic as students advance to English-only classes in middle and high schools, where highly complex grammatical concepts must be taught without using Japanese. Saitō Masafumi has criticized, with a passion seldom encountered in scholarly writing, the unrealism and implausibility of the new action plan, challenging its advocates to hold all-English demonstrations to prove its efficacy.³¹

Linguistic Distance

Why do the communicative skills of Japanese teachers remain so low? While a myriad of publishers and private educational institutions claim year after year to have found the best method for building communication skills, researchers in pedagogy have come to a consensus that six years of formal teaching, encompassing the memorization of a scant 2,700 words, cannot equip the average Japanese person with the level of

²⁹ Charles M. Browne and Minoru Wada, “Current Issues in High School English Teaching in Japan: An Exploratory Survey,” *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 11/1 (1998), 101–102.

³⁰ Ōtsu, *Kiki ni tatu Nihon*, 40–41.

³¹ Saitō Masahumi, “Nihon no Eigo kyōikukai ni gakumon no ryōsiki o torimodose [Bring Back the Common Sense of Academia to the English Education of Japan]” in Yukio Ōtsu, ed., *Kiki ni tatu Nihon no Eigo kyōiku* [Crisis in Japan's English Education] (Tokyo: Keiō Gijyuku Daigaku Syuppankai, 2009), 92.

articulateness envisioned by prime minister Obuchi in 2000, that is, with the capacity to speak English “routinely alongside Japanese”; nor can it “[nurture] the ability [of students] to understand abstract contents for a wide range of topics and the ability to fluently communicate with English speaking persons” that the drafters of the *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding [sic] to Globalization* hope for now, fourteen years later.

The difficulty is in part due to the linguistic distance between English and Japanese, and in part due to the number of classroom hours (or instructional hours). It is well-established that Japanese is one of the most distant languages from English.³² This dissimilarity between the two languages is reflected in how long it takes for English speakers to become fluent in Japanese. A recent study in second language acquisition found that while native speakers of English with “average aptitude” can reach the level of “Advanced-High” proficiency in Romance and Scandinavian languages after 720 classroom hours, they can only progress to the level of “Intermediate-High” level in Japanese after the same number of classroom hours; double the amount of hours, and they still cannot go beyond the “Advanced-Low to Advanced-Mid” stage.³³ The impact of language distance on learning has been known for decades.

Robert Lado, a pioneer in contrastive linguistics, noted as early as 1957 that the absence of similarities in the sound system, morpho-syntactic structure, vocabulary, or script type of the learner’s native language and that of the target language will cause “linguistic distortions,” hampering effective acquisition of the latter.³⁴ More recently, in a 1981 survey, Educational Testing Service researchers discovered that nearly seven out of eight questions (which they call “items”) on the TOEFL are “sensitive to

³² Barry Chiswick and Paul W. Miller, “Linguistic Distance: A Quantitative Measure of the Distance Between English and Other Languages,” IZA Discussion Paper 1246 (Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Bonn, Germany, 2004); Lucinda Hart-Gonzalez and Stephanie Lindemann, “Linguistic Distance as a Determinant of Bilateral Trade,” Mimeograph (School of Language Studies, Foreign Services Institute, 1993).

³³ Benjamin Rifkin, “Oral Proficiency Learning Outcomes and Curricular Design,” *Foreign Language Annals* 36/4 (2003), 586.

³⁴ Robert Lado, *Linguistics across Cultures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 1–2.

examinees' native languages,"³⁵ and that examinees from language groups with a linguistic affinity with English have a relative advantage. A confirmation of the validity of Lado's theory also comes from a psycholinguistic study showing that the "foreign language effect," that is, the "temporary decline of thinking ability during foreign language processing," becomes greater as the dissimilarity between a native and a foreign language becomes larger.³⁶

Instructional Hours

Given the linguistic handicap, both genetic and typological, that Japanese speakers suffer under, it would be logical for policy makers to increase the number of English instructional hours in order to offset such disadvantage. Yet, the hours allotted to English teaching in Japan trail those set aside in many other countries (the majority of which have official languages with a close affinity with English). *Education at a Glance 2013*, an OECD report on how education systems in the world operate, states:

[In Japan, instruction] in modern foreign languages accounts for 10% or less of instruction time; in Belgium (Flemish Community), Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia, it accounts for between 15% and 19% of compulsory instruction time; and in Denmark and Luxembourg, instruction in modern foreign languages exceeds 20% of compulsory instruction time.³⁷

The wide linguistic gap, combined with the paucity of classroom hours, means that, under the current Japanese system, one would have to make extraordinary and tireless efforts to "acquire a working knowledge of English" before leaving high school. Even after an additional four years of

³⁵ Donald L. Alderman and Paul W. Holland, "Item Performance Across Native Language Groups on the Test of English as a Foreign Language." *TOEFL Research Reports* (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1981), 118.

³⁶ Yohtaro Takano and Akiko Noda, "Interlanguage Dissimilarity Enhances the Decline of Thinking Ability during Foreign Language Processing," *Language Learning* 45/4 (1995).

³⁷ "Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators," OECD Publishing, June 25, 2013 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>).

elective English classes in college, it would not be easy, without constant practice and dogged persistence, to maintain the modicum of fluency one might have attained.

Certainly, there are many English instructors in Japan who have become fluent. Without exception, however, they are not products of the public educational system; rather, they are individuals who have taken private lessons or lived in English-speaking countries, and have then worked continuously to keep up their skills. The Ministry of Education should follow the lead of the rising number of aspiring teachers choosing to pursue a master's degree in English pedagogy, by making post-graduate studies obligatory for anyone wishing to be certified to teach English, during which they will be afforded additional formal training in language lessons as well as in the art of teaching.

It also goes without saying that successful foreign language acquisition depends more on need and desire than on even the best teaching method. Many members of Al-Qaeda learn to speak English to attract more recruits in the West; on the other hand, most Japanese baseball players in Major League Baseball remain monolingual thanks to their constant dependence on their personal interpreters. Contrast the latter case with that of the current president of the Ladies Professional Golf Association of Japan, who, with only a high-school diploma, intrepidly took up residence by herself in the United States at the age of 27; at first, she relied on her friends and manager to translate for her, but, tired of a self-imposed linguistic and social isolation, she decided to wean herself off this dependence by placing herself in Japanese-free settings that forced her to interact with other English speakers. Eventually, her oral communication skills reached a level where she was comfortable enough to have not only day-to-day conversations, but also intellectual discussions on a variety of topics, including an Orthodox rabbi who had invited her to a Shabbat dinner.³⁸

Circumstances Affecting Teaching in the Workplace

Unfortunately, English teachers in Japan, most of them fully aware of their weaknesses, and desirous of overcoming them and achieving a

³⁸ Hiromi Kobayashi, "How to Live – It's Important," *Toyokrizai*, October 7, 2008 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/2133>). The author of this article was also invited to the occasion.

breakthrough, are not provided with the means or opportunities necessary to do so. Their work environment is not at all conducive to self-improvement, as the 2013 OECD *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS), published on June 25, 2014, shows: their weekly total working hours (53.9, versus an OECD average of 38.3) and hours spent engaging in extracurricular activities (7.7, versus an OECD average of 2.1) are both the longest of all the participating countries.³⁹ To make matters worse, they are burdened with 40-student classes, on average, a situation that is not likely to change anytime soon, since a former Education Minister, Machimura Nobutaka, stated during a 2001 diet session that he was not convinced that “there exists any empirical study proving that [a smaller class size] is better,” and since some researchers claim, without citing any statistics to back up their assertion, that larger classes are preferable in Japan because students “feel more comfortable when they are buried within a group.”⁴⁰

More depressing is the reality that, once teachers enter the workforce, they are given little chance to enhance and build upon their instructional skills. For instance, they do not have the freedom of going overseas during summer break to participate in training programs, even when they are willing to pay out of pocket.⁴¹ During a break, there are no classes to teach, but the blunt fact is that teachers are not liberated from an assortment of other duties outside the regular program of courses: they have to advise students on college planning, coach athletic teams, supervise school clubs, take turns working as a pool lifeguard, visit homes of truant students for counseling, attend mandatory seminars sponsored by the local board of education – and the list goes on. An extended absence from these obligations would not be possible without finding someone willing to shoulder them pro bono, and without causing feelings of jealousy and resentment among colleagues not travelling abroad.

Although three government-sponsored overseas English training programs (lasting two, six and twelve months) were inaugurated in 1979,

³⁹ “TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning,” OECD Publishing, June 25, 2014 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>).

⁴⁰ Yasuteru Ōtani, *Nihonjin ni totte Ego to wa nani ka?* (Tokyo: Taisyūkan Syoten, 2007), 51; Minoru Ike, “A Historical Review of English in Japan,” *World Englishes* 14/1 (1995): 3–11.

⁴¹ Terashima, *Ego kyōiku*, 140.

the last two were discontinued in 2010 and 2008, respectively, and the surviving two-month program is capped at just 30 teachers, foolishly few when compared with the 4,000 untrained language assistants (see below) brought every year to Japan.⁴² Moreover, one cannot hope to accomplish much in two short months. The Ministry of Education may press on with the English-only lessons regardless, but so long as those who teach are unable to convey ideas clearly and accurately in English, their teaching plans will not be developed around the acquisition of communicative skills, but rather the perfunctory learning of sentence patterns.

Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program

In 1987, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program was inaugurated under the auspices of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. Originally having 848 participants from four countries (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand), it has grown to 4,476 participants representing 42 countries in 2014.

From the outset, however, the Japanese have had a different understanding of the foremost purpose of the effort to attract thousands of young English speakers as Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) than have foreigners, owing to Japan's ingrained tendency to engage in "inward-facing and outward-facing" diplomacy. The fact that the government has a dual stance is revealed by the difference in stress between the program's English and Japanese titles. While the English title, *Japan Exchange and Teaching Program*, suggests the primacy of cultural sharing, or at least an equal weighting given to the advancement of mutual understanding and to the improvement of education, the official Japanese title, *Gogaku sidootoo o okonau gaikokuzin seenen syooti zigyo*, meaning "Project to invite foreign youths to be engaged in language teaching (and other tasks)," clearly places schooling at the forefront.

There is actually a third, less lofty, objective, and unrelated to either foreign language education or cross-cultural friendship: the slashing of Japan's trade surplus. In 1985, after Japan's trade surplus with the United States reached \$50 billion, pressure from America was mounting to open Japan's markets to foreign products and transform Japan from a closed

⁴² See reference in Japanese: "Training for Middle and High School English Teachers," MEXT, May 3, 2011 (accessed October 20, 2015, http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/082/shiryo/attach/1302510.htm).

society – down to the local level – to one more accessible and non-Japanese. It was at this political and economic juncture that the idea of a new language teaching initiative was hatched by the government and presented as a “gift” to the American delegation during a 1986 summit meeting.⁴³ Though no one has officially admitted that the JET Program was conceived in order to reduce tensions over Japan’s trade surpluses, one of the senior government officials involved in the program implementation inadvertently touched on this hidden motive during an interview by David McConnell, author of *Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program*:

During the year of the trade conflict between Japan and the United States – and I didn’t get a vacation at all that summer – I was thinking about how to deal with the demands that we buy more things such as computers and cars. I realized that trade friction was not going to be solved by manipulating material things, and besides, I wanted to demonstrate the fact that not all Japanese are economic animals who gobble up real estate. There was no one in Japan who intentionally planned all this economic conflict, especially out in the countryside. I wanted to show things like that, simple truth in Japan.

In order to do all this, I decided local governments must open their doors and let people come and see the truth directly – not just any people but those with a college degree and under the age of thirty-five, since people start to lose flexibility after that age. I thought this would be a much better way of solving the trade conflict than using money or manipulating goods. I thought that seeing how Japanese live and think in all variety, seeing Japan the way it really is, would improve the communication between younger generation in Japan and America.⁴⁴

Regardless of the philosophical foundations of the program – linguistic, cultural or economic – so long as the official title given to the participants is

⁴³ David L. McConnell, *Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

⁴⁴ McConnell, *Importing Diversity*, 5.

“Assistant Language Teacher,” they should be considered primarily as professional educators. Yet, the JET Program does not seem to put a priority on finding trained personnel, as it has never made a teaching certificate (or a knowledge of Japanese, for that matter) a prerequisite for selection:

There are no requirements for course of study (major) at university or college for the ALT position. For example, it is not a requirement for the ALT position to have a Bachelor's Degree in Education or English... In general, ALTs are not required to have Japanese language skills to participate in the JET Program.⁴⁵

McConnell, who also interviewed current JET participants, discovered that only 13% of those he surveyed had “a deep interest in teaching and ESL or had some experience in these fields” and that the majority of them just wanted to “see the world and perhaps take the time off from school before making decision about career plans.”⁴⁶ It should therefore surprise no one that there have been few signs of progress, and certainly none commensurate with the program’s annual cost of \$500 million.⁴⁷ Some of those in charge of the project have evaded questions about its ineffectiveness by spinning what was originally supposed to be its secondary purpose – the cultural enlightenment of English-speaking foreigners who, upon returning home, would extol the country that had given them a chance to experience a school life there (while paying them a generous salary) – as its *raison d’être*. One of the advisors to the Education Ministry took another tack in justification by comparing the role of an ALT to that of a friendly neighborhood green grocer visiting a math class to

⁴⁵ “JET Program: Eligibility Criteria,” Consulate General of Japan in Houston (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.houston.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/culture/page10b.htm>).

⁴⁶ McConnell, *Importing Diversity*, 61–62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. I am quite familiar with this attitude in JET aspirants, and can attest to a recent case. One day, while I was in my office, putting the finishing touches on this paper, a student came by for advisement. He told me that he hoped to go to Japan on the JET Program “to take some time off after graduation,” and wanted to get assurance from me that “Japanese wouldn’t be necessary, right?”

show pupils how to do addition and subtraction.⁴⁸ On the JET Program's website, the first three eligibility requirements listed are not about academics at all. The applicants must:

- a) Be interested in Japan and have a desire to deepen their knowledge of Japan after arrival. Be motivated to participate in and initiate international exchange activities in the local community;
- b) Be both mentally and physically healthy;
- c) Have the ability to adapt to living and working conditions in Japan, which could be significantly different from those experienced in the applicant's home country.

Predictably, the undertaking has attracted many men and women who are "interested in little more than enjoying themselves at the expense of the Japanese tax payers."⁴⁹ Is it any wonder that the educational establishment finds itself in the predicament of having inadequately prepared teachers assisted by inexperienced and unqualified (and perhaps unmotivated) native-speakers?

Conclusion

Nothing is as indicative of the current state of English education in Japan as the prominent position occupied in the curriculum by C. T. Onions' "Five Sentence Patterns," an obsolete syntactic analysis put forward more than a century ago. Introduced to Japanese educators in 1917, and made an element of the Education Ministry's *Educational Curriculum Guidelines* (*Gakusyū Sidō Yōryō*) thirty years later, this remnant of nineteenth-century descriptive grammar continues to hold sway over teachers, students, and textbook publishers alike, despite studies having proven its inadequacy. Delving into the reasons why its tenets are still accepted, I have concluded that the policy-making inertia of the government

⁴⁸ Tetsuya Yasukochi, "The Controversy Broke Out! English Education in Elementary Schools is Going Nowhere!?" *Toyokeizai*, June 18, 2014 (accessed October 20, 2015, <http://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/39987?page=3>).

⁴⁹ Justin McCurry, "Japan's 'Secret Language Weapon,'" *Guardian Weekly*, July 31, 2007; Ōtani, *Nihonjin ni totte Ego*, 231–232; Yūichirō Yamada, *Ego kyōiku wa naze matigau no ka?* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2005), 182–187.

and the insufficient linguistic competency of teachers are to blame for the enduring regard it has as an authoritative text.

The “Five Sentence Patterns” is inadequate because it reductively classifies sentences in accordance with a superficial identification of four grammatical elements (subject, verb, object, and complement), without even touching upon thematic roles, word co-occurrence restrictions, and differences in nuance as well as connotation, an understanding of which is indispensable for any student wishing to write and speak English reasonably well. Yet, all too often, instructors do little more than hewing to the dogma of the “Patterns.” Even in oral communication classes, which were introduced in 1994, it turned out that most classroom hours are spent on “teacher-fronted, drill-oriented activities,” hours when students are supposed to be interacting with each other by making personalized and situationally adapted utterances in the target language.⁵⁰

Japanese instructors are reluctant to make the transition toward more communication-oriented teaching because many do not yet possess a command of English sufficient to pull it off. To shift the emphasis from monotony and superficiality to functionality and pragmatism, would entail helping teachers to become better speakers of English, so that they in turn could help their students to be better speakers, too – a goal strongly supported by both parents and business leaders, who are always on the lookout for valuable bilingual workers. Their less-than-satisfactory degree of competence is the product of two factors: the distance separating English phonology, syntax, and vocabulary from Japanese, and too few classroom hours coupled with too little teacher training. Whereas the “genetic makeup” of a language cannot be changed, how much time spent on studying it certainly can. The Education Ministry, as a first step, should provide teachers with an unsurpassable opportunity to study in English, by offering to send them abroad for an extended period of time, at public expense. In some universities in Finland, a country with the most successful education system in the world, such study abroad stays, called “foreign sojourns” there, are mandatory.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Browne and Wada, “Current Issues in High School,” 107–109.

⁵¹ David Marsh, Tarja Nikula, Sauli Takala, Ulla Rohiola, and Tero Koivisto, “Language Teacher Training and Bilingual Education in Finland,” *Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages TNP 1* (European Language Council, 1996–1999).

Above all, the government needs to make the successful completion of a master's program a prerequisite for a teaching certificate for anyone wanting to be an English instructor, in order to be ready and able to take up their duties by the time they graduate. At the same time, it should redirect most of the funding for the costly, yet ineffective JET Program to the earnest, focused and continuous professional development of indigenous teachers. Lacking such systematic support for a long-termed and flexible commitment to the nurture of both pre-service and in-service educators, the crucial goals of the *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding [sic] to Globalization* cannot be met and will remain grounded in 1904.

“THE CREATURE DISAPPEARS FOR OUR CONVENIENCE”: AN ANALYSIS OF MURAKAMI HARUKI’S “ELEPHANT VANISHES”

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The Elephant Vanishes came out in 1993 as the first English collection of short stories by Murakami Haruki 村上春樹 (1949–). Selecting from existing Japanese pieces, it was “another new re-edited collection” that “an American publisher originally made.”¹ Among them, “Pan’ya saishūgeki パン屋再襲撃 [The Second Bakery Attack]” (1985) and “TV pīpuru TV ビーブル [TV People]” (1989) mark the early stage of the author’s writing career in the sense that they were title pieces of Japanese collections respectively in 1986 and 1990. However, they do not receive special arrangement in the English version with seventeen pieces. In contrast, although originally positioned second after the title piece at the beginning of the Japanese book *The Second Bakery Attack*, the translated short story “Zō no shōmetsu 象の消滅 [The Elephant Vanishes]” (1985) assumes dual significance in the English edition as its eponymous text and with its placement at the very end. This added significance might partly come from a marketing consideration with the perplexingly curious title.² Still, the story has not attracted much critical attention, presumably considered frivolous because of the reader’s difficulty in making sense, or even “an ultimate negation to convey a story with some actual meaning attached to it other than the story itself.”³

¹ Aoyama Minami, “Murakami Haruki no ‘Zō no shōmetsu’ 村上春樹の「象の消滅」 [Murakami Haruki’s ‘Elephant Vanishes’]” in Komata Tomoshi, ed., *Murakami Haruki Nihon bungaku kenkyū ronbun shūsei* 46 (Tokyo: Wakakusa shobō, 1998), 252, 238. All the translations from Japanese secondary sources are mine.

² Jay Rubin, “Zō no tsukurikata: Murakami Haruki wo yakushite 象のつくり方: 村上春樹を訳して [How to Make an Elephant: On Having Translated Murakami Haruki]” *Kokusahi Kōryū* 73 (1996), 63–64. Rubin, one of the two translators of the pieces included in *The Elephant Vanishes*, ascribes its final edited form to the liking of an editor at Alfred A. Knopf that originally published the collection.

³ Nakamura Miharū, “Yukue fumei no jinbutsu kankei: ‘shōmetsu’ to ‘renkan’ no monogatari 行方不明の人物関係: <消滅>と<連環>の物語 [The

The assumption here is that the physical effacement of an elephant in the text is indeed not supposed to allow a rational explanation and is expected to remain a mystery. This does not mean, however, that the reading experience of “The Elephant Vanishes” yields little interpretative understanding. As Wada Atsuhiko points out, an unspecified, yet central issue is economic efficiency, and, despite of his skepticism, it is certainly possible to figure out to a great extent, for instance, the root cause of the protagonist’s “tendency to get attracted to what the elephant stands for” as well as “the gap that lies between” the two main characters.⁴ In addition, what makes this text outstanding is not the Kafkaesque weirdness of the story told but the fact that the text as a whole is structured unstable with a discrepancy between an imaginatively unusual content and a sharply divided form. It is not “a comforting text” about irretrievable loss that “finds a way how to get along with the system rather than criticize it.”⁵ A persistent sense of antipathy to the socioeconomic system underlies apparent irrationality of the essentially disquieting text, aimed at “the problematic and incompletely conceptualized relationships between the individual and society” in postindustrial reality.⁶

As often the case with Murakami’s early fictional pieces, an unnamed man around the age of thirty, more specifically thirty-one years old by the end of September in this case, narrates the story about an unrealistic, even absurd occurrence. Unmarried, he lives alone in an unspecified “town,” commuting to a company as an office worker. As a suburban municipality near a metropolis like Tokyo, his “town” is large

Relationship of Missing People: The Story of ‘Disappearance’ and ‘Links’]” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 43/4 (1998), 109. In discussion of the motif of disappearance in Murakami’s fiction, especially *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Nakamura further explains this idea of “media as a message in which the message content is nullified, that is, a pure signifier” (109).

⁴ Wada Atsuhiko, “‘Zō no shōmetsu’: zō wo meguru ‘dokusha’ no bōken 「象の消滅」：象をめぐる<読者>の冒険 [‘The Elephant Vanishes’: The ‘Reader’s’ Adventures concerning an Elephant]” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 43/4 (1998), 163.

⁵ Ibid., 160.

⁶ Chiyoko Kawakami, “The Unfinished Cartography: Murakami Haruki and the Postmodern Cognitive Map,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 57/3 (2002), 310.

enough to have an increasing number of high-rise, expensive apartment buildings and urban facilities, such as a small-scale zoo, although the zoo has been closed due to financial difficulties. The story concerns, as the title literally indicates, the sudden disappearance of a very aged elephant, so old that no other zoos care to take it. The animal's physical existence, along with its old keeper, simply and mysteriously vanishes without leaving any trace from within a small enclosure allotted for it, reportedly sometime between early evening on the 17th of May and the following afternoon. Having paid attention to the animal since the zoo's closure, the narrator closely follows TV and magazine coverage of the aftermath and collects all the newspaper articles exclusively about the incident in scrapbooks. The public interest, however, dwindles in a week, and a few more months are enough to erase the memory from people's minds, except for his.

This account takes up the work's first half. Uncharacteristic of Murakami's regular writing, this section reveals social satire clearly targeted at hypocrisy and hardly disguised greed of the expanding city. The narrator's perusal of available information and his direct observation of certain events expose the town's budget-conscious partisan politics, entrepreneurship that pursues profits at minimal costs, and the media sensationalism that seeks to agitate the general population as well as the public opinion that easily sways to news frenzy. Although the narrator does not directly comment on them, he apparently does not approve of these social reactions, judging from the way he observes them in a detached, yet somewhat ridiculing way.

Otherwise, this portion of the story exhibits the Japanese writer's typical style and imagination à la Franz Kafka, particularly reminiscent of *The Metamorphosis* (1915) in terms of central non-human creatures. The Czech writer pioneered the textual reconfiguration of reality through presenting a grotesquely unreal situation in minute detail to the point of precluding disbelief and incredibility. It is a well-known fact that Murakami pays devout homage to Kafka, to the extent that one of his major novels is titled *Umibe no Kafuka* 海辺のカフカ [Kafka on the Shore] (2002) with the eponymous protagonist. In addition, known as highly shy of media exposure and publicity of award winning, Murakami nevertheless chose to receive in person the 2006 Kafka Prize in Prague, citing for the exceptional public appearance his great admiration of the Czech predecessor. As a result, Kafka's influence on Murakami's writing is manifest on a technical level, exemplified in the current case by the real-life-like news reporting surrounding the giant animal's mysterious disappearance. More

importantly, Kafka's fiction hints at a problem in society, which is too insidiously pervasive for people to recognize it. In order to bring the underlying issue to the forefront of the reader's awareness, the fiction shockingly destroys expectation of literary protocols and life's continuum with frightening imagination actualized in uncompromisingly daily normalcy, and this applies to Murakami's fiction as well.

There are at least three differences, however. First, compared with Gregor Samsa's sudden transformation into a large insect, for instance, the disappearance of an elephant might appear innocuous, even humorous. This is not to deny Kafka's sense of humor, but many of Murakami's oeuvres tend to exhibit relatively lighthearted humor unlike Kafka's that is often dark and abstruse. Second, what relates Murakami's fictional world to today's life is not only close attention to detail but also abundant references to consumer goods and popular items predominantly of Western culture, which saturate his characters' lives in their daily routines. Third, different from Kafka's fiction in which an individual faces an inexorable, incomprehensible system that rigidly constitutes the social fabric, Murakami's character one day finds him/herself somehow placed in an almost identical, yet somewhat altered reality. The nature of reality transmutes itself without any dramatic, telltale signs while the protagonist initially undergoes no internal or external transformation. *Ichi kyū hachi yon IQ84* (2009, 2010) offers a typical example. The short story at hand somehow throws the protagonist into a partially warped reality of a shrinking elephant.

These three points are conducive to some critics' denouncement of Murakami's fiction as frivolous and irrelevant to grave social issues.⁷ Still, in terms of foregrounding an unrecognized condition latent in familiar reality through effects of shock and humor, he follows in Kafka's steps. The question, then, is what he seeks to expose and make people realize from behind the façade of frivolity and inexplicable unreality in the midst of normalcy. It is not the social milieux that demand unconditional devotion at the sacrifice of individual self-integrity as in *The Metamorphosis*, nor the highly organized, rigid system of legal régime or bureaucratic authority that seeks its own end regardless of citizens' rights or interests as in *The Trial*

⁷ For summaries of sampled criticism, see Kawakami, "The Unfinished Cartography," 310–312, 320; Jay Rubin, "The Other World of Murakami Haruki," *Japan Quarterly* (1992), 499.

(1925) and *The Castle* (1926). Murakami hints at an even more indescribable or unspecific situation inherent in the very regular way we live our contemporary life that causes us unacknowledged anxiety.

The key lies in what truly differentiates this story. It is neither the absurdity of the elephant's putative escape, nor, as the narrator eventually reveals, the unreality of its gradual shrinkage. Murakami's fiction abounds in the sudden, inexplicable disappearance of characters and in the minimized size of beings, as used in such works like "TV People" and *IQ84*.⁸ In fact, "The Elephant Vanishes" is unusual and distinctive among Murakami's works in how its composition consists of equally divided, yet ill-connected halves. In the original Japanese publication of the book *The Second Bakery Attack*, the first section of "The Elephant Vanishes" has fourteen pages (35–48), followed by the second section of another fourteen pages (49–62), with the dividing middle coinciding with the folding between pages 48–49. In the English translation, the division between the two sections is patently marked with a blank line on page 318, and it also occurs in the middle of the story, if a half empty space of the first page is taken into consideration.⁹

As we have seen, the first section reveals the narrator carefully and persistently following the newspaper articles and TV reports that do not and cannot yield any conclusive evidence or statement about the missing elephant. The second part begins after a hiatus of a few months toward the end of September, when we find him at a business party as an able Public Relations worker for a major electronic appliance company, advertising a new set of coordinated kitchen products to women's magazines. He meets an editor, a woman five years younger, from one of those magazines. Both being single, young professionals in the prime of their lives, they find each other attractive and continue their dialogue at a cocktail bar after the party.

⁸ See a short list in Nakamura, "Yukue fumei no jinbutsu kankei," 107. Wada ("Zō no shōmetsu," 160) argues that we would be able to make "a quite lengthy, complicated list...of things lost" in Murakami's stories.

⁹ See Murakami Haruki, *Murakami Haruki zen sakuhin 1979–1989*, 8: *Tanpenshū III* [The Complete Works by Murakami Haruki 1979–1989, 8: The Collection of Short Stories III] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1991): 39–61. In the case of this 1991 edition that contains this short story, the second section is slightly longer, probably due to the transcription of the dialogue with which the second section abounds unlike the first.

In these somewhat informal circumstances, he inadvertently confides in her about his recent secret. Prompted by her, he reluctantly claims to have been the last witness of the animal and its keeper from a distance, hesitantly asserting that the elephant was physically shrinking before the lights were turned off in the house to close the view.

With the same number of pages, the two sections do not interrelate to each other in a meaningful way, except for the same narrator and the account of an improbable impossibility. The first section mainly consists of the protagonist's narration, and the second section of a dialogue between him and the editor. This might be construed as a narratological experimentation by the author who has tried various forms of fiction in terms of modes (realistic, imaginary, and mixed), voices (first and third-person narrations), and length (short, mid-sized, and long) during his writing career. He also experimented with alternate chapters, in which two unrelated plots unfold in parallel only to merge toward the end, in two of his major novels, *Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandārando* 世界の終わりとハードボイルド・ワンダーランド [Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World] (1985) and *IQ84*. The current case differs from this narrative technique, however. It also diverges from an ending that does not connect well with the preceding main body as in *Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* 国境の南、太陽の西 [South of the Border, West of the Sun] (1992) and *Supūtoniku no koibito* スプートニクの恋人 [Sputnik Sweetheart] (1999). In these mid-sized novels, the male narrator-protagonist drags on with his daily routine without a resolution after a leading female character mysteriously disappears.

The sharp disaccord between the quantitatively perfect symmetry of two halves and their poorly matched, forcibly stitched contents makes “The Elephant Vanishes” at once unique and awkward as a text. On the one hand, the text divided exactly at the midpoint largely precludes a possibility of a mere chance. Although Saito Tomoya argues that the protagonist might be telling his entire narrative to the reader from the standpoint at its closure,¹⁰ he is hardly capable of, or inclined to provide such a carefully

¹⁰ Tomoya Saito, “‘Shutai’ eno kikyū: Murakami Haruki ‘Zō no shōmetsu’ ron <主体>への希求: 村上春樹「象の消滅」論 [A Longing for ‘the Subject’: On Murakami Haruki’s ‘Elephant Vanishes’]” in Baba Shigeyuki and Sano Masatoshi, eds., *‘Kyōshitsu’ no naka no Murakami Haruki* [Murakami Haruki in ‘The Classroom’] (Tokyo: Hitsuji shobō, 2011), 83, 91–92.

measured narration when he growingly fails to suppress mental disequilibrium. Rather, it suggests an incisive authorial intervention. On the other hand, the two sections not only do not interrelate well in content, but they are also structurally ill-fitted with each other. The first section can stand almost independently on its own as one of Murakami's uncanny short stories with a kind of closure that comes with people's faded interest in the elephant, whereas the second section topically depends on the first half for its unfolding, and the narrative remains open-ended without a resolution with regard to what becomes of the narrator. The text as a whole might give us the impression of an inadequately crafted, even ill-conceived composition.

The topic of the elephant's disappearance, which is one of the only two elements bridging the two sections, provides a certain common thread in terms of economic expediency. Metaphorically speaking, the animal's existence is unwanted, and therefore it shrinks and disappears. The town's adoption and care of the otherwise helpless animal appears benevolently considerate enough, and the local citizenry, including the narrator, generally welcomes the notion of a town-owned elephant as their shared property. Yet the elephant's presence is actually not quite appreciated considering the costly way to keep it alive. The municipal administration would rather not suffer the infamy of elephant-killing nor incur tax revenue loss due to the hampered construction of a high-rise condominium on the former zoo site. As a political compromise for saving their face and money, the town takes over the elephant for free. The real estate developer pays for enclosing facilities and donates a small lot at the hilly outskirts where an old school gym is moved to shelter the animal. The elephant keeper is still paid by his previous employer, and the creature mainly feeds on schoolchildren's lunch leftovers.

The visitor also finds the animal solidly tied to the concrete base with an unbreakably thick and sturdy iron chain and fenced in with concrete and large iron bars about three meters high. Large and heavy as an elephant is, this is obviously an excessive security measure against the "feeble old thing" that is considered not "likely to pose a danger to anyone."¹¹ Nobody

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all the references to this short story are to its translation: Murakami Haruki, "The Elephant Vanishes," in Alfred Birnbaum and Jay Rubin, trans., *The Elephant Vanishes* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 310–311.

objects to this rather harsh treatment, however, and the aged creature is expected to pass away sooner than later. In fact, the municipal government anticipates “tak[ing] full possession of the land” upon the animal’s death that should occur in the near future.¹² As the narrator suspects some causality between people’s perception of the elephant and their swift consignment of its memory into oblivion, the creature’s abrupt disappearance amounts to no more than what is supposed to happen before long, actually rendering the whole process less troublesome or costly for those in charge by not leaving a huge carcass to dispose of. The incident is “convenient to all the sides...even their unspoken desire.”¹³ The old, quiet, reserved keeper with almost round, disproportionally large ears, whom alone the elephant trusts wholeheartedly and vice versa, symbolically stands for an extension of the animal and, as such, disappears with it.

In this case, the old elephant together with its keeper epitomizes uselessness as a being that proves totally inefficient in enhancing any social productivity. As the narrator observes, their disappearance has brought forth no change whatsoever in the workings of society. In Murakami’s fictional world, along with cats and sheep, elephants often appear, as illustrated by another short story titled “*Odoru kobito* 踊る小人 [The Dancing Dwarf]” (1984), in which a large factory complex manufactures a monthly set number of live copies of an elephant with a kind of biotechnology to meet popular demand. In *Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru* ねじまき鳥クロニクル [The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle] (1994–1995), thanks to their sheer size, two elephants are spared from the “liquidat[ion]” of supposedly threatening, large zoo animals by imperial Japanese troops in the Manchurian capital city of Hsin-ching at the end of World War II (409, 410).¹⁴

¹² Ibid., 311.

¹³ Wada, ““Zō no shōmetsu,”” 163.

¹⁴ All the references to this novel are to its translation in 1998. Hisai and Kuwa (112–135) trace Murakami’s use of elephants from his earliest novel through the 1980s with the viewpoint that he gave “a negative image as a sign” to the animals from the beginning (131). They, however, dismiss the two early short stories in which elephants play a crucial role, “The Elephant Vanishes” and “The Dancing Dwarf,” as unimportant and fail to discuss their significance; See Hisai Tsubaki and Kuwa Masato, *Zō ga heigen ni kaetta hi: kīwādo de yomu Murakami Haruki* [The Day the Elephant Went

In “The Elephant Vanishes,” however, even such a favorite creature is not immune from a fate that arrives without much delay once one is deemed useless and unneeded, analogous to what happens to “bears and tigers and leopards and wolves” in the Manchurian zoo (410), or to what ultimately befalls the protagonist of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. Unlike those creatures, the old elephant apparently accepts its own extinction without resistance or even “gladly” into “a different, chilling kind of” dimension (326). Notwithstanding, the pivotal, normative concept here is efficiency, or, as Jean-François Lyotard’s puts it, “performativity—that is, the best possible input/output equation,”¹⁵ in the highly advanced stage of capitalism that always prescribes the social milieu of Murakami’s fiction. The “performativity” of a zoo animal is low to begin with, consisting in some vaguely aesthetic, sentimental value due to its exotic appeal. The “input/output equation” of the aged elephant in question is nil or minimal if any, perhaps except for the townspeople’s self-satisfaction for keeping the feeble creature alive, but their kind gesture thinly veils the underlying anticipation of its fast approaching demise. As Wada argues, we should sense “the presence of force that, innate to our own world, suppresses heterogeneous excess” (163).¹⁶

This point of efficiency in part helps to bring together the ill-related two sections of the story, for the narrator’s life as a PR official centers on it both in personal philosophy and for corporate success, illustrated by his dwelling use of *yōryōyoku* 要領よく [effectually] and *bengi-teki/sei* 便宜的／性 [convenient/convenience, expedient/expediency] in

Back to the Plain: Reading Murakami Haruki with Key Words] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1991).

¹⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 46.

¹⁶ Wada, ““Zō no shōmetsu,”” 162–163. Through his Internet research of newspaper articles during the decade from late 1980s to late 1990s, Wada further argues that, apart from the difficulty in reproducing them, elephants in Japanese zoos “have become being eliminated due to their economic [in]efficiency...even better to disappear...for their excessive size” (162–163). Murakami makes this point even more apparent by having his elephant very old in the story, although this does not mean that old elephants are actually maltreated in Japanese zoos.

the second half.¹⁷ At the business party, he promotes a newly produced set of kitchen equipment, the important aspect of which, he stresses to the editor he has just met, is its impeccable coordination in color, design, and function. As the main selling point of the products, “[s]implicity, functionality, unity” in this context easily translate into efficiency or performativity (Complete Works 51). In order to enhance his sales pitch as instructed by the company, he insists on using the English word “kitchen” that presumably sounds more stylish and alluring than its Japanese counterpart. Although he privately admits that the kitchen needs a few other features than unity, he rejects them as unmarketable, extending the idea to “this pragmatic [*bengi-teki-na*] world of ours” in which “things you can’t sell don’t count for much” (320), and he concludes the argument by saying that everybody thinks the same, despite of the woman’s skepticism. By pursuing the way of the world as he understands it, the narrator greatly succeeds as a salesperson of kitchen appliances, even “in selling myself to” people (327).

Thus, the two divided halves are linked to each other through the notion of economic expediency. This, however, brings into light a few issues concerning the other common element, the narrator-protagonist. First, although he provides the narrating voice about his interest in the elephant and belief in efficiency, he scarcely tells us anything else about what constitutes his personal being, such as his upbringing and social activities, especially his inner thoughts and self-reflections. Second, it is incongruous for such an able professional like him to have exhibited “from the very outset” (310) a keen, constant interest in an old elephant, which, as a very embodiment of un-salability, should have nothing to do with him. Nonetheless, he regularly comes to see the animal on weekends, often from a rear hillside vantage point that he alone knows. When asked, he admits that he has liked elephants as far as he remembers, but he cannot provide a reason for his sustained, even unusual fascination with them. Lastly, for all his assertion of pragmatism and personal success in marketability and efficiency, we find him unsure of his mental equilibrium and unable to attune himself well to the external world at the end of the story. Altogether, these points put into question what kind of person he is, although he must appear like a normal resident of the town.

¹⁷ Murakami, *Murakami Haruki zen sakuhin*, 50–52, 60. All the translations from the Japanese edition (Complete Works 1979–1989, 8) are mine.

With regard to his unspecified internal life, there can be two possible explanations. He either carefully avoids divulging what ruminates in his mind or simply does not have much inner thought on a conscious level. The first possibility would render him a keenly self-conscious, grinning intellectual who knows what to reveal selectively from personal observations and experiences in order to conceal what privately matters most like his belief and emotions from anyone who has access to his narration. This is not very likely, however, considering the fact that the narrator does not address the reader. Apparently unaware of, or neglecting the presence of readership that follows his story, he keeps on telling his personal accounts that are devoid of internal deliberations in spite of good intellect, abilities, and certain knowledge at his disposal. We are then left with the alternative explanation.

As pointed out above, his professional belief in efficiency for economic advantage does not accord with his persistent interest in a senile animal. He even betrays such a close sense of affinity and sympathy with it as to personify the animal with *hitori* 一人 (Complete Works 41), a counter reserved for a human being, when it is left alone in the bankrupt zoo, while he does ridicule with emphatic dots the newspaper's usage of *hitogara* 人柄 about its "personal character" (Complete Works 48). He might be strongly fascinated by the elephant precisely because it represents an antipode of the performative value he ostensibly upholds, when he actually harbors an unacknowledged doubt and apprehension about the pursuit of efficiency that even commodifies him.¹⁸ He is, after all, no more than an able, yet little self-reflective salesperson. Complacent as he is about his marketing prowess, he nevertheless retains some humanly inefficient traits unstifled, unlike the Boss's precise, power-driven secretary in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 羊をめぐる冒険 [A Wild Sheep Chase] (1982) who, devoid of emotional superfluity, purely incarnates efficiency in Murakami's entire fiction.

Against his own reason, the narrator in "The Elephant Vanishes" has to feel, without realizing it, certain misgivings about the relentless

¹⁸ As Saito ("Shutai" eno kikyū," 86) argues, the narrator's meticulous attention to numbers, especially in the passage of time, might be "a manifestation of excessive attempt to adapt to 'reality' by [him] who holds 'incompatibility with reality' like harboring 'personal interest' in an elephant."

pursuit of efficiency, because that means to deprive him of any inefficient elements, including human attributes like desire for an interpersonal relationship. This is why he inexplicably feels most attracted to watching the elephant unreservedly interact with the keeper in the evening, especially as they show their mutual, brimming trust and affection in privacy. In his own case, he fails to bring the burgeoning acquaintance with the young editor to the next intimate stage when he inadvertently divulges the secret of the elephant vanishing, thereby stirring up the core of his insecurity that he is not well aware of. In his own words, he initially succeeds in adroitly “selling himself to” her with his professional refinement, and yet he is then unable to deal with the emergent inner demon that forms an integral part of what he has become, thanks to that excellent performativity. In the end, he loses interest in continuing the relationship, because he innately feels uncertain and futile about applying his philosophy to anything new that should matter in his private life.

In a rare, yet hesitant and passing self-analysis, he retrospectively ascribes the indiscreet mention of such “a topic the most improper” for the first date, which he immediately regrets, to an “unconscious” urge to tell someone about his secret (Complete Works 53). His psychological uneasiness also manifests itself in the fact that he picks up a smoking habit again after three years when the elephant disappears. He lights a cigarette at two strained moments during the conversation with her, once when she challenges him about his unhesitant assertion of the world’s expedient nature, which he immediately admits he does not entirely believe in. Then, aware that she detects “unnaturally distorted chilliness” in his initial attempt to steer their topic away from the elephant (Complete Works 53), he has recourse to another cigarette.

Encountering difficulties in understanding his elusive explanation, she rightly figures out that the problem lies not in her but in him while he still does not acknowledge the serious nature of his problem. The woman, who has already expressed her reservation about his unabashed advocacy for marketability, senses his unspoken trouble fermenting inside at the mention of the elephant and instinctively refrains from further personal involvement. As Murakami states, the female character in his fiction often functions as a medium through which “something happen[s]” and

“visions...are shown” to the male protagonist.¹⁹ She elicits a problem surrounding or inherent in her male counterpart so that he can finally become aware of the nature and gravity of the situation. In this case, the editor achieves the effect by insisting on hearing about the narrator’s secret of the vanished elephant.²⁰ Whether or not the male protagonist can make proper use of the opportunity to deal with his problem hinges on his willingness to accept, understand, and act on the revealed knowledge. This brings light to defining what kind of person our narrator-protagonist embodies.

Murakami’s first-person male narrators before the turn of the century tend to have employments that require certain intellectual finesse but do not produce anything tangible or lasting, such as regular or temporary jobs at an advertising agency or a law office. In a sense, these types of work are ideal in efficiency because they do not involve raw, physical materials, while labor outputs are thoroughly consumed at the moment of production. These professionals thrive on the forefront of informational, service-oriented economy, but they might share an uncertain basis of existence largely due to the very nature of their work. The narrator in “The Elephant Vanishes” belongs to this group.

The problem is that he does not make a conscious effort to closely examine and understand his own issues. In this respect, he resembles his counterparts in the sister short stories of the eighties. Struck by a painfully ravenous hunger, the narrator-protagonist in “A Second Bakery Attack,” who works for a law firm, is coerced into “attacking” a McDonald’s with his wife in the middle of the night without comprehending a fundamental

¹⁹ Murakami, “Haruki Murakami: The Art of Fiction CLXXXII,” *The Paris Review* 170 (2004), 133. See also Murakami, “Talks with Haruki Murakami,” in Vendela Vida, ed., *The Believer Book of Writers Talking to Writers* (San Francisco: Believer Books, 2005), 247; and the beginning of his short story, “Rēdāhōzen レーダーホーゼン [Lederhosen]” (1985). As the author, Murakami even acknowledges indebtedness more to his female characters than to male ones for guiding him in fiction-writing in *Shokugyō toshite no shōsetsuka* 職業としての小説家 [The Novelist as an Occupation] (Tokyo: Switch Publishing, 2015), 232–235.

²⁰ In this respect, she functions like the female spousal figure in “The Second Bakery Attack.” See Masaki Mori, “A Bakery Attack Foiled Again,” *Japan Studies Review* 17 (2013): 38–42.

cause or a reason in him.²¹ In “TV People,” the narrator-protagonist, employed in the marketing department of a major electronics corporation, cannot deal with shrunken people intrusively carrying a TV set into segments of his private and public life. There is a crucial difference, however, between these main figures and the one seen in “The Elephant Vanishes.”

In the other two stories, the unnamed protagonists at least realize, albeit vaguely, a serious problem latent in them through visualizing it with a metaphorical image. In “A Second Bakery Attack,” the protagonist introduces the image of an undersea dormant volcano to explain his mental situation under duress from the irrepressible hunger and his importunate wife; he then begins to feel the imagined volcano imminent with a devastating eruption due to the overly transparent water. After a few encounters with shrunken TV people just over one day, the protagonist in “TV People” has a vivid dream in which all his office colleagues in a business meeting are turned dead into stone statues, and he also finds himself losing his voice and getting petrified. This is actually what is about to befall him in real life at the end of the story. The two characters do not fully understand the significance of their respective images, but they at least know that they are confronted with a clear, highly symbolic visual representation of their underlying fear.

This is not the case with their counterpart in “The Elephant Vanishes.” He fails to visualize a problem either passively in a dream or by actively exerting imagination. The closest he can get to that state of visual realization takes place at the very end of the first section. Just before the break between the two halves, for a few months after the elephant’s disappearance, he often visits the empty enclosure that used to house the animal, only to find the place somewhat unnatural and desolate each time. Antithetical as the visits are to his belief in economic efficiency, he nevertheless repeats them, compelled by an incomprehensible drive from within. The very fact that he chooses to come back to see the empty space multiple times suggests its relevance to his hardly self-examined problem.

This scene of an unoccupied enclosure turns out highly significant in deciphering the story, especially considering how Murakami often gets

²¹ Concerning this character’s case, see Mori, “A Bakery Attack Foiled Again,” 29–50.

motivated to write a novel through conceiving an initial scene.²² He ascribes the inception of this story to his creative curiosity about an imagined “elephant house from which the elephant has disappeared.”²³ The bleak landscapes that give a sense of decay and desolation recur in his fiction. Examples include the aforementioned dream scene in “TV People” and the remote, hard-to-reach location in the midst of Hokkaido where the narrator-protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* waits alone for an encounter with the unknown just before snow closes the passage out. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, through a botched cerebral experiment, an almost deserted, walled town operates in the mind, separate from the surface consciousness, with an effect of making its inhabitants lose their memories. In each of these cases, the forlorn location corresponds to a mind in which humanness is somehow being impaired or endangered, while at the same time providing the protagonist with a rare, last chance to recognize and address his problem. The narrator in “TV People” realizes it but does not have time to deal with it. The one in *A Wild Sheep Chase* undergoes a reunion with his deceased friend from lingering teenage days only to go back to his regular life in the end, bereft of the last remnants of his youth as a result. The *Boku* 僕 [I] in “The End of the World” does figure out his problem and takes an action.

It is relevant to notice here that all the above-mentioned characters find themselves within some kind of enclosure, and the closed spaces can be their starting points for self-renewal, if they actually realize their situations and make efforts to get out of the impasse that is rather mental than spatial. In this respect, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* typifies a successful case. Its protagonist named Toru Okada repeatedly goes down into a dark, lifeless, closed space of a dry well for days. A crucial difference, however, is that he stays at the bottom of an empty well by his own will and embraces hours of physical duress each time, urged by a mounting sense of need to deal with a difficulty inherent in his life. As a

²² For instance, the short story “Nejimakidori to kayōbi no onnatachi ねじまき鳥と火曜日の女たち [The Wind-Up Bird and Tuesday’s Women]” (1986) obviously paved the way for the much longer novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* that came out eight years later. See also Mori Mayumi.

²³ Hisai and Kuwa, *Zō ga heigen ni kaetta hi*, 129. They cite this remark from an interview with Murakami in the Japanese edition of the *Playboy* magazine (May 1986).

result of intense self-contemplation in subterranean utter darkness, he manages to commune with the spiritual essence of his lost wife and defeat his evil brother-in-law through a nonphysical channel before he emerges from the well for the last time, severely bruised and yet expectant for a new phase in his life.

This self-examination often accompanied by the act of symbolically passing into one's innermost psyche is also an important, recurring motif in Murakami's works. Toru Okada voluntarily goes down to the bottom of the dry well. The teenage protagonist in *Kafka on the Shore* encounters a rarefied locus of his unconscious, Oedipal desires when he ventures deep into the mythically impenetrable, dense forest of Shikoku. In *1Q84*, Aomame, the female protagonist whose orbit of action is separated from that of the male counterpart in alternate chapters, is finally reunited with her soul mate after her descent into another, parallel world of simulacrum. In fact, the importance of symbolic descent extends to, and stems from the author himself when he metaphorically compares his method of conceiving a novel to going down into a hidden, dark, underground area of the house at the risk of never returning or jeopardizing his sanity.²⁴

It follows that facing the external void that interests him irresistibly must be the very situation in which the narrator-protagonist in "The Elephant Vanishes" could delve into the deeper realm of his mind to look for a cause of what has been unsettling him for a long time. Not daring or able to undertake such a close self-examination, however, he misses a precious opportunity to confront it. All he does is keep on gazing, and he does not undergo any transformation or take any action in the face of the closed blank space. Lacking in mental power or capacity beyond practical intellect, he is even less inclined, in contrast to the other protagonists, to expose himself to risky self-exploration, maintaining, instead, the status quo of the ever-growing applicability of efficiency as if mnemonically programmed. Thus, the story at the very end aptly shows him still observing

²⁴ See Murakami, "Haruki Murakami: écrire, c'est comme rêver éveillé [Haruki Murakami: Writing, It's like Dreaming Awake]" *Le Magazine Littéraire* 421 (2003), 99–100; "In Dreams Begins Responsibility" (2005), 558–559; *Hashiru koto ni tsuite kataru toki ni boku no kataru koto* (2007), 133–137, and *Shokugyō* (2015), 175–176.

the empty enclosure that looks even more desolate with the coming winter, which mirrors his own internal wastes.

In a metaphoric sense, the narrator-protagonist's humanity strongly corresponds to the ancient elephant in terms of inefficiency. Regarded as an unneeded, cumbersome burden, nominally receiving recognition for social decency, yet largely neglected, it is very much enfeebled while deprived of freedom by way of a thick chain of his purely utilitarian thinking.²⁵ This metaphorical affinity accounts for his otherwise inexplicable attraction to the animal from the onset. Without knowing it, he innately feels threatened by his own relentless pursuit of efficiency that sacrifices his human nature, and he finds an equivalent symbol of his endangered humanity in the aged elephant. According to the unnamed narrator-protagonist in *Notes from Underground* (1864) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, whom Murakami admires as a novelist along with Kafka, what makes us human in the increasingly positivistic society is our willful desire for the irrational against our own calculated advantage. Murakami's narrator here opts for the irrational, the inefficient, which goes against his principle of numerable gains at the least costs possible. Unmeditated as his visits might be to the deserted elephant house, they are likely his last ditch attempt at holding onto his sense of humanity and his mind's stability.

His fundamental problem is threefold. First, placed outside of the enclosure, he is not at a right place to start with, because he cannot free himself when he is not confined, physically or symbolically. Metaphorically speaking, his humanity is, but that is not allowed autonomous agency unlike *Boku's* shadow in "The End of the World." The narrator has no power or opportunity to alter his own situation as a result. Instead, the elephant as his metaphorical correlative is in bondage. Second, with the elephant gone, he has even lost an object to correlate with, forced to live with the void left by the animal's physical disappearance outside and his consequently diminishing humanity inside. These two factors keep him in psychological suspense for months, until he is driven toward a mental breakdown when the precarious balance between his increasing business success and reduced humanness is finally tipped at the brink of collapse. Third, as discussed above, content with his rising professional fortune on the conscious level,

²⁵ To a certain extent, the metaphor might also apply to the humanities of today's academia for their institutional plight in such countries as Japan and the United States.

he is neither able nor willing, despite an indefinably palpable apprehension, to examine an underlying situation in order to get himself out of life's mounting crisis.

In this context, the blank space that separates the text's two sections indicates far more than a mere lapse of several months. Although, generally speaking, such an inserted passage of time might suggest a certain change happening in the story, the current case points to the narrator's stalemate in understanding and motivating himself toward a new direction. Textually, the blank space that follows the vacant enclosure on the page is a physical embodiment and a symbolic carryover of the spiritual stagnation. Of greater significance here, however, is the undeclared, yet irreconcilably sharp contrast between the character's incapability and irresolution for self-renewal and the author's decisive, if not deliberate intervention in incisively dividing the story in the very middle.

The exact division of two sections might be expected to separate one aspect of the narrator-protagonist's life from another. Indeed, we find the narrator in the first section meticulously tracing the social unfolding of the elephant incident all by himself, mostly in the private space of his apartment, while the second section presents him in his public function through his interaction with the magazine editor. The disconnect appears to ensure the private and public spheres of his life being set apart unequivocally as the narrator undoubtedly intends them not to affect each other. Like many of Murakami's protagonists in the 1980s, he is "not a 'self-closed' youth but an individual" who "tries to live through 'the advanced capitalistic society' all by himself...with complete 'autonomy.'"²⁶

In human terms, however, an attempt at such strict, clear-cut demarcation hardly succeeds, especially when one carries psychological uncertainty. Thus, far from being suppressed, the genuine concern that the narrator evinces about the elephant's fate in the first half resurfaces later when, against his best judgment and qualms, he confides the source of his insecurity to the female editor in spite of his professed rationalism of marketability. Therefore, an inefficient, yet essential element of human weakness links the two sharply divided halves different in nature, when the

²⁶ Kawamoto Saburo, "Kono karappo no sekai no naka de: Murakami Haruki ron この空っぽの世界のなかで: 村上春樹論 [In This Empty World: On Murakami Haruki]" in Komata Tomoshi, ed., *Nihon bungaku kenkyū ronbun shūsei* 46 (Tokyo: Wakakusa shobō, 1998), 15.

narrator is not in a mental state to address his trouble with such decisiveness. It is the authorial design that creates an awkward text with irrationality unpreventably spilling over the borderline of geometric partition, and the resulting story indicates the predicament of postindustrial people who are expected to live as efficiently as possible even to the detriment of their overall integrity as human beings.

The titles of the original Japanese text and its English translation implicitly happen to stand for different aspects of this short story. The noun-phrased Japanese title, 象の消滅, which literally means the extinction of an elephant, addresses a definite, “too complete” (321, 326), irreversible state of non-being as the animal has already ceased to exist terminally before the story begins to delineate its circumstances. In contrast, the verbal English title not only denotes an active process of the elephant’s gradual disappearance in the narrator’s account but also alludes to the ensuing change in him as his anxiety progressively develops, ultimately leaving him in a habitually dazed condition of skewed perception and judgment. Even when he finally suspects a cause in himself, he nevertheless does not dare to examine it. The text ends without suggesting any means by which he might elude an impending mental breakdown amidst his rising marketing success. He still comes to see the vacant enclosure covered with dead weed in the imminent winter without expecting any possibility of its former occupants’ return.

When he delivered an acceptance speech for the Catalonia International Prize on June 9, 2011, Murakami rhetorically posed a question about the cause of the nuclear reactor meltdowns that had taken place in Fukushima, Japan three months earlier. The inhabitants in nearby towns were forced to flee, and the immediate areas have remained deserted since. Rather than ascribing the disaster to natural forces, he found a ready answer in the post-WWII pursuit of “efficiency” for a supposedly secure, inexpensive source of energy by the collective will of corporations, the government, and ultimately the people, including himself, who consumed that supply of power in comfort and, as such, became “at once victims and victimizers” of the disaster.²⁷ This is a recent example of the deep-rooted

²⁷ Murakami, “Katarūnya kokusai-shō spīchi genkō zenbun” (2011). See also Murakami, *Shokugyō* (2015), 202–204, 212.

distrust of “the system” that he has sustained and expressed for decades,²⁸ at least since the days of student demonstrations in the late sixties.

As Chiyoko Kawakami argues, the target of his critique might not be easily identifiable as “a unified ideological entity” of the authoritative institution like a reactionary government as it used to be with writers of older generations.²⁹ It is largely because he is fundamentally opposed to an amorphous, immense complex of desire for power, sociopolitical control over individuality, and an ever more “efficient” flow of capital that, if left unchecked, seeks to exploit individuals to their detriment. This “system” might likely include those very individuals as unknowing accomplices, illustrating one aspect of Jamesonian postmodernity where all resistance is “somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it.”³⁰ In his personal life, Murakami appears to exemplify the condition when, unlike his poverty-stricken younger days, he has fulfilled the desire of possessing or consuming certain objects, such as an impressive collection of CDs and records, as well as other luxury items, along with a prospering writing career. Unlike characters of his making who unquestioningly embrace overflowing consumables or “the trivia of contemporary urban life,”³¹ he has consciously (almost inveterately) kept the critical “distance from it” in another part of his mind, and that critical gaze manifests itself in many of his writings. Murakami might not appear to “confront the age directly” according to Saburo Kawamoto, but this does not mean that he “quietly accepts the system...with all its contradictions,”³² as we have seen “The Elephant Vanishes” demonstrate. While containing

²⁸ For typical examples, see Murakami, “The Novelist in Wartime” (2009) and *Shokugyō* (2015), 97, 200–202. The narrator’s unwillingness and inability to reflect on the cause of his own predicament coincidentally prefigures Japan’s gradual resumption of nuclear power generation just a few years after the earthquake-caused tsunami destroyed the nuclear plant.

²⁹ Kawakami, “The Unfinished Cartography,” 310.

³⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 49. See also Saburo Kawamoto, “Kono karappo no sekai,” 22.

³¹ Rubin, “The Other World,” 494; See also Kawakami, “The Unfinished Cartography,” 320–323.

³² Kawamoto, “Kono karappo no sekai,” 19–20.

such contradictions, his overall stance as a novelist continues to problematize them, especially in the fiction he creates. Although deviating from what Fredric Jameson speculates, his unwavering critical stance reveals innate, quiet, yet inextinguishable rage against “the system” in postmodern reality.

In the style of apparent irrelevance and lighthearted playfulness with no straightforward meaning, Murakami touches upon vaguely felt dangers latent in an individual’s life of today’s society. In Lyotard’s terms, he “puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself” by “invent[ing] allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented.”³³ As Jameson phrases more specifically, on the other hand, the Japanese writer has created a story that is “‘irrational’ in the older sense of ‘incomprehensible’” in an age that almost precludes such irrationality, pointing to the “enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions.”³⁴

³³ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 81.

³⁴ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 268, 38.

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Essays

GEORGE KENNAN'S INFLUENTIAL 1905 DEPICTION OF KOREA AS A "DEGENERATE STATE" AND JAPAN AS ITS GRACIOUS SAVIOR

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The power of the press to shape public opinion is immense, especially in cases where the public knows little if anything about the subject at hand. An excellent example of this proposition is the role that leading members of the American media reported on Japan's 1904 seizure of Korea at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Two veteran American war correspondents, George Kennan (1844–1923) and Frederick Palmer (1873–1958), both informal but valued advisors to President Theodore Roosevelt, provided a deliberately distorted image of Japan and Korea that very likely played an important role in the shaping of American foreign policy and public opinion in favor of Japan's takeover of Korea during the Russo-Japanese War.

Until the start of World War II, very few Americans had any knowledge of Korea. The United States had no vital interests in Korea before 1941 and was mostly indifferent to its fate.¹ When Japan declared war on Russia in 1904, over a hundred Western journalists descended on Tokyo eager to cover the conflict, but the Japanese kept them marooned in Tokyo where Japanese military officials fed them an endless stream of propaganda.² Both Kennan and Palmer, both of whom commanded a large readership in the U.S. and who were on close terms with Roosevelt, caught the attention of the Japanese. The Japanese military invited Kennan and Palmer to accompany Japanese leaders on "fact-finding" missions in Korea and Manchuria with the implicit understanding that they would write a stream of articles showing the utter depravity of Korea and the magnanimity of Japan's desire to modernize a free and independent Korea.

¹ James I. Matray, "The Korean War 101: Causes, Course, and Conclusion of the Conflict," *Education About Asia* 17/3 (2012), 23.

² A tiny handful of reporters led by novelist and journalist Jack London managed to sneak into Korea and to accompany the Japanese military through northern Korea to Manchuria where the Japanese met the Russian army. Yet, despite this proximity, Japanese censorship made it very difficult for London and his few colleagues to get close to the action.

Kennan and Palmer did their job beautifully. They were lavish in their praise of the Japanese. They lauded the ability of Japan to modernize itself so quickly, on the honesty and efficiency of its government and military, and for the general cleanliness of Japan. They reported just the opposite about Korea, which they saw as backward and hopelessly corrupt without a functioning government and military. They frequently commented on the filth and deprivation of the cities and the degenerate nature of the Korean people. Both men sent a stream of articles back to the U.S. and Palmer, who made a brief trip back to Washington in late 1904, briefed President Roosevelt on the nature of Japan's occupation of Korea.

The result of this reporting was the formulation of American policy that strongly backed the Japanese takeover of Korea and public opinion that supported this approach. Although both Palmer and Kennan reported much the same information about Korea and Japan, due to space limitations I will focus on the work and ideas of the senior reporter, Mr. Kennan.

The Japanese Seizure of Korea

When Japan occupied Korea at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), they used Korea as a staging area for confrontation with Russia in the region of Manchuria. The Japanese then forced the Korean government to accept Japanese administrative control of their nation. The Japanese compelled the Korean Emperor and his cabinet to accept Japanese “advice” for the management of the Korean government. Western powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom later supported Japan's “reform” measures in Korea, praising the Japanese for their promise to modernize Korea thoroughly.

Although Japan did not formally annex Korea until 1910, soon after the 1876 treaty, which opened Korea to Japanese trade and commercial penetration, it commenced a practice of stationing increasingly greater numbers of troops in Korea allegedly to protect Japanese citizens living in the treaty ports and elsewhere. Japan later went to war with China in 1894–1895 and with Russia a decade later to consolidate its control of Korea, which it saw as being vital to its national security.

Japan's leading military figure throughout much of the Meiji period, Field Marshall and twice Prime Minister, Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), stressed that national security is the key reason why Japan went to war with Russia in February 1904. During an interview with Frederick Palmer near Tokyo the day after Japan declared war on Russia,

Yamagata declared: "If you look at the geographical position of Korea, you will see that it is like a poniard pointing at the heart of Japan. If Korea is occupied by a foreign power, the Japan Sea ceases to be Japanese and the Korean Straits are no longer in our control."³

Japan used Korea in 1904 and 1905 as a critical base for its troops on the Asian mainland and as a launching pad for their ultimately successful invasion of Manchuria, which prior to the war was becoming a Russian stronghold. With Korea militarily strongly under Japanese control from the very outset of the war in 1904, the Koreans had no choice but to accept a series of agreements in 1904 and 1905 that gave Tokyo control over all sections of Korea's government and over its economy. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was still nominally independent, but essentially was under the full control of Japan.

Japan's next goal was to achieve international recognition of its protectorate over Korea. According to legal scholar Alexis Dudden, the practice of an advanced nation creating a protectorate over a less advanced culture was quite common and at the time was called "enlightened exploitation." The idea of a protectorate represented a particular piece of territory "governed in part by an alien regime." Dudden continues:

[R]ace-driven theories of civilization more generally shaped a Euro-American political climate that ordered a taxonomy of the peoples of the world. So-called civilized governments predicated their claims to legitimacy on conquering and ruling so-called barbaric ones; such governments also infused their claims with political and social theories derived in part from nascent evolutionary sciences. A regime was civilized only if it could claim the ability to transform an uncivilized people. The logic of the politics of enlightened exploitation can be described as the practice of legalizing the claim to protect a place inhabited by people who were defined as incapable of becoming civilized on their own. It was understood, of course, that the protecting regime had access to the material and human resources of the place it protected.

³ Quoted in Frederick Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1904), 10–11.

Ultimately, the ability to control colonial space defined a nation as “sovereign” and “independent.” Regimes that sought to dominate others legitimated their actions in terms consistent with this intellectual order. Declaring a territory a protectorate did not merely apply a euphemism to the action of taking over; it established a legal precedent for defining certain people unfit to govern themselves.⁴

Until then, virtually all protectorates had been established by Western powers such as Britain, France and Belgium. Japan opened a well-orchestrated campaign during the Russo-Japanese War led by politician and Harvard University graduate Kaneko Kentarō to gain international support for its military efforts. Following the end of the war in 1905, Japan continued its efforts to win international recognition for its new protectorate in Korea. Prime Minister Katsura Tarō promoted the idea of the desirability of Japan’s plans for Korea in an interview with the *New York Times* on July 30, 1905:

The introduction of all the blessings of modern civilization into East Asiatic countries – that is our Far Eastern policy and behind it there is no more selfish motive than a simple desire for our own commercial and educational betterment. China and Korea are atrociously misgoverned. They are in the hands of a lot of corrupt officials whose ignorance and narrow-mindedness are a constant menace to political tranquility in the Far East. These conditions we will endeavor to correct at the earliest possible date – by persuasion and education if possible; by force, if necessary, and in this, as in all things, we expect to act in exact occurrence, with the desires of England and the United States.⁵

⁴ Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 9.

⁵ Quoted in James Bradley, *The China Mirage: The Hidden History of American Disaster in Asia* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015), 76.

Part of Japan's strategy was to encourage the writing of Western journalists who would support Japan's effort to create a protectorate over Korea. The notion was that since political leaders in the West had very little knowledge of the history and culture of Korea, Western journalists who would support Japan's point of view could effectively mold opinion in the West. Western journalists who demonstrated strong sympathies with Japanese views and aims and who had a broad readership in the West received gala treatment from Japanese authorities. They got lavish accommodations and traveled with Japanese officials across Korea where they could witness the terrible living conditions of the people and the good work being done by the Japanese to modernize and reform Korean society.

One such reporter was the famous American war correspondent, George Kennan. Kennan depicted Korea as a "degenerate state" and praised Japan's "unselfish desire" to both "modernize" and "civilize" Korea. Such reporting by leading writers like Kennan presented Americans with a wholly negative view of Korea and may well have helped to shape American foreign policy in support of Japan's moves in Korea and away from its recognition of Korea as an independent state.

Kennan was one of the leading writers on Japan and Korea at the dawn of the twentieth century. Kennan, elder cousin to Soviet specialist George F. Kennan (1904–2005), covered the Russo-Japanese War and the subsequent Japanese seizure of Korea for the influential American weekly news magazine *The Outlook*.⁶ He traveled to Korea twice with an official entourage of Japanese officials, at the start of the war in 1904 and again in 1905 at the end of the conflict. His writing mirrored official American policy as formulated by the government of President Theodore Roosevelt towards Korea, which regarded it as an impossibly backward nation and strongly advocated a Japanese takeover of the state.

Reading Kennan's work and Roosevelt's many statements concerning Japan's occupation of Korea reveal a virtual mirror image of

⁶ The New York City-based weekly news magazine, *The Outlook*, was an influential organ that employed many leading writers. Begun in 1870, it acquired a wide readership by the end of the nineteenth century and ceased publication in 1935. The elder Kennan was a famous explorer who traversed much of Russia for years at a time, an investigative reporter, and a founder of the National Geographic Society in 1879.

each other. While Kennan expressed his own opinions while covering the war and the Japanese penetration of Korea, his articles serve as a virtual blueprint of American policy towards Korea. The best way to understand the Roosevelt administration's views on Japan and Korea during this period is to read Kennan's work. It is clear that Roosevelt too regarded Korea as a "degenerate state."

President Theodore Roosevelt and his administration exhibited a very pro-Japanese stance during the Russo-Japanese War and supported the Japanese takeover of Korea for the same reasons echoed in Kennan's writing. Roosevelt believed that strong modern states had a right and an obligation to take over and modernize the more regressive nations. Four years before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the inimitable Roosevelt had written to a friend, "I should like to see Japan have Korea. She will be a check on Russia and deserves it for what she has done."⁷ Roosevelt sent a cable to Tokyo in July 1905 where he stated his approval of the Japanese annexation of Korea, thus negating the 1882 Treaty where the United States and Korea along with Great Britain and Germany established diplomatic relations. The 1882 treaties were classic unequal treaties where the Western nations got extraterritorial rights for their citizens, fixed tariffs and the like. Korea also got the standard "use of good offices" clause that Koreans since that time mistakenly thought meant that the United States would or should protect Korea from Japan.⁸

Roosevelt in the cable also agreed to an "understanding or alliance" among Japan, the United States and Britain "as if the United States were under treaty obligations."⁹ This "as if" clause is critical because Congress was much less interested in affairs in Northeast Asia than the President. Roosevelt thus made an unofficial and unwritten (though in his mind perhaps a binding) treaty with Japan. Diplomatic notes exchanged between the United States and Japan (the Taft-Katsura agreement) in 1907 acknowledged a trade-off between both nations where the United States

⁷ Roosevelt to Hermann Speck von Sternberg, 8 August 1900: "The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt," in E. E. Morison, ed., *The Years of Preparation, 1898-1900* II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1394.

⁸ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 107.

⁹ James Bradley, "Diplomacy That Will Live in Infamy," *New York Times*, December 5, 2009.

would not oppose the Japanese absorption of Korea and Japan would recognize the American takeover of both the Philippines and Hawaii.¹⁰ Roosevelt followed up by cutting off relations with Korea, closing the American legation in Seoul, and seeing to it that the State Department's Record of Foreign Relations no longer had a separate heading for Korea. Instead, Korea was placed under the new heading of "Japan."¹¹

George Kennan and Korea in 1905: How to Save a Degenerate State

George Kennan wrote over twenty lengthy feature articles for *The Outlook* covering Japan's war effort against the Russians as well as on conditions in both Korea and China. A great admirer of Japan, he believed at the time that Japan had a strong obligation to help the Korean people modernize their nation and that a Japanese takeover of Korea was fully justified to achieve this goal. He lauded Japan for its successful modernization during the Meiji era and castigated Korea for its apparent poverty, filth, decay, and corruption.

The first thing that strikes a traveler in going from Japan to Korea is the extraordinary contrast between the cleanliness, good order, industry, and general prosperity of one country, and the filthiness, demoralization, laziness, and general rack and ruin of the other...The Japanese are clean, enterprising, intelligent, brave, well-educated and strenuously industrious, while the Koreans strike a newcomer as dirty in person and habits, apathetic, slow-witted, lacking in spirit, densely ignorant, and constitutionally lazy...Korea is an organism that has become so diseased as to lose its power of growth; and it can be restored to a normal condition only by a long course of remedial treatment.¹²

Kennan looked at his sick patient, Korea, and found three groups of people responsible for Korea's malaise: The Emperor, The Government and The People. The Emperor of Korea, he noted, was a gentle little man with the

¹⁰ Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 142.

¹¹ Bradley, "Diplomacy That Will Live in Infamy," op. cit.

¹² George Kennan, "Korea: A Degenerate State," *The Outlook*, October 7, 1905, 307.

personality of a child – stubborn, ignorant and superstitious, so much so that he devotes much of his time with sorcerers and witches who inhabited the palace and advised their monarch on state affairs: “He is indeed a spoiled child, who regards his country as something created for his special delectation, and all of the people as flocks and herds for his slaughter.”¹³ He is “absolutely incapable of forming a correct judgment with regard to men and vents, and in consequence of this mental disability, he is deceived by his courtiers and robbed and cheated by all who have business dealings with him.”¹⁴

If the Emperor was bad, the rest of the government was in even worse shape: “Thieves, extortioners, counterfeiters, torturers and assassins have again and again held positions in the Emperor’s Cabinet.”¹⁵ Provincial governors pay out a lot of money for their positions, but they get a far greater profit because of their schemes to rob the common people of Korea. These schemes include excessive taxation, bribery, and illegal seizure of property on a mere whim. There was nobody to stop these selfish practices. Every position in government was for sale and there is corruption everywhere.

Kennan stressed that the ultimate victims of this corruption were the Korean people. No matter how hard they worked, whatever profits they made were seized by the thieves who also were their governors, policemen, and local guardians. The result was that the people were impoverished, depressed with no hope for advancement in life and no education or anybody to look after them in times of adversity. They lacked the incentive to work hard because their labor would get them nowhere. Consequently, they starved in the streets and lacked the energy or desire to seek a productive and prosperous life. Street scene photographs from the period show many gaunt Koreans sitting idly about with little or nothing to occupy them. Their faces lack any smiles or other signs of joy. Their homes are of simple design and their personal possessions are few. Moreover, Kennan notes that the common man in Korea had come to accept their dismal situation with stalwart resignation and had even given up on life:

¹³ Ibid., 308–310

¹⁴ Ibid., 308.

¹⁵ Ibid., 310.

So far as my limited observation qualifies me to judge, the average town Korean spends more than half his time in idleness, and instead of cleaning up his premises in his long intervals of leisure, he sits contentedly on his threshold and smokes, or lies on the ground and sleeps, with his nose over an open drain from which a turkey-buzzard would fly and a decent pig would turn away in disgust.¹⁶

They were thoroughly used to the robbery of their hard-earned gains by government officials and other members of the ruling *yangban* class; Commoners in Korea would only protest if the demands made on them were too great. Kennan writes:

It must be remembered, moreover, that the Korean people have been accustomed to “squeezes” and illegal exactions for centuries, and that they protest or resist only when robbery passes the extreme limit of endurance. If a governor or prefect “squeezes” moderately and with discretion, he may do so with impunity – the people will not “kick” – but if he resorts to general violence, or attempts to “squeeze” for his own use ten or twenty times as much as he collects in legal taxes, there is apt to be trouble. You may rob some of the Koreans all of the time; but if you rob all of them all of the time and without limit, you are finally dragged out of your house and beaten or kicked to death in the streets.¹⁷

Subsequently, Kennan provides statistics that demonstrate government graft and misuse of public funds. There is huge emphasis on spending for the Emperor and his court, but there is absolutely no concern for the safety, education and welfare of the Korean people. While the Emperor and other high officials lived in clear luxury, the ten to twelve million ordinary Koreans paid dearly to support their rulers, and received next to nothing in

¹⁶ George Kennan, “The Korean People: The Product of a Decayed Civilization,” *The Outlook*, October 21, 1905, 310.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

return. Kennan includes the following figures derived from the most recent Korean government budget to emphasize his point:

*Monies spent for the benefit of the government:*¹⁸

Imperial Privy Purse	\$1,103,359
Imperial “sacrifices”	\$186,041
Palace construction	\$300,000
Palace Guard	\$170,256
Special palace guard	\$81,978
Total	\$1,841,634

Monies spent for the benefit of the Korean people:

All public schools ¹⁹	\$27,718
Public works	\$424
“Suppressing robbers”	\$500
Total	\$28,642

Kennan reports that by far the largest single appropriation was \$5,180,614 spent on the army, which he considers mostly to be wasted. The army as an institution that drew an enormous amount of money was poorly armed and equipped. Desertion was rampant. There was little order in the ranks and proceeds were drained. The army was hardly fit for anything. The navy was even worse – spending \$450,000 – but all that the navy had to show for itself was an old rather dilapidated gunboat. Hereafter, Kennan concludes his article on the “degenerate” and hopelessly corrupt condition of Korea by noting:

The activities and operations of the existing Korean Government may briefly be summed up as follows: It takes from the people, directly and indirectly, everything that they earn over and above a bare subsistence, and gives them in return practically nothing. It affords no

¹⁸ Ibid., 313. Figures are in “Korean dollars” and no exchange rate is offered. The point here is not necessarily the total amount spent on each item, but rather the proportions of money spent in each category.

¹⁹ Ibid. This indicates, “All public schools outside of the capital – schools for the education of ten or twelve millions of people.”

adequate protection to life or property; it provides no educational facilities that deserve notice; it builds no roads; it does not improve its harbors; it does not light its coasts; it pays no attention whatever to street-cleaning or sanitation; it takes no measures to prevent or check epidemics; it does not attempt to foster national trade or industry; it encourages the lowest forms of primitive superstition; and it corrupts and demoralizes its subjects by setting them examples of untruthfulness, dishonesty, treachery, cruelty, and a cynical brutality in dealing with human rights that is almost without parallel in modern times.²⁰

Kennan's Praise for Japan's Promise to Guide Korea into the Modern World

While historical hindsight tells us that Japan's rule in Korea (1905-1945) was brutal and was designed to serve Japanese interests at the expense of Koreans, many in the West at that time accepted Japan's announced goal of entering Korea to improve the welfare of Koreans and their nation. George Kennan, like Theodore Roosevelt in 1905, strongly applauded the Japanese for their seemingly unselfish pledge to modernize Korea for the benefit of its people.

For the first time in the annals of the East, one Asiatic nation is making a serious and determined effort to transform and civilize another. Asiatic peoples, in centuries past, have exchanged ideas, arts, or products, and the higher has sometimes handed down its knowledge and such civilization as it had to the lower; but no Oriental nationality ever made a conscious and intelligent attempt to uplift and regenerate a neighbor until Japan, a few months ago, took hold of Korea.

The interest and importance of this experiment are not wholly due to its unique and unprecedented character. An experiment may be new and yet have little or no bearing on human progress and welfare. The Korean

²⁰ Kennan, "Korea, A Degenerate State," 314–315.

experiment, however, is not one of this kind, inasmuch as its results are likely to affect vitally the interests and happiness of millions of people, and may completely transform social and political conditions not only in Korea, but throughout the vast empire of China. The present war has made Japan the predominant Power in eastern Asia, and there can be little doubt, I think, that she is about to assume the leadership of the so-called Yellow Race.

In the Korean experiment we may see what capacity for leadership she has, and what are likely to be the results of the exercise of her newly acquired influence and strength in the wide field thrown open to her by her recent victories. She has successfully transformed and regenerated herself, but has she the disposition and the ability to uplift and civilize the degenerate nation on the other side of the Tsushima Strait, or to guide wisely and unselfishly the greater and more promising people on the other side of the Yellow Sea.²¹

Kennan's Criticism of Japanese Actions in Korea

While Kennan has always supported the Japanese assertion of control in Korea, he strongly criticized the manner in which they attempted to accomplish this. When the Japanese forced the Koreans to accept the placement of their troops on the peninsula in preparation for their planned invasion of Manchuria to counter the Russians, they asserted that Korea was, and would always continue to be, an independent country. The Japanese were to play an advisory role with the Korean government and the Koreans agreed to accept Japanese advisers and advice.

The reality, however, was that the Japanese began to assert control over the Korean government in 1904 and 1905. They began instituting fiscal and governmental reforms and took over the Korean post office. Several ranking Koreans infuriated that the Japanese were in fact gradually asserting their sovereignty over more and more of the Korean government, protested that the Japanese were going against their pledge to respect Korean independence. A number of ranking Koreans including the Emperor

²¹ Kennan, "The Korean People," 410.

strongly protested these intrusions on their sovereignty and sought outside intervention on their behalf from the United States and other nations. American support, of course, was not forthcoming because the United States was firmly on the side of Japan. Kennan suggests a more direct approach:

The Japanese Government may have thought it necessary, or expedient, at that time, to treat Korea as a sovereign and independent State which needed only benevolent advice; but it would have saved itself much trouble if it had openly assumed control of Korean administration, had made its advisors directors, and had guaranteed only the ultimate independence of a reformed and regenerated Empire.²²

This direct approach might have distressed Koreans, but it would have clarified Japanese aims and also might have given some Koreans something more concrete to work. Kennan felt that the Japanese also erred with regard to the programs that they initiated in 1904-1905. The Japanese worked to restore financial order in the country by restructuring the currency and restructuring Korea's postal system. Kennan suggests that the greatest concern of all Koreans was the "cruelty and corruption of Korean [government] administration... The people everywhere were being oppressed, robbed and impoverished by dishonest Korean officials, and they wanted, first of all, adequate protection for their personal and property rights."²³

Kennan's approval of Japan's seizure of Korea was conditional. Japan's mandate was to reform and restructure Korean government and society for the express benefit of the Korean people. Japan had proven its claim to be a fully modern civilized nation and the leading country of East Asia, but this maturity came with responsibilities to assist its less fortunate neighbors. Failure to unselfishly act on behalf of the Koreans in Kennan's opinion might well terminate Japan's mandate to occupy Korea.

²² George Kennan, "The Japanese in Korea" *The Outlook*, November 11, 1905, 609.

²³ Ibid.

Unfortunately, for the futures of both Korea and Japan, Japan's motives were highly mercenary, promises as dishonorable as British and French pledges during World War I to help Arabs build their own independent nation after the war. They had no intention of furthering Korean modernization and independence. Rather, they were determined to hold Korea as their stepping-stone leading to a sphere of influence in northeast Asia extending into Manchuria. Instead of lending a helping hand even at the start of their occupation of the peninsula in 1904–1905, they used force to coerce the Korean emperor and his cabinet members to accept Japanese “reforms” and to suppress Korean protests.

While Kennan was a keen observer and a quick learner, he was always working under the auspices of the Japanese. He began his work in Japan, traveled on Japanese ships, and always had Japanese-government sponsored guides with him and his party. He made use of his many opportunities to walk through Chemulpo (Inchon) and Seoul and to meet many Korean officials, but always under the watchful eye of the Japanese administration. Although Kennan was in East Asia for much of 1904, 1905, and 1906, he spent most of his time in Japan, on Japanese ships, or staying in Japanese compounds in Korea and China. He listened acutely to Japanese propaganda, which he accepted at face value.

Not all Western reporters served as propagandists for the Japanese. Canadian Frederick Arthur McKenzie (1869–1931), who worked for British newspapers, covered the Russo-Japanese War in Korea and spent a lot of time with his American colleague, novelist Jack London (1876–1916), who worked for the Hearst newspaper chain in the US. McKenzie worked independently of the Japanese and spent several years in Korea. He understood Japanese intentions very clearly and presented his readers with a far less flattering view of their occupation.

Frederick Arthur McKenzie's Reporting on the Japanese in Korea

George Kennan's pro-Japanese writing about Japanese intentions in Korea were sharply contradicted by journalists like McKenzie and London.²⁴ Writing for a largely British audience, McKenzie paints a very

²⁴ Frederick Arthur McKenzie's books: *From Tokyo to Tiflis: Uncensored Letters from the War* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905); *The Unveiled East* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1907); *The Tragedy of Korea* (London:

convincing story to counter Kennan's view of Japanese conduct. He demonstrates that the Japanese never had any intention from the start of their modernization in the 1870s not to exert their authority over Korea. They used gunboats to open Korea in 1876 to penetration by Japanese business and investment. Hundreds and then thousands of Japanese moved to Korea in the latter part of the nineteenth century, so much so that by the early 1900s there were just under a hundred thousand Japanese in Korea.

Japan's goal by the 1890s, according to McKenzie, was to become the "leader of a revived Asia. She is advancing to-day along three lines – territorial expansion, increased fighting power, and an aggressive commercial campaign."²⁵ Korea was to be the heart, the nerve center of its growing empire in northeast Asia. The Japanese told the world that their goal was the benevolent modernization of Korea – which Japan would invest its people and resources in the creation of a strong independent state and that Korea would be a showplace of Japan's modernization program. The reality, according to McKenzie, was very different. Japan was prepared to use crude aggressive force to seize full control over Korea and to employ whatever brutality was necessary to subdue the Koreans.

In short, the Japanese military and police sought to bulldoze Korea into total submission by means of "sheer terrorism" which included beating and killing innocent civilians, torturing many others, and physically harming, violating and humiliating women. In other words, McKenzie feels, the Japanese had ventured to the lower depths of barbarism to get their way. He wonders why the British entered into an alliance with such people, an alliance that the Japanese would inevitably break.²⁶ The Japanese were furious with McKenzie's reporting and vigorously protested to British authorities in Korea and Japan, flatly demanding his expulsion from both countries. Unfortunately for Korea, much of McKenzie's reporting came very late – well after the end of the war and after both the United States and Great Britain had recognized the Japanese takeover of Korea and had withdrawn their embassies from Seoul.

The value of Kennan's reporting lies in his excellent coverage of Japanese operations in its war against Russia, his time on a Japanese

Hodder and Stoughton, 1908); and *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1920).

²⁵ McKenzie, *The Unveiled East*, 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

battleship during the siege of Port Arthur in 1904, his presentation of Japanese views of Korea, and his portrayal of the desperate state of Korean society at the dawn of the twentieth century. His writing is also a clear portrayal of official American policy towards Japan and Korea today. Regrettably, he did not spend enough independent time on the ground in Korea to gain the same understanding of the situation, the way McKenzie did. In the end, he nevertheless became, perhaps unwittingly, an invaluable propaganda tool for the Japanese government.

A “NORMAL” JAPAN AND THE EXTERNALIZATION OF CHINA’S SECURITIZATION

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Introduction

Despite having one of the most prolific bilateral trades in the world,¹ China and Japan have maintained a tenuous relationship which some have characterized as “warm economics and cold politics.”² This is not a particularly new phenomenon however. In fact, within months of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the two countries established trade links despite the fact that Japan was still occupied by the United States, the San Francisco Treaty had not been signed yet, and more importantly, that both countries were in opposite sides of the ideological and strategic struggle being waged in the Cold War.³ This dynamic persisted even as the two countries reached a rapprochement and established formal relations in the 1970s. Therefore, while trade between China and Japan began to grow exponentially, particularly after the full normalization of trade relations in 1974, the political dimension of the relationship continued to be undermined by lingering suspicions, ideological, political, and strategic concerns.⁴

In other words, “warm economics and cold politics” have a historical precedent and reveal that Sino-Japanese relations continue to be informed by two crucial characteristics: (1) a pragmatic approach to bilateral economic relations, (2) and a political and strategic rivalry because of historical grievances. These historical grievances can be observed in issues

¹ “Japan: Trade Statistics,” *GlobalEDGE*, 2014 (accessed March 4, 2016, <http://globaleedge.msu.edu/countries/japan/tradestats>).

² Michael Green, “Japan’s Role in Asia,” in David Shambaugh & Michael Yahuda, eds., *International Relations of Asia* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2014), 204.

³ Amy King, *China-Japan Relations after World War Two: Empire, Industry and War, 1949–1971* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 50.

⁴ Hong N. Kim, “Sino-Japanese Relations Since the Rapprochement,” *Asian Survey* 15/7 (1975): 559–573.

concerning war reparations, conflicting interpretations of the Second Sino-Japanese War, territorial disputes involving the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and, more recently, overlapping claims to exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the East China Sea.

The historical grievance dimension of the Sino-Japanese relation continues to fuel enmity between the two states. This consequently results in their mutual securitization, and feeds their growing strategic rivalry in East Asia. Understanding this rivalry is important to fully grasp the security dynamics in the region for a number of reasons: (1) China and Japan possess great power status; (2) the two states are geographically proximate; (3) and both reside in the most economically dynamic region in the world. Therefore, the Sino-Japanese relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the twenty-first century because their actions have region-wide effects.

While numerous works focus on the material dimension of the Sino-Japanese rivalry, such as the military build-up of the two powers, it is the social dimension, in this case securitization, that give meaning to extant material capabilities, reveal a state's threat perception, and exposes its preferred choice to resolve the challenges it encounters. In addition to this, many works have predominantly focused on China as a result of its dynamic economy and its decade-long double-digit defense expenditures. As a result, Japan is often largely ignored due to its relative systemic decline since 1989, or referenced only in the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

More grievously, however, Japan has often been depicted as largely reactive in its policy towards China.⁵ In reality, while Japan may demonstrate reactionary tendencies in its foreign policy, there has been a clear trend, especially since Shinzo Abe's second term, to make Japan's policy towards China, and regional security in general, more proactive. Consequently, this study aims to illustrate how Japan's "normalization" process has been galvanized by China's assertive policies, but more importantly, how a "normal" Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China in East Asia. In other words, to reveal both the reactionary and proactive dimension of Japan's China policy.

⁵ See Edward J. Lincoln, *Japan's New Global Role* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995); Curtis, Gerald L., ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy After the Cold War: Coping with Change* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Securitization Theory and Politics

Securitization is a speech-act that raises both the non-politicized and politicized issues to the security realm.⁶ In effect, these speech-acts allow an actor, usually a state representative, to declare a referent object as existentially threatened. For that reason, securitized issues become differentiated from politicized issues through a heightening of the sense of urgency and by opening the possibility to take extraordinary measures. In other words, actions outside the bounds of societal and international norms become justified.⁷ A securitization speech-act transforms the realm of security into an act itself. Put differently, the statement itself becomes an act. Thus, it moves security to an arena that requires immediate action.⁸ This is referred to as the illocutionary dimension of securitization and remains the foundation of Securitization Theory, as developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations.⁹ Furthermore, the Copenhagen School approach to securitization remains focused on the act that the speech itself creates and not the actual effect of those acts. In other words, securitization, as understood by the Copenhagen School, is constitutive, but not causal.¹⁰ However, more recent literature on securitization has deviated from the original focus on its illocutionary dimension and sought to focus on the perlocutionary aspects. That is, the actual effect that the securitization speech-acts have.¹¹ This refocus allows the Securitization Theory to make causal explanations rather than purely constitutive ones. It also marks a distinction between the philosophical approach of the Copenhagen School's version of securitization, and the more sociological approach proposed by Thierry Balzacq.¹² Therefore, while the two approaches to securitization

⁶ Michael C. Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 511–531.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ole Waever, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” in Ronnie Lipschutz, ed., *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 46–86.

⁹ B. Buzan, O. Wæver, and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

¹⁰ Thierry Balzacq and Stefano Guzzini, “Introduction: ‘What Kind of Theory -if any-is Securitization?’” *International Relations* (2014): 2–7.

¹¹ Thierry Balzacq, “The ‘Essence’ of Securitization: Theory, Ideal Type, and a Sociological Science of Security,” *International Security* (2014): 8–18.

¹² See Thierry Balzacq, “Enquiries into Methods: A New Framework for

remain explanatory in nature, they explain different dimensions of the process.

This study contends that both approaches need not be mutually exclusive as it is often portrayed in the debate. Rather, Securitization Theory can make use of both illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of speech-acts. In other words, it is possible to assess the process of securitizing an object or actor, and from there, proceed to assess the results of those actions. In order to do this, the paper will demonstrate how Japan has securitized China and why, how Japan's "normalization" process has been galvanized by China's assertive policies, and lastly, how Japan's externalization of its securitization of China has had important security consequences for the region. Externalization in this context should be understood as the process of obtaining international consensus of a state's securitization of another.

Methodologically, this involves evaluating speech-acts, in this case, statements, by Japanese representatives such as the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Defense Minister, as well as official documents such as white papers. Assessing these speech-acts will shed light on what Japan has securitized and why. Furthermore, by evaluating domestic changes in Japan, particularly constitutional reinterpretations and national opinion, it will be possible to determine their success. Lastly, a review of Japan's foreign policy should reveal its efforts to externalize its securitization processes, and its results should be reflected in the consensus and support that Japan has garnered regionally and internationally, if any exists. Revealing these processes will demonstrate that Japan's foreign policy has shifted from being largely reactive, to becoming increasingly proactive.

Japan's Securitization of China

Since the nineteenth century, Sino-Japanese relations have endured numerous periods of mutual and unilateral securitization and desecuritization. Securitization during the years 1895–1945 was more straightforward in the sense that the two countries found themselves locked in a period dominated by two wars that saw the infringement of China's

Securitization Analysis," in Thierry Balzacq, ed., *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (New York: Routledge, 2011). 31–54; Thierry Balzacq, "Constructivism and Securitization Studies," in Myriam D. Cavelty and Victor Mauer, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 56–72.

sovereignty through loss of territory, occupation, imposition of unequal treaties, and forcible payment of large indemnities. The post-war period, however, has been far more complex since China and Japan have become increasingly economically interdependent while being simultaneously beset by numerous political and strategic issues that are the result of lingering historical grievances. This dichotomy has been all the more prevalent since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office for a second term in 2012.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Securitization

Abe came into office immediately after the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands; a group of islets in the East China Sea that are administered by Japan, but are claimed by China and Taiwan. Despite of the heightened tensions between China and Japan he encountered upon becoming Prime Minister, Abe, a conservative nationalist, seemed unwilling to repeat the events of 2010 when former Prime Minister Naoto Kan released a Chinese trawler captain, who had been apprehended in Japanese waters, due to growing Chinese political and economic pressure.¹³ In fact, one of his most immediate foreign policy efforts was to call for an “Asian Democratic Security Diamond” which effectively sought the containment of China.¹⁴ Abe argued that, “Japan must not yield to the Chinese government’s daily exercises in coercion around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea” and warned that “the South China Sea seems set to become a “Lake Beijing,” which analysts say will be to China what the Sea of Okhotsk was to Soviet Russia.”¹⁵

These statements are effectively securitization speech-acts and reveal the referent objects that the securitizing actor (Abe) has identified as existentially threatened. In this case, the risk that China poses to Japan’s administration of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly the South China Sea through which 50%

¹³ Martin Fackler and Ian Johnson, “Japan Retreats with Release of Chinese Boat Captain,” *The New York Times*, September 25, 2010 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/25/world/asia/25chinajapan.html>).

¹⁴ Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project-Syndicate: The World’s Opinion Page*, December 27, 2012 (accessed June 5, 2015, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>).

¹⁵ Ibid.

of the world's merchant tonnage traverses.¹⁶ Prime Minister Abe also made securitizing statements at World Economic Forum at Davos in 2014. During his speech, Abe stated that he perceived China's 10% annual increases in defense spending as a provocation. He further indicated that a reduction of tensions between the two countries would not occur so long as China continued its military build-up. The Prime Minister went as far as likening Sino-Japanese relations to that of Germany and Great Britain on the eve of World War I; explaining that despite deep economic ties the two countries ultimately went to war with each other.¹⁷

Perhaps more crucial, however, is Abe's depiction of the Chinese educational system as essentially "anti-Japanese." He believes that the emphasis on patriotic education in China creates a "'deeply ingrained' need to spar with Japan and other Asian neighbors over territory. This is due to the fact that the ruling Communist Party uses the disputes to maintain strong domestic support."¹⁸ These statements illustrate another set of securitizing speech-acts in which the existentially threatened referent object becomes Japan's sovereignty and safety due to the perceived threat of China's military expenditures, and the belief that the Chinese education system causes a predisposition among its citizens to cause Japan harm.

China in Japan's Defense White Papers

The Prime Minister's securitization has in many ways reflected in Japan's defense white papers even before he took office for his second term. Japan's Ministry of Defense (MoD) has released white papers on an annual basis since its formation in 2007.¹⁹ While China has been part of Japan's

¹⁶ Ralf Emmers, *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

¹⁷ Linda Yueh, "Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Urges Asia Military Restraint," *BBS News Asia*, January 22, 2014 (accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25851960>).

¹⁸ Chico Harlan, "Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe: Chinese Need for Conflict is 'Deeply Ingrained,'" *The Washington Post*, February 20, 2013 (accessed March 23, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japans-prime-minister-shinzo-abe-chinese-need-for-conflict-is-deeply-ingrained/2013/02/20/48adbc80-7a87-11e2-9a75-dab0201670da_story.html).

¹⁹ "About Ministry," Japan Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/about/history.html>).

white papers even under the Japanese Defense Agency, the MoDs predecessor, the reports have become more comprehensive and the perceived threat of China has been more clearly illustrated. A recurring trend in these white papers has been Japan's concern with China's lack of military transparency, in particularly “specific information on possession of weapons, procurement goals and past procurements, organization and locations of major units, records of main military operations and exercises, and a detailed breakdown of the national defense budget.”²⁰ Another point regularly addressed in these publications has been China's defense budget and the opacity surrounding it, specifically the fact that China does not include all aspects of defense spending. In other words, the official defense budget released by China is not an accurate figure according to international standards.²¹

Perhaps more importantly, these white papers reveal the country's concern for China's maritime operations in waters near Japan, as well as waters which are considered Japan's internationally recognized waters, particularly in waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.²² These numerous encounters are depicted as a concerted effort by China to turn exception into normality. The white papers contend that China's goal is to desensitize Japan's alertness and make the international community accept changes in the situation on these waters.²³ The implicit claim being made in these white papers is that China, through its constant deployment of civilian and naval vessels, as well as aircraft, in the vicinity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, is attempting to challenge Japan's administrative control of these islets and undermine Japan's long-standing position that no dispute exists over the islands and the surrounding waters.

²⁰ Citation comes from “Defense of Japan 2015” but the exact quote has appeared in white papers dating back to at least 2011. “Defense of Japan 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_1-1-3_web.pdf), 35.

²¹ Ibid., 36–37.

²² See “Defense of Japan 2007 through 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/index.html.)

²³ See “Defense of Japan 2012,” Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2012/07_Part1_Chapter1_Sec3.pdf), 36.

Echoing one of the main concerns expressed by Abe when he called for “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” as of 2013, all Japanese white papers have expanded their scope beyond Chinese activities in waters near Japan to include other areas.²⁴ In this regard, the South China Sea has garnered significant attention by Japan as Japan’s most critical Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) traverse those waters. In essence, Japanese officials have increasingly identified maritime stability in the East China Sea and the South China Sea as a matter of national security.²⁵

An example of this linkage appears in Japan’s 2015 white paper, which states that China “continues to act in an assertive manner, including coercive attempts to change the status quo, and is poised to fulfill its unilateral demands high-handedly without compromise.”²⁶ These white papers disclose numerous instances of securitization of China’s actions. The issues highlighted range from mistrust as a result of China’s opacity regarding its military modernization and its defense budget, to more serious concerns regarding the sovereignty and strategic challenge posed by China’s civilian and military deployments in and around Japanese waters and airspace. In effect, Japan perceives these referent objects as existentially threatened because of China’s actions.

Domestic Effects of Securitization

Securitization, if successful, should have tangible effects on the target audience. In other words, speech-acts do not occur in an echo chamber, they are intended to result in action. As a result, the audience plays an important role in the successful securitization of another actor.²⁷ The audience does not always need to be the general population of a country,

²⁴ “Defense of Japan 2013,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2013/11_Part1_Chapter1_Sec3.pdf), 44.

²⁵ Celine Pajon, “Japan and the South China Sea: Forging Strategic Partnerships in a Divided Region,” *Institut Francais des Relations Internationales, Center for Asian Studies*, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=7555>), 7.

²⁶ “Defense of Japan 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_1-1-3_web.pdf), 33.

²⁷ Balzacq, ed., “Enquiries into Methods,” 31–54.

although they generally have an important role to play, particularly in democratic states. An audience may belong to any sector of a state's society, or it may be the international community itself. In the case of Japan, numerous groups play the role of the audience. However, the general population plays the most important role, especially since Japan is a mature democracy. Successful securitization of China can be observed in the perception that the average Japanese citizen holds about China. In Japan, only 9% of the population have favorable views of China as a result of “long-standing historical animosities and recent territorial tensions.”²⁸ Meanwhile, 83% of the population is concerned about the ongoing territorial disputes with China.²⁹

Moreover, the constitutional reinterpretations sought by the Abe administration that allows Japan to participate in collective self-defense have proven polarizing for a country whose public continues to identify with a pacifist defense policy. Nevertheless, the numerous polls conducted prior to and after Abe's cabinet decided to reinterpret the constitution, clearly reveal that the public has not yet fully formed an opinion on the issue.³⁰ Interestingly however, the data demonstrates that there has definitely been some shift in Japanese public opinion regarding constitutional reinterpretation due to the “aggressive conduct by China in recent years around the Senkaku Islands on the East China Sea and in the South China Sea that could be described as eccentric.”³¹ In effect, the more pacifist voices in Japan's electorate and political cadre have gradually lost their ability to influence public opinion and policy as a result of the growing perception that China is a legitimate threat to Japan's sovereignty and interests. This shows that the securitization of China has had measurable success among the Japanese electorate.

²⁸ Bruce Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders,” *Pew Research Center*, September 2, 2015 (accessed December 12, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/09/02/how-asia-pacific-publics-see-each-other-and-their-national-leaders/>).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kamiya Mataka, “Japanese Public Opinions about the Exercise of the Right to Collective Self-Defense,” *Japan Foreign Policy Forum*, September 25, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/archives/politics/pt20140925231907.html>).

³¹ Ibid.

A “Normal” Japan

China’s growing assertiveness along its maritime periphery has produced tangible effects on Japan’s “normalization” process. However, to make the claim that Japan is “normalizing,” it is necessary to make a case for its “abnormality.” In essence, Japan has been the only sovereign country in the world that has relinquished its rights to wage war or maintain armed forces in its constitution. In addition to this, despite enjoying widely recognized great power status, Japan has not been a key player in the provision of regional and global security.³² Together, these points make the case for “abnormality” since there has been no historical precedent for a country with similar material and discursive capabilities as Japan to abstain from claiming greater regional and international roles. However, Japan has been undergoing a gradual “normalization” process for over two decades, and, as this study claims, this process has been intensified due to China’s assertive policies in recent years.

The “normalization” of Japan encompasses two interrelated sectors: (1) political, (2) and military. The political dimension of the “normalization” revolves around making the Japanese government more responsive to regional and international developments, whereas the military dimension is focused on the legality of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), the defense budget, doctrinal reforms, and weapons acquisitions. Japan’s “normalization” process has its roots in the passage of the Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peace Keeping Operations and Other Operations. This is commonly referred to as the PKO Law. The PKO law was the first piece of legislation that permitted the deployment of the JSDF beyond Japanese territory.³³ Regarding the legality of the JSDF, the issue has been addressed through a flexible interpretation of the constitution. Whereas the constitution forbids Japan from establishing a “war potential,” it does not expressively prohibit the state’s right to self-defense. Therefore, so long as the established forces are not greater than the minimal required for self-defense, they do not constitute “war potential.”³⁴ It is for this reason that the

³² Yoshihida Soeya, Tadokoro Masayuki and David A. Welch, *Japan as a ‘Normal Country’?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

³³ Sayuri Umeda, “Japan Article 9 The Constitution,” *Library of Congress*, February 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/Japan/Article9.pdf>).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

JSDF has maintained a primarily defensive doctrine and avoided the acquisition of weapons that would be perceived as capable of projecting power or were offensive in nature. However, acquisitions made in the past decade reveal that this stance has gradually shifted.

Political “Normalization”

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been a key vessel for Japan’s “normalization” process. Since the Korean War, the U.S. has sought greater commitments from Japan to develop capable armed forces to play a greater role in the security of the region. As the Cold War came to a close and the U.S. began to reduce its defense expenditure, it sought greater contributions on the parts of its international allies to provide public goods. Consequently, efforts to incentivize Japanese “normalization” intensified. Through its alliance guidelines updates of 1997 and 2015, the U.S. has been able to push Japan into a more flexible security posture. In many ways, this would lend support to the argument that Japan continues to be a reactive power. However, the fact that Japan has made significant political reforms to become more flexible in its approach to security, indicates that the effectiveness of the U.S.-Japan guidelines for defense cooperation is dependent on Japan’s ability to actually perform the goals outlined in the agreements. In other words, the guidelines would be ineffectual if Japan was not proactively reforming its political institutions.

Examples of these reforms can be observed in the replacement of the Japanese Defense Agency for the Ministry of Defense in 2007. The elevation of the defense department from agency to ministry level allows for more power concentration and influence in security policies. In addition to this, in 2011 Japan eased its export ban and set forth a new set of criteria for arms sales and production. The new criteria for transfers of defense equipment emphasize the need to cooperate with the U.S. and other countries in the development of defense equipment. It also allows for the sale of military equipment for peaceful uses on a case-by-case basis.³⁵

In 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved legislation to create a National Security Council (NSC) based on the American system. This new

³⁵ “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on Guidelines for Overseas Transfer of Defense Equipment, etc.,” Kantei, December 27, 2011 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/others/201112/___icsFiles/afielldfile/2012/01/31/20111227DANWA_e.pdf).

body would replace the existing nine-member Security Council and provide a more centralized decision-making body composed of the Prime Minister, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defense.³⁶ “The reduced membership is intended to facilitate prompt decision-making in national security and crisis management.”³⁷ Another objective of the new NSC is to make the NSC a ‘headquarters’ for the numerous intelligence agencies that are spread out among the different ministries. This would allow for better communication and information sharing among the different bodies and subsequently facilitate better policy making during a crisis.³⁸ Lastly, of course, is the reinterpretation of the constitution that allows Japan to participate in collective self-defense, as indicated above. All of these reforms were heavily influenced by concerns over China’s rise, and more specifically, the assertive policies that have resulted from such a rise.

“Normalization” of the JSDF

The aforementioned political developments have been matched with important military reforms as well. For example, in 2010 Japan began a realignment within the JSDF to relocate assets from Hokkaido to the Southwest island chain, normally referred to as the Ryukyu Islands.³⁹ This realignment was motivated by the increasing perceived threat of China along Japan’s remote southern islands and places greater emphasis on deploying surveillance platforms and strengthening Japan’s maritime presence in the adjacent waters. Furthermore, in order to address a major amphibious capability gap, in 2014, the JSDF formed an Amphibious Preparatory Unit.⁴⁰

³⁶ Toshiya Takahashi, “Abe and a Japanese National Security Council,” *East Asia Forum*, July 16, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/16/abe-and-a-japanese-national-security-council/>).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Eric Sayers, “The “Consequent Interest” of Japan’s Southwestern Islands: A Mahanian Appraisal of the Ryukyu Archipelago,” *Naval War College Review* 66 (2013): 45–61.

⁴⁰ “Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Overview of FY 2014 Budget Request,” Ministry of Defense, August 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/pdf/251009.pdf).

The development of this unit allows Japan to become more effective in amphibious operations, which would be more pertinent in a conflict scenario in the East China Sea. These developments are supplemented by the weapons acquisition of the navy that, in recent years, has commissioned its largest vessel, the *Izumo*-class Helicopter Destroyer,⁴¹ since the end of World War II, and continues to operate key platforms like the *Hyūga*-class Helicopter Destroyers and the *Ōsumi*-class Landing Ship Tanks (LST). These ships not only possess power projection capabilities but they are also intended to address the concerns regarding China's growing submarine force. For example, the *Ōsumi*-class LSTs have participated in numerous peacekeeping operations,⁴² while the *Hyūga* and *Izumo*-class Helicopter Destroyers are optimized for anti-submarine warfare.⁴³ These capabilities demonstrate not only a defensive capability, but also the capability to project power if necessary.

Collectively, Japan's political and military reforms are known as a “normalization” process and demonstrate that the country has become more proactive and aware of its regional security role. While this process was not primarily motivated by China in its early stages, China's assertive policy in recent years has effectively galvanized this process. This is more evident after the 2007 when the securitization of China begins to become more visible, thus facilitating the domestic reform agenda of Japan's political elite. However, concurrent with domestic reforms, Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China as it attempts to obtain consensus of its securitization of China, acquire greater security roles in the region, and develop strategic partnerships in East Asia.

Externalizing Securitization & Seeking Consensus

As part of its more proactive foreign policy, and cognizant of the need to establish regional consensus in order to deter Chinese assertive policies, Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China. The

⁴¹ Matthew Gamble, “Japan's Izumo-Class Helicopter Destroyer: An Aircraft Carrier in Disguise?” *Center for International Maritime Security*, April 11, 2016 (accessed May 1, 2016, <http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130>).

⁴² Toshi Yoshibara and James R. Holmes, *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy* (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008).

⁴³ Gamble, “Japan's Izumo-Class Helicopter Destroyer.”

externalization of securitization entails careful assessment of potential regional and international partners in order to ascertain which states Japan can more effectively form consensus with. This requires Japan to focus on specific dimensions of its securitization of China rather than the whole spectrum. In practice, this means that Japan's claim that China presents an existential threat to freedom of navigation, regional stability, and the status quo, is more salient to regional and international actors than its claim that China is a direct threat to Japan and its people. In its search for viable partners, it appears that Japan has identified five key states. These include the U.S., Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and India.

The American Partnership

Among these five actors, the U.S. is by far the most natural partner for Japan considering the existing treaty between the two. Furthermore, the U.S. and Japan agree on the perceived threat that China poses to freedom of navigation and regional stability. Nevertheless, perhaps more important for Japan, has been its ability to push the U.S. into publicly restating its commitment to defend Japanese territory in which the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are formally recognized. Recent examples of this can be found in former Secretary of State Clinton's remarks during her 2013 visit to Japan in which she reiterated that the U.S. has treaty obligations regarding the islets.⁴⁴ Furthermore, in 2014, President Obama made similar statements in an effort to assure Japan that the U.S. was on its side of the dispute, and to deter "unilateral attempts to undermine Japan's administration of these islands."⁴⁵

Regarding the broader security concerns of the region, since 2015, the U.S. has resumed conducting freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea in order to challenge what it considers China's unlawful and destabilizing claims in the region.⁴⁶ While the U.S.

⁴⁴ Hillary R. Clinton, "Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After the Meeting," *U.S. Department of State*, January 18, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>).

⁴⁵ Scott Neuman, "Obama Assures Japan of U.S. Security Commitment," *National Public Radio*, April 23, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/04/23/306170201/obama-assures-japan-of-u-s-security-commitment>).

⁴⁶ "A Freedom of Navigation Primer for the Spratly Islands," *Asia Maritime*

spearheads these operations, they are facilitated by the diplomatic support the U.S. enjoys from regional partners, especially Japan.⁴⁷ In other words, effective conduct of FONOPs and their potential to succeed will be contingent on the ability of America’s allies playing a greater role. In this regard, Japan’s efforts to externalize its securitization of China will become a key avenue for greater support of FONOPs in the SCS.

Strategic Partners in Southeast Asia

Japan’s linkage of the ECS and SCS maritime stability has been one of the most important developments in its foreign policy in the past two decades. The motivation for linking the security developments in these two areas is centered on economic and strategic factors. Economically, Japan is cognizant that the SCS is a major global trade artery, through which it receives 80% of its oil supply and 70% of its exports are sent.⁴⁸ As a result, this SLOC is critical for the Japanese economy and any conflict between China and other claimant nations in the SCS has the potential to destabilize Japan’s economy and security.⁴⁹ Strategically, the linkages between the two areas becomes important in Japanese thinking because of the perception that China’s actions in the South China Sea will be an indicator of what it will do in the East China Sea as its capabilities improve.⁵⁰ This is a particular concern is directly tied to China’s military modernization. For the moment, Japan has been able to successfully defend against China’s maritime and airspace encroachments in the ECS. However, this is because the JSDF and the Japanese Coast Guard are well trained and equipped as well as the fact that America’s extended deterrence provides an added layer of protection. Southeast Asian states simply do not possess these things. Thus, as China’s

Transparency Initiative, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://amti.csis.org/fonops-primer/>).

⁴⁷ Benjamin Schreer, “Will Japan Join the US in Freedom of Navigation Patrols in the South China Sea?” Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 30, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/will-japan-join-the-us-in-freedom-of-navigation-patrols-in-the-south-china-sea/>).

⁴⁸ Ralf Emmers, *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

⁴⁹ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Security Relations with China Since 1980: From Balancing to Bandwagoning?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 60–61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

military and civilian maritime agencies become more capable, it has become more assertive in the SCS, and the ability of these Southeast Asian states to deter China has been undermined.

Seeing an opportunity to externalize its securitization of China, Japan has sought to deepen existing relations with key Southeast Asian states. In this regard, Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia, have been identified by Japan's Foreign Ministry as important strategic partners in their efforts to deter China.⁵¹ These states were selected because, in the case of Vietnam and the Philippines, the two countries have been the most proactive in challenging China's claims in the SCS, while Indonesia is increasingly considered a regional power in Southeast Asia through which all critical straits leading in and out of the SCS are located. Their mutual concern of China's maritime policy facilitates Japan's efforts to obtain consensus of its securitization of China.

Japan has established close relations with these key states and maintains strategic-level partnerships with each of them. In the case of Vietnam, the two countries forged a strategic partnership in 2011, and in 2014 upgraded their relationship to "Extensive Strategic Partnership" level.⁵² During this summit, as with previous Japan-Vietnam summits, the two countries expressed their concern regarding China's unilateral coercive actions, the importance of complying with international law – particularly with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – and upholding freedom of navigation and overflight.⁵³ These issues were also reiterated in the 2015 Japan-Vietnam summit in addition to the issue of China's island-reclamation in the South China Sea. During this summit, these events were portrayed as yet another example of a destabilizing, and unilateral move, made by China that ultimately erodes trust and confidence in the region.⁵⁴ It is clear from these meetings that Japan has been successful

⁵¹ Pajon, "Japan and the South China Sea."

⁵² "Japan-Viet Nam Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Extensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), March 18, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000031617.pdf>).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁴ "Joint Vision Statement of Japan-Viet Nam Relations," MOFA Japan, September 15, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000099707.pdf>).

in its efforts to reach consensus with Vietnam over its securitization of China among Vietnam's political elite. In many ways, the securitization of China is reflected among the Vietnamese populace. The Vietnamese have overwhelmingly favorable views of Japan (82%) while having very unfavorable views of China (19%).⁵⁵

In addition to this, 83% of Vietnamese are concerned about the ongoing territorial disputes with China. While Japan's externalization of China's securitization is not responsible for these poll results, the results do point to two important developments. The first is that Japan has been essentially desecuritized among the Vietnamese. This is important because Vietnam was occupied by Japan during World War II. The second development is that Vietnamese political elites have been able to successfully transmit their own securitization of China to the general population.

Like Vietnam, the Philippines entered into a strategic partnership with Japan in 2011.⁵⁶ Similarly, the two countries conduct regular summits in order to strengthen their relationship and to vocalize their concerns on a number of issues. The topic of maritime security is a recurring point raised during these summits, which highlight the importance of freedom of navigation in the SCS, the need to uphold UNCLOS, and the importance of peace and stability in the region. Although never explicitly named, China is the target of these statements. Furthermore, these summits demonstrate that the two countries share the same views on China's assertive policies, signaling another instance of mutual securitization of China. Again, this demonstrates another instance of Japan's success in obtaining consensus of its securitization of China among political elites in another state. That being said, the Philippines represents an interesting case regarding the general views that are held towards Japan and China. Although 82% of Filipinos have an overwhelmingly positive view of Japan, interestingly enough, 54% have favorable views of China. Even so, 91% of the population⁵⁷ are concerned

⁵⁵ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

⁵⁶ “Japan-Philippines Joint statement on the Comprehensive Promotion of the “Strategic Partnership” between Neighboring Countries Connected by Special Bonds and Friendship,” MOFA Japan, September 27, 2011 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/noda/joint_statement110927.html).

⁵⁷ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

with their territorial dispute with China in the SCS, making them the most concerned state in the region.

Among the three Southeast Asian states singled out by Japan as important strategic partners, Indonesia is the only state that has achieved recognition as a regional power.⁵⁸ In addition to this, critical straits, such as the Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and the Ombai-Weitar, are located within Indonesian archipelagic waters, giving its significant strategic advantage.⁵⁹ Consequently, Japan established a strategic partnership with Indonesia in 2006.⁶⁰ However, it was not until 2012 that Japan began to use the annual summits as an avenue to express its concerns over China's policy along its maritime periphery. This relationship was further strengthened in 2015, when Japan and Indonesia upgraded their strategic partnership.⁶¹ During this meeting the two heads of states exchanged views on regional issues, particularly those concerning with the South China Sea.

As with summits with other states, the Japanese used this opportunity to once again call for the respect of freedom of navigation in the maritime commons, the importance of UNCLOS, and the instability in the region due to the SCS territorial disputes.⁶² Yet again, while China is never explicitly referred to in the public releases of these meetings, the topics discussed indicate that China is the central actor that is being presented as a destabilizing force. Indonesia represents another case when Japan has found

⁵⁸ Mark Beeson and Will Lee, "The Middle Power Moment: A New Basis for Cooperation between Indonesia and Australia," in Christopher Roberts, Ahmad Habir and Leonard Sebastian, eds., *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and Regional Order* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 224–243.

⁵⁹ Rusli, M.H.M., "Maritime highways of Southeast Asia: Alternative Straits?" RSIS Commentaries, February 10, 2012 (accessed June 5, 2015, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CO12024.pdf>).

⁶⁰ "Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement 'Strategic Partnership for Peaceful and Prosperous Future,'" MOFA Japan, November 28, 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/indonesia/joint0611.html>).

⁶¹ "Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement: Towards Further Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership Underpinned by Sea and Democracy," MOFA Japan, March 23, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000072695.pdf>).

⁶² Ibid.

success in reaching consensus over China's actions. However, despite a strengthened relationship, there does not appear to be a securitization of China among the Indonesian public. Based on a Pew Research Center poll, Indonesia's have a 71% favorable view of Japan and a 63% favorable view of China.⁶³ This may be the result of two factors: First, Indonesia has maintained a “middle way” approach to foreign policy, and thus, would be more resistant to take sides in the ongoing struggle between China and Japan for regional influence.⁶⁴ Second, Indonesia's distance from China may mitigate the threat it perceived from China's assertive maritime policies. However, recent clashes may push Indonesia to take a more confrontational stance towards China in the SCS.⁶⁵

India as a Pivotal Strategic Partner

Out of all of the relationships that Japan has sought to strengthen, India may have the greatest role to play in Japan's efforts to externalize its securitization of China. Similar to Indonesia, India and Japan established a strategic partnership in 2006.⁶⁶ Similarly, it was not until 2012 that this relationship began to flourish. India, a regional power in South Asia,⁶⁷ became a pivotal state in Prime Minister Abe's efforts to establish an “Asian Democratic Security Diamond.” As part of his efforts to link the Indo-Pacific maritime commons Abe stated that, “peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Pacific Ocean are inseparable from peace, stability, and

⁶³ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

⁶⁴ Awidya Santikajaya, “Indonesia as an Emerging Power,” Great Insights, April 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://ecdpm.org/great-insights/emerging-economies-and-africa/indonesia-emerging-power-2/>).

⁶⁵ Chris Brummitt and Rieka Rahadiana, “Indonesia Will Defend South China Sea Territory with F-16 Fighter Jets,” *Bloomberg*, March 31, 2016 (accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-31/indonesia-to-deploy-f-16s-to-guard-its-south-china-sea-territory>).

⁶⁶ “Joint Statement Towards Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership,” MOFA Japan, December 15, 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/pdfs/joint0612.pdf>).

⁶⁷ David R. Robinson, “India's Rise as a Great Power, Part One: Regional and Global Implications,” *Future Directions International*, July 7, 2011, (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/indias-rise-as-a-great-power-part-one-regional-and-global-implications/>).

freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean.”⁶⁸ In this “diamond,” India underpins the western corner, and safeguards the maritime commons against any destabilizing force.⁶⁹

In 2013, the two countries agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership and in 2015 outlined a vision for the partnership for the next decade.⁷⁰ This event was used to discuss mutual concerns regarding the freedom of navigation, the importance of UNCLOS, the critical importance of the SLOCs in the Indo-Pacific region, and the denouncement of unilateral actions in the SCS that undermine stability in the region.⁷¹ The relationship between Prime Ministers Abe and Modi have played a key role in Japan’s successful Externalization of China’s securitization among India’s political elite. Curiously, however, the general population in India appears to see both Japan and China unfavorably.⁷² It is unclear as to what factors lie beneath these results, although it can be argued that Indians’ perception of China may be accurately reflected as a result of existing territorial disputes between the two countries, while the case of Japan may require more data.

In the midst of the Southeast Asian and Indian cases, a dichotomy emerges. It appears that while Japan has been able to reach consensus regarding its securitization of China’s actions within the political representatives of those states, there have been mixed results in the securitization of China among their general population. That being said, it would be unrealistic to claim that Japan is responsible for those mixed results. In fact, with the one audience in which they have a direct connection to (the political elites) Japan has had measurable success. Tokyo’s efforts to externalize its securitization process demonstrates a more proactive foreign policy, and an effort to secure greater regional influence. In fact, Japan’s success in externalizing its securitization of China among the political elites

⁶⁸ Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Visit to Japan by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and Mrs. Gursharan Kaur,” MOFA Japan, May 30, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page6e_000071.html).

⁷¹ “Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership: Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World,” MOFA Japan, December 12, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/in/page3e_000432.html).

⁷² Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

in the region facilitates its efforts to play a greater political and security role in East Asia. At the same time, this success allows Japan to bolster the capabilities of regional partners in an effort to deter China's unilateral actions.

Conclusion

The Sino-Japanese relation is one of the most important ones of the twenty-first century. As great powers in the most economically dynamic region of the world, the ability of these two states to move beyond a relationship marked by “warm economic and cold politics” is crucial to the stability of East Asia. However, the mutual securitization of China and Japan signals that the strategic rivalry between these two neighbors will endure for the near future. China's assertive policies has allowed Japan to galvanize a long-running process to “normalize.” In effect, major political and military reforms in Japan occurred, which in turn, allowed Japan to become a more proactive state, regionally and internationally. Japan's securitization of China at the domestic level, also paves the way for its efforts to externalize this process and obtain consensus with key regional states. This has resulted in the successful securitization of China by portraying its policies as an existential threat to freedom of navigation, as undermining international law (UNCLOS), and being a destabilizing force in the region.

Japan's successful securitization of China has led to a number of important developments in the region. First, it has facilitated the desecuritization of Japan itself. In other words, Japan is more positively perceived among Southeast Asian neighbors and its “normalization” process more readily accepted. Second, because of its desecuritization, Japan is now able to play a more prominent political and security role in the region. This option was not formally available to Japan because of lasting historical grievances pertaining to its occupation of Southeast Asian countries during World War II. Lastly, by building consensus on what China's policies mean for the region, Japan is effectively contributing to the American Asian Pivot. Hence, all allies and partners are on the same page regarding their perception of China as a threat to regional stability and international norms.

Although these securitization processes heighten the strategic rivalry between China, Japan and other Southeast Asian neighbors, they could be reversed. A turn towards a more prudent policy on the part of Beijing may initiate processes of desecuritization. In the same way that it was able to garner significant good will at the turn of the twenty-first century through its “Peaceful Rise” policy and a commitment to avoid unilateralism, China has

the capability and expertise to address regional concerns about the effects of its current policies on regional stability. The U.S., Japan, and their partners are betting that their policy of deterring China's unilateralism will result in a change in its policy. While the results are yet to be seen, this author is hopeful that mutual interest in avoiding armed conflict will be enough to allow both sides to pursue a more beneficial and stable relationship.

Book Reviews

Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013. 320 pp. ISBN: 978-0307739742, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux

One of the most interesting questions I ask my students in my Modern Japan and East Asian History courses is: “Who is responsible for Pearl Harbor?” This is a far more difficult question than one might think. Certainly, the Japanese carried out surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor and other British and American bases throughout Asia, but one can argue that the American embargo on oil and scrap iron, products that Japan desperately needed to keep its economy and war machine alive, was a warlike measure that placed great pressure on Japan. Ultimately, most of my students play it safe and place blame on both the United States and Japan.

Historians have written several books on Pearl Harbor, but there are relatively few by Japanese scholars who objectively investigate Japan’s role in the attack. Eri Hotta, a well-respected Japanese historian and writer, has made a valuable contribution with her 2013 book, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy*. While Hotta does analyze American acts that contributed to the Japanese attack, her focus is on Japan and the decision-making process that led to the date that will forever “live in infamy.”

Hotta writes that from April to December 1941, the Japanese leadership made a series of decisions that many initially failed to recognize as a doomed path toward war. The attack on Pearl Harbor was hardly preordained and there was little unanimity among Japanese leaders as to whether war with the United States was a necessary or even wise step. The Japanese army was bogged down in an invasion of China, and yet these leaders contemplated an additional war against the U.S. and Britain. Several influential members of the government including Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe 近衛 文麿 (1891–1945) and Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto 山本 五十六 (1884–1943), who drew up the plans for the strike on Pearl Harbor, were convinced that simultaneous wars against China and the Western powers had little chance of success. They nevertheless went ahead with their plans and gambled that the Western powers, being preoccupied with Nazi Germany in Europe, would cave in after the first waves of attacks by Japanese bombers. But if so many of Japan’s ranking leaders were convinced that Japan would be the ultimate loser, why did they proceed?

According to Hotta, the Japanese need for consensus – combined with a convoluted government organization that allowed the military to make

decisions free from civilian control – drove Tokyo down a path that many Japanese did not want to follow. This governmental structure allowed younger naval and army officers to initiate a series of steps toward war that senior officials found themselves increasingly powerless to rein in.

In Hotta's account, Japan's war with China had become a deepening quagmire. Japan depended entirely on oil shipments and other resources purchased from the West, but meanwhile the U.S. and British governments had placed strict embargoes on Japan, hoping to force it out of China. Japan faced a hard choice: abandon military operations there and resume trade with the West or press farther into Southeast Asia and procure resources by force. The key to the latter strategy was gaining access to Indonesian oil, then controlled by the Dutch. However, seizing Indonesian oil by force was sure to provoke a war with the U.S. and Britain. The Japanese felt that this strategy must include destroying the U.S. and British fleets in the Pacific as a prelude to their invasion of Indonesia.

Prime Minister Konoe predicted that an all-out war with the United States would bring total defeat for Japan, and many senior military officials like Admiral Yamamoto agreed with this assessment – that overstretch was particularly dangerous given that Japan had never fully gained control of the war in China. However, mid-level strategists from Japan's army and navy argued that the Western forces in Asia were weak, that a sudden attack would destroy their morale, and that they would not want to extend a European war to the Pacific. It was a case of now or never. If Japan continued the war in China, the embargo would cripple Japan, while to pull out of China after so much blood was unthinkable. Senior leaders, wanting to save face, appease the restless young officers, and achieve a consensus, persuaded Konoe to make preparations for war while hoping for a diplomatic breakthrough with the West. But when it became clear that the embargo would continue and that there would be no diplomatic settlement, Japan finally decided to gamble on war. Hotta summarizes Japan's war rationale as follows:

[T]he root problem in the Japanese government remained consistent throughout 1941: None of the top leaders, their occasional protestations notwithstanding, had sufficient will, desire or courage to stop the momentum for war. ... From April to December 1941, the Japanese leadership made a series of decisions that many at first failed to recognize as constituting a doomed path toward war. But with each step, room for maneuver was lost. The

unwinnable war with the West was never an absolute inevitability, however. Despite the risk of losing all that had been achieved since Meiji, the leaders ultimately succumbed to a destructive – and self-destructive – course in the name of maximizing Japan's chance of survival and self-preservation in the short term and, more ambitiously, building an Asia for Asians under Japan's leadership in the long term. Neither the short-term nor the long-term goals were ever realizable because the planning for them was not realistic. Japan approached the war as a gambler would, taking comfort in the likelihood of initial advantages while deluding itself that it would be able to take the money and run, though running was never an option in this game. (286)

Given that contemporary Japan and China are now confronting each other over a small group of rocky islands in the East China Sea, Hotta wonders whether Japan's conservative and highly nationalistic government might inadvertently push Japan into another no-win conflict. Writing in *The New York Times*, she speculates that the old self-defeating pattern might be recurring:

Watching Prime Minister Shinzo Abe today, tensing up and pushing back against China's provocations in the East China Sea, one wonders how much of that tradition has survived within the Japanese leadership. Mr. Abe seems determined to be defiant. He has recently pushed through Parliament a bill to establish a U.S.-style national security council and allow the government to withhold information it deems vital to national security. He has argued for revising Japan's Constitution, including its war-renouncing provision. Is this tough talk the same kind of ultranationalism that led Japan into war with China in the 1930s and then the West? Hotta acknowledges that Japan of 2014 is very different from Japan of 1941, but she fears that the emergence of ultra-nationalism in Tokyo even now could lead to problems in Sino-Japanese relations. (Hotta 2013)

Overall, Hotta's meticulously researched book provides a complex and detailed look at the Japanese decision-making process that led to Pearl Harbor. She does not answer all one's questions, but she brings perfect candor to those she does answer, placing the blame for the attack squarely on Japan and the young militarists who carried the day.

Richard J. Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013. 274 pp. ISBN: 978-0801452000, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux

We all know that Japan was struck by the shock waves of a 9.0 magnitude undersea earthquake on March 11, 2011 originating roughly fifty miles off of its eastern coastline. The most devastating earthquake in Japan's recorded history produced a devastating tsunami. Waves reaching heights approaching 30 feet destroyed miles of coastline in Japan's Tohoku region and caused a dangerous nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. This catastrophe claimed over 20,000 lives, which led to the destruction of many coastal towns, and is estimated to cost many billions of dollars for reconstruction.

The 3.11 catastrophe has raised many questions about the future of Japan. The disaster exposed heroes as well as villains, strengths as well as weaknesses, and even forced Japan to confront issues that have plagued the nation over many years. One issue, for instance, was nuclear power. Should Japan abandon nuclear energy in favor of other sources of power? What about the relationship between business and government? Would the long-held tradition of tight collusion continue? Would there be any changes in the relationship between political parties and the bureaucracy? Another question focused on the future role of Japan's military in the wake of its massive and generally successful relief efforts.

Richard Samuels, director of the Center for International Studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a longtime student of Japanese politics, spent the better part of a year studying life in Japan after the 3.11 disaster. His book *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* is a very detailed analysis of the debate emerging in Japan as a result of this catastrophe. His answer is simply that, while there are some encouraging signs of reform, the

old saying that “the more things change, the more they stay the same” is very true in contemporary Japan.

One area of debate has been surfacing about the future of nuclear energy in Japan. Many Japanese demanded that as a result of the destruction of the aging nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japan should reverse its goal of enhancing nuclear power. Even former Prime Minister Yoshinoko Noda vowed to phase out nuclear energy by 2030, but this promise was quickly reversed by the new Liberal Democratic Party-led government that came to power in December 2012. The new LDP government announced that it was determined to restart as many of the existing nuclear power plants as possible to meet Japan’s huge energy needs. Public support for the anti-nuclear movement has diminished and grass-roots efforts that once brought out huge demonstrations in Tokyo have lost their power.

A report issued by an allegedly independent study group, which was commissioned by the Japanese government, has been noted for strongly criticizing the close relationship between industry and government as well as the inherent tradition in Japan that encouraged conformity and deference to authority. Samuels notes that there has been some change in the relationship between business and government: “Collusion, long the accepted narrative of their relations, was replaced by confrontation, particularly over nuclear power” (198). While this is a positive development that may lead to more open debate in Japanese society, Samuels finds that in more cases than not, Japan’s political institutions returned to the status quo. Samuels furthermore comments on the heightened respect for Japan’s military, but regrets that while the help of American forces was very much appreciated, on-going disputes concerning the presence of American bases in Okinawa have not been resolved.

Other positive developments included a growing sense of volunteerism among Japanese. Thousands of Japanese as well as many foreigners volunteered their time, money and energy in helping relief efforts. Another notable change came with the actions of the local government. Local governments are now much more focused on helping other prefectures that are heavily affected by disasters – a welcome move away from almost a complete dependency on the central government. Another very positive development was that “a robust Japanese democracy filled with well-informed, active citizens eventually emerged from the crisis. For each leader who failed the test of agility and flexibility...there were policy entrepreneurs who directed innovative ideas for change at an enraged public. Despite the

dysfunctions in Japan's political class, we have seen abundant evidence of creativity in its policy class" (200). Samuels concludes his study by noting:

So we are left with a paradox. The 3.11 catastrophe was not the "game changer" many policy entrepreneurs desired. It did not cause structural change to the Japanese body politic. Normal policies prevailed, with all its imperfections, and "staying the course," rather than the more forward leaning "put it in gear" seemed to prevail. The rhetoric of crisis infused democratic politics, empowered new actors, stimulated long-awaited if piecemeal reforms, aroused considerable public protest, and may have pushed the policy process in the direction of transparency. At a minimum, the catastrophe opened all of these possibilities and, in a famously conservative system, the first months that followed the quake, the tsunami and the meltdown provided encouraging (if limited) signs of change for those who hoped for a new style in Japanese politics. Would these early moves result in long-term alterations in the country's politics? Nearly two years later it was still too early to tell too soon to conclude otherwise: a 3.11 master narrative was still under construction. (200)

Hence, Samuel's *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* is a brilliant study of the very complex evolution of Japanese politics and society. A chapter on past disasters in Japan and abroad and changes brought about as a result provides good insight into what is going on in Japan today. This work is very carefully researched by a scholar who has a deep grasp of Japanese history and society. The writing is clear and the research is superb. Every scholar with an interest in contemporary Japan should carefully examine this book.

Miura Reiichi, *Murakami Haruki to Postmodern Japan: Global ka no Bunka to Bungaku* [Haruki Murakami and Postmodern “Japan”: The Culture of Globalization and Literature]. Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2014. 183 pp. ISBN: 978-4779120053 (hardcover), ¥ 1,800.

Reviewed by Kazutaka Sugiyama

Few would disagree that Haruki Murakami is one of only a few internationally renowned Japanese novelists. His books have been translated into various languages, and he has received multiple literary awards, such as the Franz Kafka Prize and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. However, Reiichi Miura, a professor of American literature at Hitotsubashi University in Japan, challenges this assessment because he sees Murakami as a global novelist who happens to be Japanese. The difference between the two claims is subtle but important: while the former (Murakami as a Japanese novelist) underscores Murakami's nationality, the latter (Murakami as a global novelist) undermines it. If Murakami has anything to do with Japan, Miura argues, it is not the Japanese literary tradition but with a Japan that is a mere locality in a larger, globalized world. Miura's attempt to understand Murakami in the context of globalization distinguishes the book from a typical literary study if we understand this as an interpretation of texts through close reading. Instead, Miura discusses Murakami alongside with American and British literature as well as Japanese pop culture; in doing so, he uses Murakami as a vehicle to analyze the cultural trend of globalization that replaces history with memory, and social class with identity.

Miura begins by illustrating how Murakami is a distinctly different kind of novelist from other renowned Japanese novelists. He argues that unlike Kenzaburō Ōe and others, whose writings are engaged with Japanese national culture as a singular cultural experience, Murakami shares more thematic and stylistic experiences with American postmodern novelists such as Tim O'Brien and Raymond Carver. While this characterization is nothing new in Murakami scholarship, Miura elaborates on this claim by presenting the idea of a new era of imperialism in globalization articulated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire*. If, as they argue, postmodernism – decentralization and deterritorialization of power – is not a political subversion against imperialism but a radicalization of it, Murakami's resemblance to American postmodern novelists appears as a symptom of

Hardt and Negri's new global empire. In this framework, Murakami is not a Japanese novelist but rather a global novelist who happens to be Japanese.

Following American literary critics such as Fredric Jameson and Walter Benn Michaels, Miura characterizes globalization as the ideological shift from Welfare State to neoliberalism – the rise of identity politics and the fall of socialism.¹ As a result, political disputes are no longer over social stratification but over cultural identity. To corroborate the global ideological trend asserted above, Miura reads Murakami's works (*1Q84* in particular) along with Hayao Miyazaki's films, the British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, Hollywood blockbuster films, and other works in Japan and elsewhere show how current cultural representations are invested in depicting one's identity while class issues often disappear from them. The primacy of cultural identity, Miura argues, implies that history as a common ground is replaced with cultural memory since for one's identity, what happens in the world is not relevant but instead it is what she or he remembers (or not). By analyzing various cultural products and showing their devotion to cultural identity, Miura concludes that Murakami, along with other artists, depicts postmodern Japan in the globalized world – a floating imagery of Japan, as a nation which is disconnected from history and rearticulated as a cultural memory.

After analyzing the ideological trend in globalization by using Murakami as a vehicle, in the final chapter, Miura pushes his analysis further as he takes on Murakami's newest novel, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, in relation to American modernist literature. Looking at the transition from realism (Upton Sinclair) to modernism (F. Scott Fitzgerald) in American literary history as a decisive moment for the construction of American national identity, Miura historicizes the culture of globalization. His genealogy of global culture prepares him to discuss Murakami's newest novel as a failed attempt to highlight the significance of history over memory. However, precisely by failing to be a realist novel in the sense György Lukács defines, Miura characterizes the novel as a realist novel that intricately depicts our inability to escape global neoliberalism.

¹ Author's Note: Although Miura does not explicitly name Michaels in the book, his criticism on postmodernism plays a significant role in the book. Miura translated Michaels' work into Japanese in addition to the fact that he completed his second Ph.D. in English at the University of Illinois at Chicago under his supervision.

Miura's realism, in other words, is a literary style that strives to illustrate the totality (or the inability to do so) of the new imperialism (160–2).

Although the book does have Murakami's name in the title and devotes a significant portion describing him in the text, Miura aims more than just merely situating Murakami in the culture of globalization. Through historicizing the global culture, Miura delineates what we might call a new realism, a realism which depicts (and again, the inability to do so) the neoliberal empire, as an appropriate critical approach for contemporary literary study. One might argue that Miura could have added more thorough case studies to validate his argument further rather than relying heavily on American literary scholarship, or that he could have demonstrated a more concrete example of an alternative to the new imperialism for which this critical approach allows us to imagine. He doubtlessly would have done so if he did not regrettably pass away in 2013. Despite these shortcomings, Miura's work provides us a plausible framework for a literary study with a more inclusive framework to critically investigate the empire of global neoliberalism in which many of us find ourselves caged without realizing it.

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