Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal

Spring 2019, Volume XLIII

In Dedication

Every year, the East Asian Studies Journal is dedicated to a Wittenberg University faculty or staff member who is actively involved in the East Asian Studies Program, promotes academic achievement and encourages students to stretch beyond their limits in their chosen fields of study. The student staff would like to dedicate this year's issue to Dr. Shelley Wing Chan, Professor of Chinese Language and Cultural Studies.

Dr. Chan earned her BA from Hong Kong Baptist University. Moving to the United States to continue her studies, she pursued a MA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Ph.D. at the University of Colorado-Boulder. She became a faculty member of Wittenberg University in 2004, and since that time, has been known by her students as an approachable, dedicated professor both inside and outside the classroom. She inspires and encourages her students to pursue their goals and to challenge themselves in their studies. Often teaching both content and language courses, Dr. Chan is able to offer introductory classes to students of all academic backgrounds and thus, broadens the minds of many.

We at the East Asian Studies Journal would like to thank Dr. Chan for her great contributions to our program and passion for sharing knowledge on East Asia. Her support and love for Hello Kitty will never be forgotten by those that she teaches.

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Fukushima's Black Bags: How Citizen Scientist Activism is framed by Cultural Contexts, Environmental Justice, and Ethical Reasoning

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Abstract

Fukushima Prefecture, on the Pacific coast north of Tokyo, Japan, is spotted with radioactive contaminated matter packed into black bags as a result of the March 11, 2011 Tohoku earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant run by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). Through the lens of local culture, core ideas of human rights, and deontological ethical reasoning, I argue that a solution to Fukushima's remaining radioactive mess, symbolized and made visible by the black bags, must be created by the citizens of the affected areas and backed by TEPCO and the government. Citizen scientists—defined as any person with scientific proficiency or expertise who translates between laypeople and professionals—provide a crucial link between local and expert. The pursuit of a land-use based approach to reorganize and revitalize Fukushima must come from those who live there, because only then a feasible solution will be realized.

This essay will join the conversation of what should be done to remedy and who should have a say in what happens with the remains of the 3/11/11 Triple Disaster encapsulated in the black bags. If you were Japan's Minister of the Environment, who would you decide should have a voice in resolving

the dilemma? How can the tension between insider and outsider groups be resolved? Who should decide the fate of the black bags? How to move forward in Fukushima is a question yet unresolved.

Introduction

In a country abundant with earthquakes, it would be easy to assume that all Japanese civil engineers plan for potential damage from seismic activity. Unfortunately, it is not so. The results of the 2011 earthquake was a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale; while a 2002 report estimated that it was only a 20% probability of a magnitude-8 earthquake accompanied by a powerful tsunami happening in Japan in the following 30 years.[1]

Fukushima Prefecture, located approximately two hours north of Tokyo via *shinkansen* (bullet train), is the location of the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE), also called the Tohoku Earthquake. Followed by a tsunami and meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the event is known as the Triple Disaster. The resulting release of radioactive steam into the atmosphere caused severe damage everywhere the wind blew. Nearly 100,000 evacuees are still living outside of Fukushima Prefecture and the exclusion zone nearest the nuclear plant.[2] Health and food uncertainty struck fear across the nation as the air and seas were increasingly contaminated by the Daiichi Plant's malfunction. TEPCO admitted to the contamination, of which "the attendant environmental and social impacts are believed to eclipse those of Chernobyl," the 1986 Ukrainian nuclear accident.[3] Although the design of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant owned by TEPCO included safeguards against the elements, the thirteen-foot cliff protecting the plant had no chance of stopping the tsunami that peaked at 127 feet.[4] Both Fukushima and Chernobyl are classified as

1 See Bobuo Mimura, Kazuya Yasuhara, Seiki Kawagoe, Hiromune Yokoki, and So Kazama, "Damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami- A Quick Report," *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change*, vol. 16, no. 7 (October 2011) and Justin McCurry, "Japanese Government Held Liable for First Time for Negligence in Fukushima," *Guardian*, March 17, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/17/japanese-government-liable-negligence-fukushima-daiichi-nuclear-disaster.

2 Alan Taylor, "5 Years since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake," *Atlantic* (Boston), March 10, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2016/03/5-years-since-the-2011-great-east-japan-earthquake/473211/.

3 Vlado Vivoda and Geordan Graetz, "Nuclear Policy and Regulation in Japan after Fukushima: Navigating the Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 45, no. 3 (August 2015): 490.

4 Sara B. Pritchard, "An Envirotechnical Disaster," in *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental*

level 7 major accidents, the highest level on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale.[5]

In wake of the 2011 events of Fukushima, it must be decided what should be done with the remaining contaminated mess, symbolized by black bags, full of radioactive material. *Furecon* bags (フレコンバッグ)—a blend of the borrowed English words "flexible" and "container"—remain stacked everywhere, a poignant visual reminder of the ever-present, silent threat of radiation. A Google Maps search of any coastal town in Fukushima Prefecture shows multiple patches of the bags neatly lined up. Commonly used in construction work, the material is not specially designed to contain radiation.[6]

Japan's Minister of the Environment must rectify the dilemma of who should have representation in the decision-making process concerning Fukushima's cleanup. In this role, one must grapple with a dissonance between inside and outside groups; Fukushima evacuees and TEPCO are considered insiders, immediately involved, whereas the Japanese government and the unaffected population of Japan are considered outsiders due to their separation from the disaster. Who should decide where the black bags should go? How can the tension between groups be reconciled? These unanswered questions keep victims of the incident from resuming lives of normalcy.

The solution requires an ethical approach. I will use consequentialist and deontological reasoning to discuss what to do with this contaminated land, how it shall be done, and by whom. Through the core ideas of local culture, environmental justice, and consequentialist and deontological ethics, I argue that a solution to Fukushima's black bags must be created by the citizens of the affected areas, led by citizen scientists, and backed by TEPCO and the government. This combination of teamwork under the leadership of affected citizens will ensure a solution acceptable to all and appropriately feasible on many accounts.

In this essay, historical issues and background surrounding the current-day decontamination problem will be examined first. Next, local cultures

Context of a Global Power, edited by Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 255.

5 International Atomic Energy Agency, "International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES)," https://www.iaea.org/topics/emergency-preparedness-and-response-epr/international-nuclear-radiological-event-scale-ines.

6 Chie Kobayashi and Debra Goldschmidt, "Japan Recognizes First Death Related to Fukushima Cleanup." *Cable News Network*, September 7, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/07/health/japan-first-fukushima-death/index.html.

within the general Japanese culture will be discussed, and how they add layers of understanding to our dilemma, in which a significant player is the citizen scientist (able to work between experts and local people), environmental justice as a natural human right, and the ethics that determine responsibility. The paper will be concluded with forward-moving initiatives and progress that reveal complexity in finding a solution.

Japan, a nation that seems to always be one step ahead of the rest of the world in terms of large problems—whether it be an aging population, declining birth rate, lack of productive land, recycling, or nuclear meltdown disasters—is "allowing the world to learn and benefit from their stumbles, innovations and experiments" in regards to their own reactions towards these issues.[7] Different from Chernobyl in their desire to recover the area, the Japanese people as a whole are actively pursuing solutions, and endeavor to recover and improve the land, not just entomb it. It is the author's hope that the world can learn from Japan's trials.

Literature Debates Related to Fukushima

Disciplines that factor into discussions surrounding the issue of Fukushima's black bags in this essay include history, anthropology, philosophy, and science. They coincide with the main topics of historical issues, culture, human rights, ethics, and solutions featured later in the text. Also included are the fields of economics, business analytics, and political science. The interdisciplinary fields of environmental and Asian studies overarch the entire discussion. When these disciplines come together and cultivate discussion, it enables analysis and a deeper understanding of the physical disorder of Fukushima, and gives recommendations for a path forward.

Many past events inform the black bag problem, and many authors write about essential background history that explores the time leading up to the Daiichi accident. The events of Chernobyl are especially illuminating concerning Fukushima's initial responses, but fail to educate on the return of humans living in evacuated areas due to Chernobyl's continued designation as an exclusion zone.[8] Old scars from the atomic bombs and newer scars

7 Iain Marlow, "Japan's Bold Steps," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), November 13, 2015, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/retirement/retire-planning/how-japan-is-coping-with-a-rapidly-aging-population/article27259703/.

8 John Wendle, "Animals Rule Chernobyl Three Decades After Nuclear Disaster," National

from accidents like the 1999 Tokaimura nuclear criticality accident formed a pattern of resistance to nuclear energy and receptiveness to renewable energy. With a lack of natural resources, renewables are preferable. Records and stories provide a view into the events of the past that give context to current Fukushima actions and reactions.[9]

Many cultural factors influenced the decisions and reactions immediately following the initial quakes as well as in the years after. While Mimura, et al. give statistical facts, NHK's television show 未来塾*: Lectures for the Future* considers the opinions of real individuals about Fukushima and their many fears and doubts about future nuclear energy several years after the fact.[10] Beyond the general implications of culture, O'Brien considers the impact on local fishermen and offers a perspective on the humble nature of the 50 heroic workers who stayed behind when the plant was evacuated.[11] Both of these groups shaped the responses to and outcome of March 11, albeit in different ways. The author personally got a glimpse into this culture during travels to Fukushima in January of 2018.

Human rights as defined by international society are an essential part of this paper's argument. The United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights lends the most essential, fundamental ideas of the rights of people. As more recent conversations explain, it is now widely believed that the environment needs to be included in these doctrines as a basic right. [12]his belief is due to an undeniable relationship between human lives and the natural world, a connection that is constantly shifting.[13] Schapper argues that the current way we maintain human rights is not rigorous enough to address environmental injustice. Rinfret and Pautz introduce an American perspective of environmental justice. The 2015 Paris Agreement finally

Geographic, April 18, 2016, https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/060418-chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/.

9 See Ibid. and International Atomic Energy Agency, "International Nuclear."

10 See NHK (日本放送協会), "Fukushima **から考える「ニッポンの**未来」, in 未来塾*: Lectures for the Future*, television broadcast, November 4, 2018, https://www.nhk.or.jp/ashita/miraijuku/.

11 See Miles O'Brien, "Return to Fukushima with Miles O'Brien," video, August 6, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtwNyUZJgw8, 33:15 and Miles O'Brien, "The Heroes of Fukushima Dai-ichi, But Don't Call Them That," *Public Broadcasting Service*, March 13, 2016, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/the-heroes-of-fukushima-daiichi-but-dont-call-them-that.

12 See Tracey Skillington, *Climate Justice and Human Rights* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

13 See Brett L. Walker, Preface to *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power*, edited by Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

writes that states should recognize their obligations to human rights, but Schapper believes the idea needs to be further developed to fully benefit those facing environmental injustice. McCurry encourages international pressure on the Japanese government as an environmental justice violator by reporting on the plight of one woman begging for her basic rights.[14] These interpretations of human rights lend to the paper's argument on a normative concept and will inform sociological and anthropological understanding of the black bags.

Ethical conversations for this research are largely informed by the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy's wisdom that intersects with the other disciplines in this essay.[15] Global environmental responsibility is hard; Japan's desire to reduce climate impact from emissions via carbon neutral nuclear energy shows good intent, but has turned out to be an option condemned by the large majority of the nation due to the Daiichi disaster, as argued by Silverstein. TEPCO's corporate-social consequentialist responsibility and the government's innate deontological role hold major ethical stakes in the situation.[16] Legal ramifications also contribute to TEPCO's responsibility for the events of 2011. Bradsher and Tabuchi introduce the 50 workers who stayed behind to take care of the highly dangerous reactors during the meltdown and how they certainly fulfilled a lifetime's worth of ethical responsibility. The exploration of the ethics behind these hard decisions leads us into a very intricate moral situation, which can apply to decisions about any nuclear energy system around the globe, as well as lend insight on major pollution events with lasting costs.[17]

Takao would argue that the fragile relationship between inside and outside groups consequently demands the involvement of citizen scientists.

14 Justin McCurry, "Fukushima Evacuee to Tell UN That Japan Violated Human Rights," Guardian, October 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/11/fukushima-evacuee-un-japan-human-rights.

15 James Fieser, "Ethics," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/.

16 See Kaori Kuroda and Yu Ishida, "CSR in Japan: Toward Integration and Corporate-CSO Partnership," in *Corporate Social Responsibility and the Three Sectors in Asia: How Conscious Engagement Can't Benefit Civil Society*, edited by Samiul Hasan (New York: Springer, 2017) and McCurry, "Japanese Government."

17 The many approaches to moving forward from the disasters of 2011 are varied. Avenell discusses the cross-border interaction and collaboration between people when it comes to environmental movements, and the "translocal community"—how people interact and exchange across borders. The earth's interconnectedness calls for increased attention to local environmental issues for the sake of a possible chain reaction effect on the global environment. See Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

He stresses the "importance of public participation in the production and use of environmental science," with citizen scientists as key players linking ordinary people with expert knowledge.[18] Local experts, such as professors, STEM students, and mothers, are strategically equipped to address environmental injustices, and are essential in participating in policy through building confidence surrounding expert knowledge claims for the local people.[19] Aldrich discusses the "interplay between top-down directives and grassroots activism," which is a space inhabitable by citizen scientists.[20] On the one hand, citizens scientists can 'translate' and adapt scientific information, and thus increase local confidence in "expert knowledge claims on which policy relies," strengthening the existing policy networks.[21] On the other hand, they fill officials in on local knowledge and work to protect the environmental rights of locals. The impact of the individual citizen's voice can be powerful and persuasive, as was shown by recent court cases ruling in favor of people damaged by the radiation from Daiichi.[22] Silverstein shows an image of a changing Japan, with some cracks growing in the anti-nuclear wall with multiple nuclear plants put back online by the government.

Background and Pre-Daiichi Issues

Many of the black bags sit on former sites of production, such as abandoned rice fields, leaking radiation back into the environment. We cannot "throw away" radiation. The interconnectedness of nature will bring it back to us.[23] The black bags in Fukushima represent a lot of things: contaminated items, continued radiation leakage into the ground and ocean near Daiichi, destroyed hopes, demolished towns, interrupted lives, and a

18 Yasuo Takao, "Making Environmental Policy Work with Civic Science: The Intermediary Role of Expert Citizens at the Japanese Local Level," *Local Environment*, vol. 21, no. 9 (2016): 1101.

19 Many women and mothers involved in environmental-protection groups have been vocal protesters and successful policy changers, especially when the safety of children is at stake. See Nicole Freiner, "Mobilizing Mothers: The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Catastrophe and Environmental Activism in Japan," ASIANetwork Exchange, vol. 21, no. 1 (Fall 2013) and Takao, "Making Environmental," 1101.

20 Daniel P. Aldrich, "Postcrisis Japanese Nuclear Policy," in *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power*, edited by Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 280.

21 Takao, "Making Environmental," 1102.

22 See Kobayashi and Goldschmidt, "Japan Recognizes" and McCurry, "Japanese Government."

23 Walker, Preface, xi-xiv.

general lack of vitality. Fukushima's radiated soil, water, sludge, rubble, greenery, debris, and equipment scraped off the earth and collected into black bags, tanks, and containers can be found all over the prefecture. The decontamination process is still ongoing, but the space to store these items is becoming increasingly scarce.[24] What should be done with these bags is an inescapable problem and the prevailing ethical dilemma.

A fear of radiation permeates the Fukushima discussion, hailing back to the Second World War. A history of bad experiences from the atomic bombs dropped by American forces in August, 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, resulted in three generations of anti-nuclear sentiments. Closer to the core of the issue, immediately south of Fukushima in Ibaraki Prefecture, two injurious events happened in 1997 and 1999. The 1997 and 1999 JCO (formerly Japan Nuclear Fuel Conversion Co.) Plant's Tokaimura nuclear accidents, an explosion and a serious criticality accident, marred the reputation of nuclear. This long history of disasters cultivated a distaste for nuclear power, even when officials and experts promised safety first—and still do.[25]

The disaster of 2011 brought back the fear of nuclear power in full force. Immediately following the Daiichi accident, all 54 of Japan's nuclear plants were idled; now, four are back online.[26] Even if other options for energy are scarce or environmentally unsustainable, a history of deadly nuclear events does nothing to support the push for nuclear plants. Additionally, the majority of energy produced at Daiichi was used to power the electricity-gluttonous Tokyo.[27] Tension between Tokyo's electricity users (outsiders) and the people of Fukushima (insiders) became visible when they came into contact with each other post-Fukushima. A remedy must be found since the radiation will not disappear for many decades.

Radioactive decay is what harms the cells in human and animal bodies. Unfortunately, radioactive cesium-137 takes 300 years to completely

24 Motoko Rich, "Struggling with Japan's Nuclear Waste, Six Years After Disaster," *New York Times*, March 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/11/world/asia/struggling-with-japans-nuclear-waste-six-years-after-disaster.html.

25 Starting the in mid-1950s, numerous cases of toxic pollution caused great harm, and "people in isolated villages, regional cities, and crowded metropolises mobilized in protracted struggles against the corporations that poisoned their bodies and the government officials who obstructed protest and accused victims of local egoism." This storyline runs parallel to the situation in Fukushima. See Avenell, *Transnational Japan*, 7.

26 Ken Silverstein, "Japan Circling Back To Nuclear Power after Fukushima Disaster," *Forbes*, September 8, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/kensilverstein/2017/09/08/japan-may-be-coming-full-circle-after-its-fukushima-nuclear-energy-disaster/#73190ad130e8.

27 O'Brien, "Return to Fukushima," 25:30.

decay (due to the chemical's half-life). It takes 20 years for cesium-134 to disappear. Japan can only imagine what terribly long road they face in Fukushima if Chernobyl has been shuttered and buried for the past 30 years, still uninhabited. Even so, Chernobyl removed the human element from the equation shortly after the accident; using it as an example for Fukushima is beneficial until human inhabitants return.

In terms of both aging population and environmental disasters, Japan stands as a "futuristic" example for the rest of the world, experiencing first what many other countries are projected to soon follow, such as declining birth rates. The lessons coming out of Fukushima are many and valuable, and substantial for the prevention of major future accidents and avoidance of poor planning.

Culture as Influence and Lens

In this dilemma, the people considered residents of Fukushima are those who currently live in the affected areas, those who previously did and desire to return, or those who still cannot return. Whatever their motivation, many people of Fukushima wish for the earth to be clean and healthy, especially for the children. The challenge comes with finding a way for citizens to feel like they can safely return to their homes and enjoy the right to live life the way they wish. The Minister of the Environment must decide who to entrust to participate in decisions regarding decontamination and cleanup of Fukushima.

The Japanese culture is important in our analysis of the black bags. The fact that the disaster happened in Japan to Japanese people impacts the continual response to the disaster. A culture of commitment to one's job, self-sacrifice, and the significance of family honor inform individual decisions. Career commitment can be seen in the 50 plant workers who stayed at the impaired plant to control damage immediately following the earthquake.[28] In this example, if the ship sinks, not only does the captain go down, but so does the entire crew, which is true of TEPCO. According to O'Brien, each employee "feels individual responsibility for the collective action or inaction of the company" as a culturally normal self-disciplined reaction.[29] Blamed for the incident, the families of the plant workers would

28 O'Brien, "The Heroes."

29 Ibid.

also be dishonored if they did not stay and try to remedy the situation. Nevertheless, the 50 workers who risked their lives for the greater good understood that a great number of people would become exposed to radiation if the reactors were not controlled. They sacrificed for the sake of those who lived around the plant and beyond.

When discussing the cultural complexities that factor into this dilemma, it is necessary to consider specific, local culture: Fukushima Prefecture's local culture.[30] The fishing and farming families who lived in the same big, old houses for multiple generations lost their place-based traditions and way of life in a single day. TEPCO's current cleanup of the Daiichi plant includes attempting to stop the endless radiation of groundwater that flows into the ocean and contaminates seafood, rendering it inedible. Continued contamination was proved by Woods Hole scientists who identified a sustained concentration of cesium-134.[31] Farmers, unable to work and sell their crops due to consumers' fear of radiation, lost their livelihood and traditions.[32] Hikers unable to return to the mountain, bird-watchers unable to enter the forest, kids unable to run around in rural freedom; how can the residents of Fukushima return to a culturally significant lush environment which is now deadly? Many feel stuck in an "open-air prison."[33] Many local cultural factors influenced actions immediately following the first tremble of the earthquake, as well as in the years after.

As a result of the 2011 disaster, the Japanese population is consistently and overwhelmingly against nuclear energy.[34] The horrors of a possible

30 Engle Merry's definition of culture encapsulates the complexities and layered character of Japan's nuclear issue: Culture is not ubiquitous or unanimous, nor is it contained or unchangeable. Culture is very much alive. See Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 12.

31 O'Brien, "Return to Fukushima."

32 In order to consider the situation of Fukushima's evacuees, it is imperative to understand the cultural history and situational resources of Japan. As an archipelago, ecological resources often and historically come from the sea, and when current practices of rice-growing became prevalent, the landscape was altered and created *sato-yama* and *sato-umi*, unique habitats formed within mountains and oceans, respectively, from the land-use modification patterns of humans. For example, habitats of creatures who find a new home in the paddies of wet rice cultivation are lost if humans abandon that field and it dries up, also potentially damaging human lives. Likewise, the effect humans have on the earth in general might affect humans later. The landscape of houses and streets on the eastern coast only served to intensify the effect of surging water on landscape. See Aldrich, "Postcrisis Japanese Nuclear Policy."

33 McCurry, "Fukushima Evacuee."

34 Silverstein, "Japan Circling."

future accident are not worth the apparent benefits. This gives us a complex situation in which citizens, those most damaged by nuclear accidents, should have an especially prominent voice in the conversation with the Ministry of the Environment. The people who can best create a methodology of moving forward in Fukushima are those who understand the local culture as well as the larger culture of Japan.

Citizen scientists have the ability to work between local people and experts, engaging both in conversation through their mix of professional science skills and local expertise, and ensuring solutions remain rooted to local needs as appropriate to the local culture.[35] Citizen scientists could be anyone: professors, retired scientists, politicians, or motivated mothers. Those who can comprehend and analyze scientific jargon and make it accessible to the masses prove invaluable. Via a consequentialist perspective, these are reasons why citizen scientists are best suited to take a leading role in the effort of forward movement in Fukushima.

Reorganization and revitalization of Fukushima must come mainly from the locals, for they understand their own culture best. The Ministry of the Environment should prioritize culture because it rationalizes past and future responses of the people of Fukushima, and puts their actions into context. If the events of Fukushima are not put into the setting of cultures specific to Fukushima, and the greater culture of Japan, inside groups will clash against outside groups. Furthermore, the world will be unable to understand the complexities in the response to and recovery from the event. Moving forward, decision makers will lack the knowledge of cultural background necessary to understand human rights violations and environmental injustices when decisions are made.

Human Rights with Environmental Justice

Environmental justice makes visible the separation between inside and outside groups. The victims of environmental injustices, part of the inside group of the issue, may feel forgotten and isolated. The frustration of never receiving justice from the government for the Daiichi meltdown exacerbates the separation between people from Fukushima and the "outside." This situation often causes local-level action by groups who desire environmental justice. The Ministry of the Environment then must attempt to reconcile

35 Takao, "Making Environmental."

these groups in an ethical analysis of responsibility and duty.

In 2018, the Japanese government assigned a victim's death as related to the cleanup effort in Fukushima for the first time.[36] The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights written in 1948 proclaims the fundamental freedoms and rights of every human on the planet. Article 25, which declares adequate health for all, asserts that a safe and healthy environment is a basic human right, but the threat of environmental harm prevents attainment of safety and physiological needs.[37] Accordingly, protection of the environment protects human rights, and vice versa. The UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment asserts this relationship: "Without a healthy environment, we are unable to fulfill our aspirations or even live at a level commensurate with minimum standards of human dignity."[38] Subsequent UN reports focused on specific issues call for greater attention to issues of environmental justice, but have not changed the dialogue much. Schapper claims that existing doctrines of human rights do not provide for climate health as it relates to humans, nor do climate agreements include human rights, which further damages those facing injustices.[39] Thus, there needs to be consideration of the relationship between human rights and environmental justice.

People experience radiation damages in more than one way. Physical harm may be immediate, but emotional, economic, social and physiological harms can last much longer. These conditions are comparable to the atomic bomb *hibakusha* survivors. Even though *hibakusha* were victims, they faced extreme discrimination because they were "contagious," an entirely baseless fear. Similarly, the tough situation the Triple Disaster put many families in became too much to bear with too little support; in 2017, a mother backed by Greenpeace Japan asked the UN to pressure the Japanese government into increasing help for evacuees.[40] Lack of a healthy environment precludes all essential human rights, and the damage from environmental injustice

36 Kobayashi and Goldschmidt, "Japan Recognizes."

37 United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution 217 A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, A/RES/217," Dec. 10, 1948, https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

38 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment," last modified July 2017, https://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/environment/SRenvironment/Pages/SRenvironmentIndex.aspx.

39 See Andrea Schapper, "Climate Justice and Human Rights," *International Relations*, vol. 32, no. 3 (Sept 2018).

40 McCurry, "Fukushima Evacuee."

can last for a lifetime.

The people of Fukushima face environmental damage that degrades their overall physical and social well-being due to a lack of justice—environmental justice. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people" no matter their socioeconomic differences "with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."[41] However, environmental justice is very difficult to implement in the evaluation of policy and to measure in outputs. The authors assert that environmental justice is more likely to occur when local communities act, rather than through the efforts of large government. What this means for Fukushima is that it may be up to the local citizens to solve their own problem.

Ethical Analysis of Responsibility

An environmental disaster can be very difficult to reverse, as is true in Fukushima. The lasting environmental problem with Japan's radiation, as opposed to Chernobyl, is the myriad black bags still stacked everywhere, seven years post-disaster. The government pledged to clean up Fukushima, but government support for nuclear power in a natural resource-poor, energy-hungry and climate change-conscious society brings the possibility of continued operation of nuclear plants and future accidents.[42] More recently, green and blue tarps were laid over the tidy mountains of black bags in an attempt to protect them (and brighten the grim appearance). Schapper argues that an increase in accountability and enforcement is one way to ensure just environmental practices in a world where the link between environmental justice and human rights has not yet been recognized.[43]

For this ethical dilemma, I group the government with TEPCO due to the amount of control the government has taken over the company. The moral dilemma of the Triple Disaster, a likely preventable meltdown under the jurisdiction of TEPCO and the Japanese government, is a complex situation in which ethical accountability strongly factors into the solution and plan to move forward. From a legal perspective, TEPCO has every responsibility

41 Sara R. Rinfret and Michelle C. Pautz, *US Environmental Policy in Action* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 188.

42 O'Brien, "Return to Fukushima."

43 Schapper, "Climate Justice."

to remedy their Daiichi Plant issues. As is true in many countries around the globe, companies who make major mistakes are expected to clean up after themselves (at whatever cost). However, those who are responsible do not always provide the best solution due to time and financial burdens, and may choose a resolution that unequally benefits their company.

TEPCO and the Japanese government are morally and ethically responsibility for the Fukushima disaster and cleanup.[44] Deontological theory plays strongly into the conversation of what should be done with Fukushima's remaining mess, as symbolized by the black bags. Argued from the perspective of 17th century German philosopher Samuel Pufendorf's ethical duty towards oneself and towards others, as the creators of the black bags, TEPCO has a deontological responsibility to provide significant assistance by shouldering financial and social burdens in remedy of Fukushima.[45] This makes TEPCO an essential member of the conversation organized by the Ministry. Additionally, the government, a unitary state and democracy, has a duty to protect the wellbeing of the citizens of Japan and the right of individuals to live in a healthy environment through the duty-based rights theory.[46] This duty extrapolates to TEPCO as owners of Daiichi, as they have a duty to both protect themselves and others from harm, according to Pufendorf's theory. Therefore, following this theory would be the prevention of a level 7 nuclear disaster.

Likewise, consequentialism promotes favorable actions for all people; by this logic, TEPCO has an ethical responsibility to clean up the mess for everyone that is impacted: "Revelations that TEPCO had covered up numerous accidents, leaks, and cracks since the 1980s…at least thirty serious incidents had been hidden by company management…These events further undermined the industry's credibility. The recent (and ongoing) accident at the Fukushima nuclear complex may be the straw that breaks the camel's back."[47] The 20th-century British philosopher W.D. Ross' consequentialist reparation and beneficence duties support reasons for those who have power

44 In this essay, the author did not include arguments from the perspective of virtue ethics (parents made to decide for their children what is a good life versus what is feasible, perhaps economically) and female morality (a branch of virtue ethics that "argues that more feminine traits, such as caring and nurturing" are important in analysis of Fukushima) that also have a place in the ethical reasoning of this topic. See Fieser, "Ethics."

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Aldrich, "Postcrisis Japanese Nuclear Policy," 285.

to compensate those who are harmed and to improve the conditions of others, respectively.[48] TEPCO has a clear obligation to remedy an accident of their making, and Ross' theory mandates the need for monetary support from the government to aid evacuees amidst continuing decontamination efforts.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether or not the existence of the Daiichi Plant is in itself considered ethical. Tokyo people elected to indulge in a high-technology lifestyle, which necessitates the use of nuclear energy due to a lack of natural resources. Yet, nuclear power and its waste is also ethically questionable. This ethical question is supported by Kant's duty theory, which mandates that any action must always treat people with dignity; the use of people as tools in achieving something must be avoided, a wrong that Daiichi's construction and operation commits.[49] Before 2011, nuclear reactors generated a third of Japan's energy, now approximately only two percent.[50] Since Tokyo's dense population consumes a significant proportion of the nation's energy, a large portion of the energy produced by the Daiichi Plant (prior to the accident) was used to power Tokyo. Daiichi did bring income and vitality into the communities surrounding the plant. However, as a large portion of the Japanese population understands, nuclear energy brings more risk than benefit when the horrific destruction of a potential accident is considered. According to Kantian deontology, the construction of the Daiichi Plant in Fukushima was innately unethical due to its use of Fukushima Prefecture and its people as a means to an end. In a sense, Tokyo was deemed more valuable by those deciding where to locate a nuclear power plant. Furthermore, Fukushima was unethically used to generate electricity for the capital without putting the capital at risk. TEPCO must acknowledge their mistakes for conflict between inside and outside groups to subside.

The interaction between built environment and a force of nature caused the nuclear accident, not the actions of select parties. However, any good intention to prevent such accidents from ever happening were human, and failed to fulfill their purpose. Putting nuclear reactors at the top of a 13-foot cliff only stops 13-foot tsunami waves, the probability of which, as well as much taller waves, can be statistically predicted. TEPCO had a duty to learn about the possibility for tsunami damage. Although TEPCO

48 Fieser, "Ethics."

49 Ibid.

50 Silverstein, "Japan Circling."

holds logical responsibility for the incident as owner of the Daiichi Plant, there is no legal enforcement mechanism for consumer protection from the environment in Japan.[51] This predicament must be changed if Japan will act as an example to the rest of the world, as they claim they wish to do in a video by the Ministry of the Environment.[52]

Solutions and Methods of Moving Forward

Black bags represent the remaining mess after the Triple Disaster: physical, social, and emotional. There are many parties interested in re-establishing Fukushima: restoring it to the way it used to be, transforming it, or establishing some new operational status. Without the nuclear disaster, and only with an earthquake and tsunami, a town could clean up and rebuild in a relatively short period of time, but it is not so easy nor quick to deal with radiation. Elderly populations returned first, but now some schools have been rebuilt with the hope that young families will also return.[53] During the author's class trip to Fukushima, a gleaming community center in Iitate that welcomes visitors with a new, clean building even though the surrounding area has many shuttered houses and empty streets was observed. As reported by de Freytas-Tamura in a news report years after the disaster, a majority of the population is still displaced and radioactive boars roam wild through Fukushima neighborhoods.[54] Although the government lifted the evacuation order in 2015, many are wary to return due to radiation exposure levels equal to that of a nuclear power plant worker. According to a government survey from 2016, "more than half of Fukushima's former residents said they wouldn't return, citing fears over radiation and the safety of the nuclear plant, which will take 40 years to dismantle."[55] Meanwhile,

51 Kuroda and Ishida, "CSR in Japan," 45.

52 Jyosen (除染) MOE, "Living in Fukushima: Stories of Decontamination and Reconstruction," video, October 23, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oTReOjdN3M, 24:17.

53 Motoko Rich, "The Children of Fukushima Return, Six Years After the Nuclear Disaster," *New York Times*, April 21, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/21/world/asia/japan-fukushima-nuclear-disaster-children.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer.

54 Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, "Radioactive Boars in Fukushima Thwart Residents' Plans to Return Home," *New York Times*, March 9, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/world/asia/radioactive-boars-in-fukushima-thwart-residents-plans-to-return-home.html?module=inline.

55 Ibid.

decontamination workers continue their cleanup operation.

There are many problems for the Ministry's decision-making members to solve. What should be done with the contaminated materials? Should the black bags be buried in the ground? Should contaminated land be used for renewable energy? Is this issue something that should be fixed with zoning? The answers to these questions and many more set the group of problem-solvers on their way to moving forward in Fukushima. The government needs to be transparent and take action; TEPCO needs to confess their mistakes and make corrections, and Fukushima's citizens need to raise their voices, with citizen scientists guiding the solutions. Conversation must be frank, open and vulnerable.

The challenge of finding a solution for Fukushima is deciding who should have representation in the conversation. To create a way to move forward, I argue that local citizens should be included in discussions for the cultural knowledge and community understanding they bring. Additionally, citizen scientists prove to have a definitive role in the communication, analysis, and solution-formation of Fukushima's symbolic black bags. Both proficient in scientific jargon and local experts, they serve as mediators between laypeople and professional experts.[56] Yes, Daiichi brought jobs to the area, but the responsibility of Fukushima's critically damaged plant lies with the people who own and run the plant. This year, the Maebashi court ruled that "the government should have used its regulatory powers to force [TEPCO]…to take adequate preventive measures" after a death was attributed to the effects of radioactive fallout from the Daiichi Plant.[57] TEPCO and the government, both responsible for the accident, should be held liable by law to cleanup.[58] To reach a fair solution, these groups must all be present at the conversation concerning the moral dilemma, and further dialogue between groups on their differing opinions is necessary to remedy the tension between inside and outside groups.

This accident could have happened anywhere—either in Japan or internationally. Japan is still sorting through the problem of the black bags and forming solutions, but only reflection and remedy of the Fukushima

56 Takao, "Making Environmental," 1101.

57 McCurry, "Japanese Government."

58 Nothing can be done to stop earthquakes and tsunamis. However, catastrophic events will continue to happen, so it is better to prepare and design for them as best as possible with heavy attention to the threat to future generations in mind. Risk-reducing mechanisms like a 50-foot-tall tsunami wall show progress. See O'Brien, "Return to Fukushima."

Daiichi accident will enable Japanese society to recognize mistakes, fortify existing situations to protect against future harm, and create the foundation for an improved life for all citizens. Accordingly, all nuclear power stations around the world would do well to prepare their plants for the worst kinds of disaster and outline ethical reasoning procedures to increase sustainability, durability, and preparedness for the future. Through the knowledge of Japan's experiences cleaning up Fukushima's black bags, an understanding of how the Japanese continue to respond to the Daiichi disaster within their cultural contexts, and the means by which locals seek to obtain environmental justice for their communities, the rest of the world will avoid similar mistakes and can build methods for dealing with the extreme difficulties resulting from a catastrophic nuclear meltdown.

Images of Black Bags

Image of black bags (フレコンバッグ) in Iitate, Japan. Drop into any Google Maps Street View image along the coast for a high probability of finding a collection of black bags. Image is from Taylor, "5 Years After the Great East Japan Earthquake."

Google Maps image of the Fukushima Daiichi Plant in 2018. Orderly patterns of circular and rectangular shapes indicate large containers holding contaminated liquid and solid material.

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Japan's Next Top Mascot: An Analysis of the Use of Character Marketing and Commercial Cute in Japan

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Abstract

Japan is absolutely obsessed with mascots, yet these lovable characters are just one part of the larger narrative of the commodification of cute (kawaii) within Japan. This paper will seek to understand what "cute" is, and how it has become so pervasive in contemporary Japanese society, namely through the use of character marketing. I will also take a look at market trends that assisted the rise of commercial cute in Japan's postwar economy. Moreover, I will address three examples of cute characters by exploring the rise to power of Hello Kitty and that of two regional mascots *(yuru-kyara)*. There will be analysis on the ways in which cute characters and products based off them are able to provide empathy and bridge the alienation of the modern age. This paper will provide arguments supporting the economic and emotional support that cute creates for Japan, as well as discovering how cute has gone global through an analysis of Japanese soft power, which forms the basis of Japanese cultural diplomacy.

Introduction

In 2016, there was an event that drew millions to vote. Different figures competed on a grand stage which left only one victorious. Spectators traveled across the country to interact with their favorite candidate, an event

which last year drew in 70,000 viewers.[1] However, among the different candidates, there was one theme that was universal: cuteness. This event was none other than the *Yuru-Kyara* Grand Prix, held in Japan. The Grand Prix is an event held annually in Japan to commemorate the wide range of mascots within the country, and to vote on the one that is the most popular. Yet, behind the scenes of this gathering are hundreds of booths filled with character products and commemorative souvenirs, which are closely tied to the mascot phenomenon.

The *yuru-kyara* hail from a larger trend of character marketing in Japan, an industry based around the creation and marketing of characters. Character marketing is more narrowly defined by author Marc Steinberg as:

> The licensing, production, marketing, and consumption of goods and media based around the image of a character...narrowly defined character merchandising is the copyright business; it is the business of creating contracts and gaining income through selling or leasing the rights to use a character image its viability as a business depends on the existence recognition and enforcement of the intellectual property laws that support it.[2]

The *yuru-kyara* serve as regional mascots in Japanese society, generated to increase local pride or raise awareness for a person or company, including advertising and promotion for a specific brand or cause. Yet, character marketing is not a new phenomenon in Japan; one of the best examples is the 1970s creation of Hello Kitty, a character created specifically for the purpose of marketing. Although the *yuru-kyara* and Hello Kitty fulfill different functions and were created for different purposes, they were both created in the context of a culture of commercial cute in Japan. Japan has experienced an increase of character related products in recent years created under the guidelines of commercial cute, the commodification of goods that attempt to be universally perceived as cute.

The purpose of this thesis is to put character marketing in dialogue with commercial cuteness. I will explore the way in which commercial cute has become the focus of character marketing in Japan by first examining what

1 See Splendor, Jo., "Yuru-Kyara Grand Prix 2016 – The Ultimate Japanese Mascot Event," *Wanderlust Inc*., July 28, 2016.

2 Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 41.

cute is, followed by investigating the rise of Hello Kitty and the world of the *yuru-kyara*. This thesis will inspect the effects that cuteness (*kawaii*) has on the consumer, and how characters are created to market that cute. We will then look at cuteness in contemporary Japanese society through Hello Kitty along with two examples of *yuru-kyara*. I would like to argue that both have a positive economic and even more important emotional impact on Japanese society. Furthermore, we will examine the global implications of Japanese cute culture through the global rise in the relevance of "soft power." But before we can understand where "cute" can be found in Japanese society and its impact upon the character marketing industry, let us first begin by gaining an understanding of what "cute" is.

Cute (Circulating University Tradition and Empathy)

The word for cuteness in Japan is often translated as kawaii. While the word itself is similar to our understanding of "cute," Kumiko Sato, a Japan Scholar, provides a more complete understanding of *kawaii* by looking at the etymology of the word:

> In general use, *kawaii* is made up of two kanji (Chinese characters) that respectively signify 'able' and 'love', meaning in combination 'lovable.' The same kanji can be used for another adjective, *kawaisō*, which signifies pitiful or pitiable. *Kōjien*, the Japanese dictionary, presents three definitions of kawaii, which are 1) *itawashii* (pitiable), 2) *aisubeki* (lovable), and 3) *chiisakute utsukushii* (small and beautiful). [3]

While admitting that cute causes an "almost universal effect on humanity," Sato also notes that the Japanese have a unique understanding of cute. She writes: "The Japanese idea of cuteness in fact emphasizes the sense of pathos that the powerless and helpless object inspires in the observer's mind."[4] The psychological aspects of cute explain why these products are so lucrative and desirable.

One of the ways in which *kawaii* maintains its effectiveness is due to the universality of cute. Psychological studies show that humans not only

3 Kumiko Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," *Education about Asia*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2009): 38..

4 Ibid.

have a tendency to subscribe to similar concepts of cute,[5] but that cuteness may also affect the way in which we buy things, which helps explain the rise of cuteness in Japanese as well as global markets. *Kawaii* is marketed with the principle of a playful form of cuteness, known as whimsical cuteness. In an experiment that tested the responses of participants to whimsically cute stimuli, psychologists Gergana Y. Nenkov and Maura L. Scott concluded that "exposure to cute (vs. neutral) products and their whimsical nature prime mental representations of fun and indulgence, resulting in increased indulgent consumer behavior."[6] There is a positive correlation between the physical appearance of the product and our desire to buy it. This argument is furthered with the idea that cute products, "whose whimsical nature primes fun, [lead] to a tendency to approach self-rewards, and ultimately more indulgent consumption in domains that are both related and unrelated to the cute products."[7] By simply appearing "cute," goods, and particularly character goods, are able to gain our attention. Commercial cute is the commodification of this universal appeal to cute, which attempts to make character-based goods that can cater to cute regardless of what product it is selling, whether it be a keychain, a stuffed animal, or even clothing.

Cuteness not only capitalizes on the universal, but the familiar as well. Nostalgia is a key emotion that marketers appeal to. Gregory Carpenter, Professor of Marketing Strategy at the Kellogg School of Management, observes that:

> People become especially nostalgic when they are anxious about the present and, especially, the future. The past is safe because it is completely predictable. Connecting with the past through familiar, loved brands transports people to another time by evoking the same feelings they experienced so long ago. It can [also] work for brands without an authentic connection to the past if the brands can create

5 Melanie L. Glocker, Daniel D. Langleben, Kosha Ruparel, James W. Loughead, Ruben C. Gur, and Norbert Sachser, "Baby Schema in Infant Faces Induces Cuteness Perception and Motivation for Caretaking in Adults," *Ethology*, vol. 115, no. 3 (2009): 257–63.

6 Maura L. Scott and Gergana Y. Nenkov, "Using Consumer Responsibility Reminders to Reduce Cuteness-Induced Indulgent Consumption," Marketing Letters, vol. 27, no. 2 (2016): 323–36.

7 Maura L. Scott and Gergana Y. Nenkov, "'So Cute I Could Eat It Up': Priming Effects of Cute Products on Indulgent Consumption," Journal of Consumer Research, vol. 41, no. 2 (2014): 326-41.

> that familiar feeling without [a connection]. This is tricky but can be done.[8]

Character marketing often revolves around characters that possess a traditional heritage. Several *yuru-kyara* designs incorporate *kawaii* to harken back to traits that a region has been historically known for. The resulting nostalgia works to influence the emotional side of the consumer's brain.

Psychological research supports this idea that the emotional side of the brain has a major influence on what we buy. The brain is wired to process emotions quicker than rational thought. In his book *Emotionomics*, Dan Hill claims that "the older sensory and emotional brains dominate our decision-making process"[9] and that "emotions process sensory input in only one-fifth the time our conscious, cognitive brain takes to assimilate that same input."[10] Our first impression of a product often dictates whether we will consider buying it. This is one reason why marketers use products that are *kawaii*; they draw our attention and give a favorable first impression. In a similar mindset Paul Zak reinforces the idea of the brain's effects on consumption, through his findings from research at Claremont Graduate University: "Our results show why puppies and babies are in toilet paper commercials...This research suggests that advertisers use images that cause our brains to release oxytocin to build trust in a product or brand, and hence increase sales."[11] Marketers are continuously trying to find a way to sell products that cater to the way our brain works, and they have found a successful formula with *kawaii*. Our brains see something cute, which evokes the immediate response of emotions, such as indulgence and nostalgia, and influences (albeit not entirely) our desire to buy that product.

Another goal of commercial cute is to capitalize on empathy. Yano observes that *kawaii* goods are often marketed to represent a kind of "nostalgia for an idealized childhood that it circumscribes [which] directly points to adulthood as burdened with responsibilities and obligations...Within this

8 Steve Olenski, "What Was Old Is New Again -- The Power of Nostalgia Marketing," *Forbes*, August 14, 2015, https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2015/08/14/what-was-old-is-new-again-the-power-of-nostalgia-marketing/#47f5eddd6881.

9 Dan Hill, *Emotionomics*: Leveraging Emotions for Business Success (London: Kogan Page Publishers, 2007), 17.

10 Ibid., 19.

11 Society for Neuroscience, "Oxytocin Increases Advertising's Influence: Hormone Heightened Sensitivity to Public Service Announcements," *ScienceDaily*, November 16, 2010, https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases /2010/11/101115160404.htm.

context, *kawaii* represents a temporary state of abnegation. Surrounding oneself with kawaii objects may be interpreted as pure escapism."[12] *Kawaii* goods are designed to catch the buyer's eye, in the hopes that they will feel this nostalgia or experience a need for this escapism. The buyer can connect, at least temporarily, with this state of renunciation and be momentarily free from obligations of a busy lifestyle.

Furthermore, commercial cute also uses empathy to help bridge the gap created by alienation. Anthropologist Anne Allison notes that in modern Japanese society, people are becoming more distant from one another. She explains that: "Life, in this millennial Japan, occasions an even greater degree of solitarism, atomism, and disconnection from support systems… further, not only is more time spent in 'mediated transitions,' but more of everyday life is mediated by constructed realities that are increasingly engaged as a solitary activity."[13] Japanese society is marked by constant business for both students and workers, but the giving of *kawaii* gifts can be a display of empathy. Alienation can be bridged by the intimacy of the empathy from a gift. Author Sharon Kinsella reinforces this notion, observing that "modern consumers might not be able to meet and develop relationships enough with people, but the implication of cute goods design was that they could always attempt to develop them through cute objects."[14] Cute goods allow for the transfer of the sentiments behind purchasing a gift. It forms a connection between the buyer and recipient of a gift. The empathy connected between the two is complemented by "a warm, cheer-me-up atmosphere...the good cute design re-personalizes."[15] Empathy, along with nostalgia and indulgence, form some of the universal effects that cuteness can have on the consumer.

The universal effects of cute were channeled into Japan's postwar economy. Sato claims that "the commodification process of *kawaii* goods can be traced back to the early 1970s with the establishment of a joint stationary and gift card business by Gakken publishers and Sanrio gift

12 Christine R. Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 57.

13 Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 84.

14 Sharon Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," in *Women Media and Consumption in Japan*, edited by Brian Moeran and Lise Skov, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 228.

15 Ibid.

shops - now the largest purveyors in the cute gift industry."[16] Gakken publishers is a creator of educational toys, whereas Sanrio is the company responsible for Hello Kitty. Both companies, as well as many *anime* and *manga*, have utilized cute as a draw for selling their products. Over the next couple decades, *kawaii* became such a staple of Japanese commercial life that anthropologist Christine Yano argues that "no space is too small to avoid the clutter of advertising and products."[17] With *kawaii* available all over Japan, marketers utilized the psychology of cute to appeal to the greatest number of consumers, through the commodification of cute.

The rise of commercial cute mirrors a rise in a specific market trend during the late 20th century, the rise of consumerism from women. In their book *Women Media and Consumption in Japan*, authors Lise Skov and Brian Moeran mention that "women's increased spending power has brought with it a new type of consumer market for married women...similar to that found in the explosive market for young single women."[18] Businesses responded to this new consumer group by creating products that they thought would appeal to them. Sociologist Sharon Kinsella observes that "the increasingly large disposable incomes of youth and young women in particular throughout the 1980s, and the inventiveness of Japanese businesses in providing goods to make them part with their money, had the greatest determining influence on the highly commercial nature of cute culture."[19] Businesses utilized *kawaii* gifts to entice these new consumers to spend money, thus beginning the commodification of cute.

Commercial cute, the commodification of *kawaii* goods for consumers, has paved the way to make widespread mascot usage and character marketing possible. Characters were designed in a way that harnesses the universal aspects of cute. Commercial cute utilized the brain's responses to cute and was intertwined with the rise of character marketing. Instead of one causing the other, Yano notes that they occurred around the same time and that "this is not a chicken and egg question of which came first, marketing practices or extension of *kawaii*. Rather, it is important to note their parallel emergence

16 Leila Madge, "Capitalizing on 'Cuteness'": The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Postwar Japanese Order," *Japanstudien*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1998): 155.

17 Yano, *Pink Globalization*, 45.

18 Brian Moeran and Lise Skov, Women Media and Consumption in Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995): 35.

19 Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan," 245.

in Japanese contemporary society from the 1970s through today."[20] These two separate practices joined together to create an industry based around the selling of cute characters for marketing purposes. One of the ways this can be seen is through the marketing of Hello Kitty, a *kawaii* character created in the 1970s without a narrative for the purposes of marketing.

Hello Kitty: Small Gift, Big Smile

The quintessential rise of commercial cute is Hello Kitty. She demonstrates the effective marketing of *kawaii* towards a new consumer base of women that was gaining momentum in the 1970s and 80s. The results of which would be a billion-dollar franchise with its original roots in making a character that people would want to buy because it was *kawaii*.

Hello Kitty is a fictional character created by Yuko Shimizu for the Japanese company Sanrio in 1974. The company Sanrio focuses on the creation and marketing of products considered *kawaii*—mostly stationary goods and stuffed toys. Created without a background narrative or story, Hello Kitty was designed specifically for selling *kawaii*. The hope was that consumers would be enticed by her cute design. Although she was originally marketed toward young girls, her demographic has been broadened over the years to incorporate teens and adults as well. This proliferation of Hello Kitty merchandise is noted by Yano: "Hello Kitty can be found in department stores, gift shops, subway kiosks, toy shops, and souvenir shops throughout Japan."[21] This demonstrates the extent to which Hello Kitty can be found in Japanese society. And Hello Kitty's journey is one that will assist in understanding of character marketing.

Hello Kitty's success lends itself much in part to *kawaii*, and the emotions that it evokes. As described above, one of the properties of a *kawaii* gift is its ability to evoke empathy. Hello Kitty provides an accessible option (especially in the context of a culture of gift giving like Japan's) due to the multiple platforms and products she can be found on, which includes everything from school supplies to microwaves or diamond necklaces. One of the ways in which Hello Kitty elicits empathy is through intimate alienation, evoking empathy within the buyer as well as the recipient. There is satisfaction in receiving a Hello Kitty gift, regardless of the size or price

20 Yano, Pink Globalization, 59.

21 Ibid., 44.

tag. Yano notes this phenomenon of receiving such a gift: "These are small yet vital pleasures of the heart, materialized in the form of a Hello Kitty cell phone strap, and given to another...most are exchanged informally, as presentations of affection."[22] The notion of a small but heartfelt present serves as an extension of the company slogan of Sanrio "small gift, big smile."[23] This version of gift giving forms a ritual in which Hello Kitty becomes the medium for transferring feelings of affection and friendship, regardless of what kind of Hello Kitty product is being gifted. This empathy is transferred all throughout Japan, as noted by Yano: "Although purchasing a cute Hello Kitty souvenir as a gift for a friend can be an individual act, it can be interpreted as addressing a national need to assert and sustain emotional ties between people."[24] Hello Kitty can serve as a connection between individuals, and through the commercialization of cute, there is a way to share a similar interest through the giving of gifts to a friend.

Another way for Hello Kitty to evoke empathy is through her "healing" properties. The "healing" property of gifts and toys is explored by Allison, who notes that products such as Hello Kitty "magically '[heal]' the stresses of living in an environment with little time or space for the imagination."[25] While by no means unique to Hello Kitty, this quality of healing can often be found in character marketing, especially in toys and products aimed towards children. These products gain special meaning through the remembrance of when the gift was received. The healing property within commercial cute remains one of the reasons why it can achieve a timeless popularity amongst a wide demographic.

However, for everything positive that Hello Kitty embodies, there are critiques as well. A major concern with Hello Kitty is the accusation that she stands for a monetization of happiness. Yano reports that "most [critics claim] the target is not heart so much as its commodification,"[26] as well as what they perceive to be "the faux sincerity of Sanrio's heart-produced, marketed, packaged for sale."[27] For some critics there is a point when commercial outweighs cute, which creates a dilution and corruption of the message of Hello Kitty. Professor Norihiro Kato furthers this criticism

22 Ibid., 70.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 69.

25 Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, 24-5.

26 Yano, *Pink Globalization*, 163.

27 Ibid., 164.

stating: "Hello Kitty has no mouth, and certain critics have seen this as a symbol of the social apathy and compliance that characterize consumerism. But the truth is that Hello Kitty isn't just missing a mouth; she also has no story, no obstacles to overcome, and thus achieves no growth."[28] Because Hello Kitty is a non-narrative character, there is a worry that she is not a good role model, since she does not have a story to achieve personal growth. This negative commentary of Hello Kitty demonstrates that while cute may have near universal effects on the brain, it is not universally appreciated.

Nonetheless, while some critics argue that Hello Kitty is the personification of commodified emotions, the prevailing appealing opinion around Hello Kitty is one of friendship. Through her ability to go beyond alienation and connect others, Hello Kitty provides a source of empathy to people across the globe, especially the "healing" aspect of empathy. She was originally marketed as something *kawaii* to a new generation of women consumers, but the resulting effects timelessly display how *kawaii* can connect people.

Yuru-Kyara: The Many Mascots of Japan

Hello Kitty is not the only character that embodies or markets cute. One of the more fascinating aspects of the proliferation of cute in Japan is the concept of the *yuru-kyara*. The *yuru-kyara*, which are loosely translated into English as mascots, are used to represent anything from a local region to the Japanese national tax system. Understanding how these characters emerged and the comforting and marketing effect that they have on Japanese society presents another facet of the character marketing narrative.

Yuru-kyara can serve as regional symbols to not only aid in tourism but also raise enthusiasm for a cause. BBC contributor Neil Steinberg examines the case of one *yuru-kyara* named Kumamon:

> He has become more than a symbol for [the Kumamoto prefecture], more than merely a strategy to push its tourism and farm products. He is almost regarded as a living entity, a kind of funky ursine household god (it is perhaps significant that the very first licensed Kumamon product was a full-sized Buddhist shrine emblazoned

28 See Norihiro Kato, "Goodbye Godzilla, Hello Kitty," *The American Interest*, vol. 2, no. 1, (2006).

with his face). He hovers in a realm of fantasy like a character from children's literature.[29]

As Kumamon attests, *yuru-kyara* have taken on a life of their own and can bridge a gap between fantasy and reality. They can provide a sense of community or solidarity in times of crisis, creating a sense of comfort for fans. *Yuru-Kyara* also function on a system that relies on character marketing, or to a lesser extent character awareness, using a character to promote awareness for an issue.

Though it is difficult to locate an exact origin of *yuru-kyara*, two events in their near two-decade history demonstrate an increase in prevalence of the *yuru-kyara* in Japan. These include the 2006 unveiling of the *yuru-kyara* Hikonyan and the first Mascot Grand Prix held in 2010. Hikonyan was created to commemorate the 400th anniversary or Hikone Castle, an important cultural landmark. He is a white cat adorned with a samurai helmet, which is reminiscent of a samurai helmet within the museum of Hikone Castle. The hope was that he would draw people to the celebration and increase the popularity of the local region. His friendly way of celebrating a samurai past quickly gained fans and other local regions began to create *yuru-kyara* of their own. This would eventually culminate in the first Mascot Grand Prix, held in 2010. Mascots from around the country gathered together, and fans cast votes on their favorite character. The winner of the Grand Prix, whoever received the highest number of votes from fans, received major publicity which led to more merchandising opportunities. The Grand Prix drew tens of thousands of spectators and has become an annual event, solidifying the *yuru-kyara*'s position in Japanese society. To best understand the *yuru-kyara*, this paper will address two different case studies, which serve the purposes of promoting regional popularity and awareness.

One of the most popular *yuru-kyara* characters is Kumamon, who is a five-foot-tall black bear with rosy red cheeks. He was originally created in 2010 to promote a new bullet train in the mostly agricultural Kumamoto prefecture. Kumamoto was originally relatively unknown due to its limited tourism potential. The media boosted Kumamon towards the fame that he

29 Neil Steinberg, "Meet Japan's Kumamon, the Bear Who Earns Billions," *BBC*, July 20, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160719-meet-japans-kumamon-the-bear-who-earns-billions.

has today, as recounted by Japanese culture website WebJapan:

> Using social networking services (SNS), it was devised so that the topic of *Kumamon* would spread among his witnesses. After *Kumamon* gained wide recognition, the Kumamoto Governor held a serious press conference based on a contrived story that *Kumamon* disappeared from Osaka for nearly one month, and he called on people "to search for *Kumamon*". This strategy paid off with *Kumamon* being featured in major media outlets such as newspapers and TV, making the once unknown character into a character recognized nationwide through the Internet.[30]

His rise in popularity would lead him to victory in the *Yuru-Kyara* Grand Prix of 2011, after receiving over 200,000 votes. The results of this success have led Kumamon to be credited with:

> Bringing the prefecture ¥11.8 billion in revenues in the first six months of 2012 alone, after drumming up only ¥2.56 billion in all of 2011. Kumamon promotes thousands of Kumamoto products, the vast majority food-related, and he has 120,000 Twitter followers. In a prefectural survey of local companies, 90 percent said they believe Kumamon significantly boosted their business.[31]

This quote displays the economic benefits that a *yuru-kyara* can provide to a local community. A major reason for the spread of the *yuru-kyara* is a desire by other prefectures or organizations to mimic this success and to revitalize the tourism industry in areas of rural Japan.

However, Kumamon has supported his community in more ways than solely economic marketing. Another important characteristic of Kumamon is his ability to bring people together. When his twitter account went oddly quiet after an earthquake struck the Kumamoto prefecture, Steinberg notes that "his fans simply conjured him up themselves, independently, as an object of sympathy, a tireless saviour, an obvious hero."[32] In the weeks of

30 "'Kumamon'-Japan's Most Popular Bear," *Web Japan*, August 2013, https://web-japan.org/trends /11_culture/pop130812.html.

31 Philip Brasor, "Mascots bear cash for local authorities," *The Japan Times*, January 13, 2013, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/01/13/national/media-national/mascots-bear-cash-for-local-authorities/#.XIm8HCJKjIU.

32 Neil Steinberg, "Meet Japan's Kumamon."

silence, fans posted messages on his twitter or drew images of Kumamon to unite around a common figure in the hopes that he would emerge from the destruction. One of the attributes of Kumamon, and of several other yuru-kyara is the potential healing property discussed earlier with Hello Kitty. As seen in this instance, fans of Kumamon joined together and form a sense of community around a mascot for their region, in a time of crisis. This community came together as Steinberg recounts:

> Three weeks after the 14 April earthquake, Kumamon visited the convention hall of the hard-hit town of Mashiki, where residents were still sleeping in their cars for protection as 1,200 tremors continued to rumble across the area. The visit was reported on TV and in the papers as news, as if a long-sought survivor had stumbled out of the wreckage alive. The children, many of whom had lost their homes in the earthquake, flocked around him, squealing, hugging, taking pictures. Their friend had returned.[33]

Kumamon provided a sense of familiarity to victims of the earthquake, in doing so he demonstrated the ways in which a *yuru-kyara* can transcend the label of regional symbol or mascot. It is the *yuru-kyara*'s capacity to generate this empathy and connection that has sustained them in Japanese society.

Another facet of the *yuru-kyara* is their ability to promote an issue or concept within Japan; although less well known, another example of the *yuru-kyara* is Eeta-kun, the mascot for the Japanese National Tax Agency. Eeta-kun was created to promote and utilize electronic tax filing and serves as an example of the Japanese government's attempt to capitalize on the concept of character marketing. Writers for the Wall Street Journal, Daisuke Wakabayashi and Miho Inada, researched this phenomenon, observing that:

> Eeta-kun—a green mascot with a square head resembling a computer screen, with eyes and mouth configured in the shape of an 'e' and the word 'tax' written vertically on his torso—stands 5-foot-5 inches tall, according to his official profile. His weight is 'secret' and he is skilled with computers. His friends include a gang of rainbow-colored mascots called the 'El-rangers' who share a similar passion for promoting the electronic filing of taxes, although

33 Ibid.

> they focus on local levies. 'He can fly too,' said a tax agency official of Eeta-kun. 'He flies around the country to different locations to get as many people as possible to use this e-tax system.' [34]

Eeta-kun serves as the embodiment of Japan's National Tax agency, and the hope is that by adding a "cute" face to the agency, people will feel more welcome to it. Contrary to Kumamon, "healing" is not the primary focus of Eeta-kun; the way in which he connects people is more for communication. While not directly involved with the advertising of character merchandising, Eeta-kun represents an effort to use a kawaii character for the promotion of civic education.

Despite these two examples, the effects of *yuru-kyara* are not universally positive. A recent government law has placed a limit on the number of *yuru-kyara* that can exist, the reasoning behind it being that:

> Last year, the Finance Ministry said that many public bodies had put little thought into the rationale for having a mascot, or whether a cuddly character would represent value for money. Ongoing maintenance costs can be exorbitant, the ministry tersely noted, with one somewhat reclusive mascot setting back its owners ¥1 million a year, despite only making five outings. [35]

With the specific purpose of creating revenue through increased tourism or the sale of merchandise, it is important to local economies that the *yuru-kyara* help the regions they were created for. However, Japan is in a current state of cuteness overload, with over 1,500 mascots representing different places and causes.[36] The result of this saturation has made it difficult for individual *yuru-kyara* to gain popularity. Neil Steinberg acknowledges that many *yuru-kyara* are "cute yet obscure, the common fate for most *yuru-kyara*. The city of Osaka [alone] has 45 different characters promoting its various aspects, who must fend off periodic calls for them to be culled in

34 Miho Inada and Daisuke Wakabayashi, "Isn't that Cute? In Japan, Cuddly Characters Complete," *Wall Street Journal*, December 25, 2012, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323717004578156610405635572.

35 Shingo Ito, "Japan's Cuddly yet Costly Mascots Face Extermination," *The Japan Times*, April 8, 2015.

36 Justin McCurry, "Character Assassination as Japan's Mascot Ranks are Trimmed," *The Guardian*, April 9, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/09/character-assassination-japan-mascot-ranks-finance-ministry.

the name of efficiency."[37] With so many *yuru-kyara* attempting to compete for popularity, a system where a great portion of the *yuru-kyara* fade into obscurity has been created.

Regardless to the benefits or harms the *yuru-kyara* cause to Japanese economy and society, they have become a quintessential part of Japanese life. While the initial ideas behind them were the hopes of local revival through the distribution of character-based products, *yuru-kyara* have become so much more than that. They have been able to form connections within local communities through an attribute of "healing," as well as education and outreach. The *yuru-kyara* inhabit a unique position as the pride and soul of local communities, and when that soul is in danger, as in the case with Kumamon and the earthquake, the people band together in support around their icon. What started out as simple character marketing has now become a nation-wide, even global phenomenon.

Soft Power*:* Cute, Rather Than Brute, Force

In a global community in which economic dominance often equates to political and global power, countries such as Japan have begun to find a new way to exert their influence, through what is known as soft power. Soft power, as defined by Professor Koichi Iwabuchi, is "the capacity to attract foreign nations by the appeal of the lifestyle and culture of the nation."[38] The key to soft power is its non-coercive nature. Japan has been the quintessential example of the impact that soft power has. On a local scale, the usage of *yuru-kyara* can be seen as an exertion of soft power. The government uses these characters to help promote programs it would like the citizens to participate in, such as the E-tax system. Although often specifically designed for marketing, the contributions of the *yuru-kyara* to soft power are judged in a much less commercial light. In observing this trend, Dianne Walters, a writer for JapanSociology.com, notes that "part of the soft power that mascots have is the fact that they are not seen as marketing tools, but as a friendly character something between a mascot and a human."[39] Mascots, such as Eeta-kun, non-coercively market or

37 Steinberg, "Meet Japan's Kumamon."

38 Koichi Iwabuchi, "Uses of Media Culture, Usefulness of Media Culture Studies: Beyond Brand Nationalism into Public Dialogue," In Meaghan Morris, & Mette Hjort *Creativity and Academic Activism: Instituting Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 142.

39 Deanne Walters, "Japanese Mascotization, Marketing, and Imagined Communities,"

promote an idea, and are therefore seen as less aggressive and more welcoming. Soft power for Japan, which has allowed it to retain a major international presence, has resulted from the global spread of Hello Kitty and the *yuru-kyara*.

The Japanese Government has taken notice of the proliferation and enthusiasm for Japanese culture that began to spread across the globe in the 1990s. In the hopes of nurturing this soft power, the government has created a program known as "Cool Japan (of which Cute Japan is an important facet)," to help support this growth. The government of Shinzo Abe has funneled more than $880 million[40] into what Iwabuchi calls "the active development of national cultural policy discussion and implementation aimed at further enhancing Japan's cultural standing in the world."[41] By following the doctrine of soft power, the Japanese government looks to ways in which to market aspects of its culture, namely a combination of cool and *kawaii.* The plan is to see a holistic, world-wide growth of appreciation for Japanese culture, because currently, "Japan's cultural exports have been of a random and piecemeal nature, and there has been no sustained attempt to exploit merchandising opportunities. This is because creative companies tend to be small or medium-size and lack the resources to establish a global presence."[42] This global presence is not only a response to the global economic force that China has become, but also to developing markets in other Southwest Asian countries. Journalist Roland Kelts continues: "At the same time, Japan is both alien to and suspicious of its rising Asian neighbors. In this respect, the timing of Cool Japan makes sense."[43] The program of Cool Japan is centered on the idea that Japan can build relationships with foreign countries by sharing its own culture, thus creating a system of cultural diplomacy. While Japan will constantly be in a struggle for economic superiority, it can achieve relevance through cultural spread.

It is equally important to analyze what Japan is marketing and spreading to these countries. While there are economic factors at work, it is important

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JapanSociology (blog), February 4, 2014, https://japansociology.com/2014/02/04/japanese-mascotization-marketing-and-imagined-communities/.

40 "Japan's Soft Power: Squaring the Cool," *The Economist*, June 16, 2014, https://www.economist.com/ banyan/2014/06/17/squaring-the-cool.

41 Iwabuchi, "Uses of Media Culture," 141.

42 Roland Kelts, "Japan Spends Millions in Order to be Cool," *Time*, July 1, 2013, http://world.time.com/2013/ 07/01/japan-spends-millions-in-order-to-be-cool/.

43 Ibid.

that Japan is placing an emphasis on the kawaii aspects of its culture. As discussed above, this "cuteness" serves as potential healing for alienation in the modern world. Japan hopes to foster relationships by demonstrating a non-coercive and cool culture. This kinder, softer Japan has appealed to other foreign countries, which is best observed through the creation of *yuru-kyara* ambassadors. May Masangkay in an article for The Japan Times reports that "some foreign embassies are not missing out on the chance to catch a ride on the massive mascot boom."[44] This attempt to forge stronger ties between cultures is best seen by Israel, who created an official *yuru-kyara* to represent the Israeli embassy in Japan. The reasons cited for this creation were to help with "problems of [Israeli] branding" in Japan, as well as what Ronen Medzini from the Israeli embassy calls presenting "the soft side or the real side of Israel."[45] The *yuru-kyara* ambassadors present a non-threatening face of a nation, allowing a country to participate in Japanese culture and promote their own interests as well. This practice of *yuru-kyara* ambassadors has spread to embassies from Latin America in Japan as well, demonstrating the government's commitment to cute diplomacy.

As a result of soft power, Japan has become a key practitioner of cultural diplomacy, a form of diplomacy in which ties are strengthened by the promotion of one country's culture. As author Nissim Otmazgin stated, "no doubt, cultural exports—and their recent marriage with soft power—are beneficial for the producing country as they present a friendlier, softer, image of this country abroad. Culture can also generate economic value for the producing country in the form of direct income."[46] Japan has commodified its culture to help promote its interests in the global community. Using the same principles as the *yuru-kyara* and Hello Kitty, Japan markets *kawaii* across the globe, with the knowledge of the positive way in which our brains react to cute. The commodification of cute has now evolved into a leading foreign policy for Japan.

44 May Masangkay, "Embassies in Japan Using Mascots as Cultural Ambassadors," *The Japan Times*, October, 18 2013, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/18/national/embassies-using-mascots-as-ambassadors/.

45 Ibid.

46 Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, "Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia," *Asia-Pacific Review*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2012): 54.

Conclusion

The character marketing industry within Japan quickly realized that its characters would be best complimented by a *kawaii* appearance. The resulting process of using cuteness to appeal to consumers would be known as commercial cute. Yet, this process did not happen randomly. On the one hand, a growing consumer group of women were eager to buy not only for their households, but also themselves. Cuteness appealed to this group; though, through observing several psychological studies, we can see that there is something cute for everyone. Whether it is a sense of empathy, nostalgia, or "healing," cuteness has a wide appeal, a fact that marketers are increasingly aware of. One of the ways cuteness was marketed was through Hello Kitty, a character originally created to promote cute goods. However, she quickly developed a huge following due to her ability to give intimacy and empathy in an increasingly isolated world. The *yuru-kyara* occupy a similar comforting spot in people's hearts. While both had noticeable economic impacts, it was the emotional aspect of both groups that brought them love and popularity. These cultural phenomena have formed part of Japan's new initiative to market its culture to the world and to increase its foreign standing and foreign relations through soft power.

To best understand this cultural phenomenon, this paper would like to return to the election of 2016 (the one for the *yuru-kyara*). Millions of people voted in this election, but this was not simply a competition of who was the cutest. People were voting for the heart and soul of their local community, the winner of which would become Japan's next top mascot.

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"The Serene Skies of Kobe" Memproes pf the Kobe Jewish Refugee Community, 1940-1941

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> We were not just in another country, but had entered an entirely different culture, with a very different mindset. And for a moment we were finally able to re-lax. We could stay in Japan for the rest of the war! We had only one question: where are they going to take us? We were told, "Kobe."[1]

In the early years of the Second World War, when the international community had effectively closed its doors to refugees, 4,608 European Jews[2] found haven in Japan, "in the hands of the ally of their most deadly enemy."[3] Approximately half (2,132)[4] had been granted visas by Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kaunas, Lithuania. Sugihara disregarded orders from his Foreign Ministry by issuing Japanese transit visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews who did not possess valid entry visas—to the United States, for example—that would guarantee the brevity of their stay

1 Samuel Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War: From Bialystok to Shanghai to the Promised Land, an Oral History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 76.

2 Pamela Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees, 1940–1941," *Japan Forum*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1991): 267.

3 Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swart, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews during World War II* (New York: Paddingtoess, 1979), 182.

4 Pamela Rotner Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 164.

in Japan.[56] Those lucky enough to receive a visa from Sugihara embarked on a journey across Russia via the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok, where they boarded a Japanese fishing boat that navigated across the Sea of Japan to Tsuruga, a small port on Japan's western coast. From there, the refugees travelled by rail to Kobe, a major military depot and Japan's second largest port.[7]

Although the Jewish refugee community in Japanese-occupied Shanghai has received attention in both the academic and popular spheres, its counterpart in Kobe has been largely overlooked,[8] perhaps due to the fact it was comparatively short-lived; the first refugees arrived in July 1940 and the last departed in September 1941.[9] Nevertheless, refugees' memories of Kobe are remarkably rich. In this paper, I analyze oral histories of the Jewish refugee experience in Kobe as examples of what Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey White and Lisa Yoneyama call "critical memories." In the introduction to *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama define "critical remembering" as a process that both "denaturalizes and dismembers" dominant memories and "recuperates... memories that have been distorted, disavowed, or effaced by the effects of power."[10] Memories of the Jewish refugee experience in Kobe are, by the definition of Fujitani et al., "perilous" for two reasons. First, there are fewer and fewer alive to remember this often overlooked subset of Holocaust memories. And second, their memories challenge—or at least complicate—dominant memories of World War II, principally by recalling an instance of Japanese moral superiority on the international stage. But, as Fujitani et al. point out, experience and memory are not independent of relations of power; for this reason, the author has asked not only how these oral histories challenge dominant memories, but also how power dynamics inform the memories articulated. To investigate this question, I use Michel Foucault's definition of power in "The Subject and Power" as

5 Sugihara collaborated with the Dutch consul in Kaunas to provide refugees with Curaçao entry visas, but their validity was uncertain. See Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees,* 114.

6 Ibid., 166.

7 Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees," 264-5.

8 Ibid., 257.

9 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 131.

10 Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 2.

"a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others [but] upon their actions."[11]

The strengths of the oral histories I have chosen to analyze are numerous, but they also have some limitations that should be acknowledged. Because I could only use sources accessible through Interlibrary Loan or online could be used, the diversity of the subjects is limited. For example, all are male. Although Samuel Iwry remembers most of the refugees as being young men,[12] there were also many refugee women and children.[13] In fact, another potential limitation is that two of the subjects (Andrew Glass and Leo Melamed) were children while in Kobe; I qualify this limitation with "potential," however, because their memories provide a visceral contrast to those of the adults. Furthermore, all but one of the subjects bring an American perspective to their testimonies, for only Enrique Kaczor did not ultimately end up in the United States, but in Chile. Given that all interviews were conducted between 1989 and 2011, one must also keep in mind that some of the subjects were aware of scholarly interpretations of wartime Japanese-Jewish relations, principally that put forward by Marvin Tokayer in his 1979 book *The Fugu Plan*. Finally, one of the subjects (Leo Hanin) was not a refugee himself, but was secretary of the Jewish Community of Kobe, the organization responsible for the refugees during their stay in Japan (and known by its telegram address, "Jewcom").

The Jewish community in Kobe predated the refugees' arrival, and was composed of about 25 families, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi.[14] Hanin relates that the former regarded the latter with some contempt because many were White Russian refugees, "stateless people" who had arrived in Kobe via China and Manchuria in the 1920s and 30s.[15] Most, including Hanin, were affiliated with the import-export industry.[16] In 1937, Anatole

11 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1982): 789.

12 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 77-8.

13 The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has many more oral histories—including some with female subjects—in their physical collections.

14 The number given by both Sakamoto (*Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 23) and Tokayer (*The Fugu Plan*, 124). Iwry remembers there being 50 families (*To Wear the Dust of War*, 76); Shatzkes agrees in "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees," but does not cite her source (265).

15 Leo Hanin, "Oral History Interview with Leo Hanin," video file, United States Memorial Museum, accessed October 14, 2016, http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn506762, 7:00.

16 Tokayer, *The Fugu Plan*, 122.

Ponve (neé Ponevejsky), who had grown up in Harbin, founded the Jewish Community of Kobe (for Ashkenazim), physically located in "a cluster of rooms in a narrow lane at the foot of the steep hills."[17] Although they had established a synagogue, the community was not very religious; "mostly," Hanin said, "our people played cards."[18] Indeed, Hanin's memories of the pre-war Jewish community are carefree: "[Life over there was] very easy. Being young, friends, social, parties, playing cards, travelling...."[19] The fact that the Jewish community was "like a club"[20] did not, however, impede their ability to organize upon the refugees' arrival; if anything, the community's fraternity would serve them well as they sought housing, funding, and visas.

Indeed, once the refugees arrived in Kobe, they had little contact with Japanese authorities. Jewcom was "in charge of [their] present lives and uncertain futures" from the moment the refugees arrived on Japanese soil and in many ways functioned as a pseudo-government.[21] Representatives of Jewcom (which received most of its funding from the United States Joint Distribution Committee as well as HICEM, a European Jewish relief organization)[22] met newly arrived refugees in Tsuruga and accompanied them to Kobe. "Hundreds of people started to come in," Hanin remembers. "Where do we put them? We need housing we need food.... There were problems. There were so many people. We had to have meetings every day. Food, distribution of money, getting visas."[23] Kaczor, a recipient of a Sugihara visa and one of the "hundreds" Hanin remembers, says, "The truth is that the Jewish community in Kobe helped a lot. They got us a house." ("La verdad es que ayudó mucho la colonia Judía en Kobe. Nos consiguió una casa.").[24] Iwry echoes Kaczor when he remembers that the "[vibrant] Jewish community in Kobe...took care of us."[25] Not only did Jewcom function as the refugees' government, but the refugees recognized it as such. They organized themselves in groups of engineers, doctors, miners, journalists,

17 Ibid., 123.

18 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 6:00.

19 Ibid., 8:45.

20 Ibid., 6:00.

21 Tokayer, *The Fugu Plan*, 134.

22 Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees," 265.

23 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 30:00.

24 Enrique Kaczor, "Oral History Interview with Enrique Kaczor," video file, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed October 14, 2016, http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn73272, 21:00.

25 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 76.

etc. and would send representatives to Hanin, the secretary of Jewcom, to sort out any difficulties that arose.[26] Hanin remembers a delegation of six rabbis who asked him to arrange for a shipment of Passover matza from New York; although American imports were forbidden in Japan, Hanin was able to secure the approval of Japanese authorities.[27]

What is of greatest Foucaultian import, however, is the fact that Jewcom kept the refugees' documents in a safe at headquarters; the refugees could not travel without them.[28] In this way, Jewcom circumscribed the movement of the refugees and "act[ed] upon their actions." Although it did so only as an intermediary between the Japanese government and the refugees, the fact is that Jewcom's control of housing, documents, and finances (those without financial resources of their own were given an allowance of 1.5 yen each day)[29] led refugees to recognize it as the most immediate institutional authority in their lives. Hanin relates a story in which a woman, accompanied by her child, came to see him at the Jewcom office:

> She says, "I need money to go to Yokohama" [to see the American consul]. I said, "The Community does not have money for that purpose. The money we get from the Joint is for food, for clothing, rents...." "Okay," she says. She had a bracelet. She says, "Here, take this." I said, "This is not a pawn shop, Madame. This is the Jewish Community. I'm sorry." [She said], "Take my child!" It was painful, and young as I was, I wanted to cry.... So what does one do? I said, "How much is the ticket?"[30]

"That remained in my mind for all those years," Hanin reflects. "I'll never forget that." He shifts uncomfortably in his chair as he tells the story and sighs before moving on. Evidently, even at the time of his interview 50 years later (in 1989), Hanin continued to be preoccupied by this encounter in which he struggled to maintain his position of authority, but eventually succumbed to his humanitarian inclination to aid a desperate woman.

A requisite of Foucault's theory is that the subject of the power relationship—the individual or individuals whose actions are acted upon—

26 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 41:30.

27 Ibid., 40:00.

28 Ibid., 36:00.

29 Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees," 266.

30 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 39:15.

must have a "means of escape or possible flight."[31] One might point out that the refugees were stuck in Japan without valid destination visas and were quite literally unable to "escape," therefore rendering the relationship between the refugees and Jewcom something other than a Foucaultian relationship of power. For Foucault, however, escape and "insubordination" are one and the same.[32] Hence, Hanin's anecdote about the woman desperate to travel to Yokohama not only reveals that Jewcom circumscribed the movement of the refugees (or, as Foucault might say, "structure[d] [their] possible field of action"),[33] but demonstrates just how fitting Foucault's theory is. Is the woman's insistence not an overt act of insubordination—of resistance to Jewcom's power over her actions—and therefore evidence of the power relationship that existed? That being said, while Foucault theorizes that insubordination will culminate with the authority figure forcing the insubordinate to submit,[34] the encounter in the Jewcom office ended with Hanin bending to the refugee woman's request, thus weakening both his and Jewcom's authority. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that Jewcom was, essentially, a humanitarian organization, the refugees' wellbeing its end goal. Indeed, it should be stressed that Jewcom's authority was by no means adverse to the refugees' interests, nor should the extent of its power be overemphasized; rather, what we can conclude is that Jewcom was the most immediate institutional authority in the lives of the refugees.

Jewcom was, however, subordinate to the Japanese government. After all, as "stateless people," Jewcom officials were little more than refugees themselves. Sakamoto argues that "Jewcom was successful because it nurtured relations with [Japanese] officials."[35] One Japanese man was an instrumental ally to the Community in this regard: Abraham Kotsuji. A Hebrew scholar and Jewish convert as well as a past official of the South Manchurian Railway,[36] Kotsuji functioned as an intermediary between Jewcom and the Japanese government, and was responsible for extending the refugees' visas so that they would be able to remain in Kobe for up to eight months (instead of the original seven to fifteen days allowed by the

31 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 794.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 790.

34 Ibid., 794.

35 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 141.

36 Ibid., 109.

Sugihara transit visas).[37] In his memoir, Kotsuji recounts a meeting with the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yosuke Matsuōka, during which Matsuōka advised Kotsuji that the local prefectural government in Kobe might extend the visas despite the Foreign Ministry's refusal to do so. "The easiest way" to get the prefectural government to extend the visas, Kotsuji writes, "was to buy them, not by obvious bribery, but with liquor, parties, and small gifts."[38] Although Iwry was not involved in the administration of Jewcom, he had a sense of the situation: "The Kobe committee [Jewcom] and the Japanese officials that they were friendly with allowed us somehow to stay for months and months, as we needed. Somehow the necessary bribes were paid."[39] Sakamoto points out that Jewcom spent $923.90 on New Year's gifts for Japanese officials between November 1, 1940 and February 15, 1941, further suggesting the Kobe Jewish community's willingness to invest in positive relations with the government.[40]

In fact, Jewcom overall managed to maintain its institutional authority, even in the eyes of Japanese officials. The representatives who met the refugees in Tsuruga were "so thoroughly recognized by the Japanese Government," Jewcom vice president Moise Moiseff observed in a 1941 report to HIAS, "that even American Jews have found themselves unable to land until the Kobe Jewish representative has given his consent."[41] There were, in fact, instances in which Jewcom asserted their institutional agency by resisting the Japanese state. Hanin remembers two Japanese officials who, suspecting that there were Soviet spies among the refugees, asked him to examine each of the refugees' passports for false photographs. Hanin refused. "As far as I'm concerned all the Jews are Jewish refugees.... We don't ask who they are [or] what they are," he remembers responding. "You don't want to cooperate with us?" they asked. To which Hanin replied, "I'll cooperate with you.... But I have no time to look at each passport, there are too many of them."[42] Resistance also took less innocent forms. Fifty of the refugees decided they wanted to serve in the British army, and working with the British consul in Kobe, Jewcom "smuggled" them out of

37 Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees, 1940–1941," 266.

38 Abram Kotsuji, *From Tokyo to Jerusalem* (New York: B. Geis Associates, 1964), 163.

39 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 77.

40 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 141.

41 Ibid., 94.

42 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 36:00.

Japan. "We had the names of the people who wanted to volunteer," Hanin remembers. "I would call up the British consul, meet him in a bar, and over a couple of beers I would give him the names. He would arrange to have them assigned as crew members on British cargo boats that were sailing from Japan to India [or] to Singapore."[43]

Although Jewcom was the most immediate institutional authority in their lives, the refugees were also subject to the power of the Japanese state. "Somebody was looking at you, all the time watching you," Hanin remembers.[44] "Immediately after I sat down on the train," Iwry reflects, "a security person would also sit down...to ask questions."[45] The authorities were not the only suspicious ones; one of the Kobe neighborhood associations (*tonarigumi*) was suspicious of the yeshiva students and "their endless humming and singing" until they decided they were "religious fanatics" and "harmless."[46] Kaczor recounts getting lost on a walk in his Kobe neighborhood shortly after arriving in Japan. Eventually, he asked a Japanese civilian to show him to the police station. "When I arrived at the police station, they asked me when I arrived in Japan, in what [ship] I arrived, what my name was, and they found me [in some documents]. [Then] they took me to my house!" (*Cuando llegué a la policia, me preguntó cuando llegué a Japón, en que llegué, como me llamo, y me encontró. ¡Me llevó hasta mi casa!"*).[47] This story reveals not only the thoroughness of Japanese records, but also the fact that the authorities were keeping track of the refugees.

Sakamoto argues that the refugees felt safe "even if they felt they were being watched"; indeed, Iwry, Glass, and Melamed all peripheralize memories of hardship. Melamed, for example, remembers "the serene skies of Kobe,"[48] while Glass reflects that "living in Japan was a lot of fun."[49] One might argue that these glowing memories are symptomatic of their youth while in Kobe (Melamed was eight years old and Glass five), yet Iwry, who was a young man at the time, mentions something similar:

43 Ibid., 34:00.

44 Ibid., 8:15.

45 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 78.

46 Ibid., 79.

47 Kaczor, Oral History Interview, 20:50.

48 Kinue Tokudome, "The Mission Sugihara Would Be Proud of," in *Courage to Remember* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1999), 97.

49 Andrew Glass, "Oral History Interview with Andrew Glass," audio file, United States Holocaust Museum, accessed October 14, 2016, http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn516539, 58:00.

"The charm of pre-war Japan."[50] Hanin, on the other hand, who was not a refugee, acknowledges that refugee life in Kobe was difficult: "One tatami mat for two people, no pillows, no blankets, nothing," he says of the living conditions upon the refugees' arrival. "People crying, were upset. It was painful."[51] Tokayer recounts a few distressing incidents that came to pass in the refugee community, including the arrest of two refugees charged with spying,[52] and the assault of a rebbe and a rabbi by a group of Nazis on a train to Tokyo.[53] Of the refugees, however, only Kaczor, when asked why he didn't want to stay in Japan, emphatically responded, "there was nothing to eat there [in Japan]" ("*No había nada de comer allá.*").[54] Otherwise, memories are overwhelmingly positive. The only "unpleasant moment" Melamed recalls is a small earthquake.[55] As Sakamoto argues, refugees' experiences were no doubt colored by the sense of relief they felt at having escaped Europe,[56] relief palpable decades later in their oral histories. "And for a moment we were finally able to relax," Iwry writes of his arrival in Japan. "We could stay in Japan for the rest of the war!"[57] Melamed echoes Iwry: "When we got to Japan, [everything] changed. [There was] no real fear, no one was chasing us. It was as if someone suddenly lifted the curtain and a new world came upon us."[58]

Just as significant as this sense of relief were the "gestures of friendship from locals";[59] Japanese civilians' kindness brings refugees to remember "the charm of pre-war Japan" and "the serene skies of Kobe" when they were in fact living under difficult conditions in a country that was merely "tolerat[ing] their presence."[60] Indeed, memories of Japanese civilians' kindness challenge Allied memories of "Japan as enemy." "One day," Iwry remembers, "a delegation of Japanese came over, to our place where we lived, in the little street in Kobe. [They were] carrying little blue and white

50 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 85.
51 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 38:30.
52 Tokayer, *The Fugu Plan*, 149.
53 Ibid., 172.
54 Kaczor, Oral History Interview, 26:10.
55 Leo Melamed, *Escape to the Futures* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 49.
56 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 143.
57 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 76.
58 Tokudome, "The Mission," 102.
59 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 143.
60 Kotsuji, *From Tokyo to Jerusalem*, 166.

flags with a Star of David, and they brought us food, saying the two Hebrew words, very clearly *b'ruchim, haba'im* which means 'welcome.'"[61] Hanin recalls a Doctor Yoshimura, who cared for the refugees and would not accept payment.[62] Glass's memories of being a "street kid" and "learning Japanese quickly" are indicative of Japanese acceptance of the refugees.[63] "For years and years, my mother would talk about the gentleness, courteousness and friendliness of all the people in Japan...," Melamed reflected, "there was this feeling of friendship."[64] In fact, although the situation in Kobe might be considered unique—"there was traditionally a warm feeling of mutuality and cooperation between the Japanese and the foreigners" in the city[65]—the fact that Japanese subjects acted despite pervasive anti-foreign sentiment and anti-Semitic propaganda circulated by the Japanese government[66] complicates conventional understanding of the Japanese consumption of state power. "Kobe's entire Japanese population tended to respond to the refugees with one sympathetic word: *kawaisō*, 'poor unfortunates,'" Tokayer writes.[67]

The refugee experience in Kobe, therefore, was shaped by relations with Jewcom, Japanese authorities, and interactions with Japanese civilians. How did the refugees respond to the unfamiliar power dynamics at play in their lives? I will focus on Iwry here, since an adult perspective is necessary and his oral history is more thorough than Kaczor's. Iwry's reflection on the Jewish Community of Kobe is revealing in a number of ways: "It was a vibrant community, of 50 or so families.... Now, there were too many of us for them.... [But] we were well taken care of. It was not at all like my escape to Vilna."[68] The impression one gets of Jewcom from Iwry's description is not of an institutional authority; rather, he paints a picture of a supportive but overwhelmed group of families. And in many ways, they were, for as pointed out earlier, Jewcom officials were little more than refugees themselves. However, it is revealing that Iwry remembers the community as being composed of 50 or so families, when Sakamoto and

61 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 82.
62 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 37:15.
63 Glass, Oral History Interview, 58:00.
64 Tokudome, "The Mission," 102.
65 Tokayer, *The Fugu Plan*, 122.
66 Kotsuji, *From Tokyo to Jerusalem*, 161.
67 Ibid., 129.
68 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 77.

Tokayer agree that there were only 25 (some of whom were Sephardic, and therefore not associated with Jewcom). It is possible that by the time Iwry arrived in Kobe, other refugees had become involved in the administration of Jewcom, but his overestimate may also suggest the comprehensiveness of the assistance provided to the refugees. Indeed, the contrast Iwry sees between his escape to Vilna and that to Kobe is particularly interesting. In Europe, Jews had to fend for themselves as they fled from one city to another, seeking haven; the fact that there was a community—a benevolent institutional authority, though Iwry may not have recognized it as such—caring for them in Kobe was no doubt a relief.

In fact, Iwry's impressions of the Japanese are reminiscent of his response to Jewcom: "The Japanese were fair to us, even though we were foreigners," he reflects.[69] "It was a real wonder that we, who came only half-legally to Japan, received the same rations as everybody. We even had special permission to buy two eggs per week."[70] Given that the Japanese were infamously wary of foreigners, these reflections betray Iwry's surprise—even "wonderment"—that they were as "fair" and caring as the refugees' fellow Jews. Subject to rationing like ordinary Japanese citizens, the refugees were not immune to the power of the state. But taken together, Iwry's impressions of Jewcom and the Japanese reveal that he (and perhaps we can consider him representative of the majority of the refugees) perceived the exertion of authority in terms of the succor it provided. Indeed, the relief they felt upon escaping Europe and arriving in Japan not only colored the refugees' experiences, but their collective response to authority. As can be gleaned from Hanin's reaction to the refugee woman, resistance was not customary; overall, the refugees demonstrated complicity out of gratitude, if nothing else.

Let us now return to the questions that underpin this analysis: How do power dynamics inform the memories articulated in these oral histories? And how do they challenge dominant memories? In the introduction to this paper, I claimed that memories of the Jewish refugee community in Kobe complicate dominant memories of the Second World War, principally by recalling an instance of Japanese moral superiority on the international stage. Scholars, however, are conflicted about the extent to which the Japanese government's decision to accept the refugees does, in fact, demonstrate humanitarianism. Most agree that the move was driven by some ratio of

69 Ibid., 80.

70 Ibid., 81.

pragmatism to humanitarianism; while Sakamoto emphasizes pragmatism, Shatzkes argues that "Japan has received inadequate recognition for her part in helping Jewish refugees."[71] To consider the intentions of the Japanese government is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is necessary to ask if the memories analyzed here support Shatzkes' claim that the Japanese should receive moral commendation for their role in rescuing 4,608 European Jews from the Holocaust. To do so will be to shed light on the nature of critical remembering in these oral histories.

Sakamoto's distinction between "individual Japanese [who] continued to treat refugees with kindness" and Japanese officials who were made uncomfortable by the refugees' presence[72]—a distinction, in other words, between the Japanese people and the Japanese state—is key. Melamed makes a similar distinction when describing wartime depictions of the Japanese in the US, where he and his family ended up in early 1941:

> When the war broke out between Japan and the United States in 1941, the propaganda, of course, was very anti-Japanese.... And I had difficulty with that because I remembered that Japanese were such a nice people.... These weren't the people I knew. But these movies only showed Japanese soldiers. So, pretty soon I got an impression in my mind as a child, "Well, soldiers are different from regular people."[73]

Melamed is clearly—and self-consciously—engaged in critical remembering by complicating dominant Allied memories of World War II. But he also differentiates between soldiers and "regular people," or representatives of the state and subjects. Hanin does something similar when he says, "Sugihara got instructions from Japanese government to stop issuing visas but he didn't listen. He saved the people..."[74] Here, he makes a distinction between the Japanese government and Sugihara, that is, between state and subject. However, Japanese civilians, Sugihara and the Japanese state are easily conflated, even by the same individual who at another point differentiates between them: "[I] have never forgotten the profound truth that Japan saved our lives," Melamed wrote to Sugihara's

71 Shatzkes, "Kobe: A Japanese Haven for Jewish Refugees, 1940–1941," 268.

72 Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 143.

73 Tokudome, "The Mission," 102-3.

74 Hanin, Oral History Interview, 29:15.

wife in 1991.[75]

Thus, the extent to which the refugees challenge dominant memories varies not only from oral history to oral history, but from moment to moment. Both Iwry and Hanin accept Tokayer's explanation that Japan accepted the refugees out of self-interest; "they considered the Jews a useful people," Iwry says.[76] But this belief does not dampen memories of their time spent in Japan. Perhaps the distinction between the state and subject, when made, allows them to reconcile Japan's status as an Axis Power with the fact that the Japanese government saved them from the Holocaust. Jewcom's role also cannot be overlooked. Indeed, the refugees' day-to-day lives—and therefore their memories—were shaped less by the Japanese state than by Jewcom, which acted on their actions in a Foucaultian sense.

Central to the theory of "critical remembering" is the fact that "memory work continually figures and refigures the past...for present purposes."[77] Yet memories of the Jewish refugee community in Kobe have largely been absent from contemporary "memory work." Why? "Dominant narratives," Fujitani et al. write, "have tended to nationalize memories of the war."[78] Refugees' lives, by definition, transcend national boundaries, leading their memories to be excluded from the dominant order of historical knowledge. The memories of the Jewish refugees of Kobe are no exception, for they fit into neither Japanese nor American post-war narratives. In Japan, the focus immediately after the war was on collective victimhood and national atonement; where did 4,608 Jewish refugees fit into this narrative? In 1999, in reaction to a rise in Japanese anti-Semitism, Kinue Tokudome published her volume of Holocaust testimonies, in which her interview with Melamed appears. Otherwise, excluding the attention Sugihara has received for the past few decades, memories of the Jewish refugee community in Kobe continue to fall without the bounds of collective memory, no doubt due in part to contemporary Japanese ambivalence about multiculturalism.[79]

Many of the refugees ultimately ended up immigrating to the United

75 Tokudome, "The Mission," 97.

76 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 78.

77 Fujitani et al., *Perilous Memories*, 1.

78 Ibid., 7.

79 For example, see Chris Burgess "Japan's 'No Immigration Principle' Looking as Solid as Ever." *The Japan Times*, June 18, 2014, accessed December 15, 2016. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/06/18/voices/japans-immigration-principle-looking-solid-ever/#.WFCI33eZPeQ.

States, where memories of Japan's wartime benevolence to European Jews would most certainly have been considered "dissonant."[80] The story might be expected to have arisen early in the Cold War, when the US sought to recast Japan as an American ally in the fight against Communism; however, collective shame about not accepting Jewish refugees during the war—in addition to persistent American anti-Semitism in some quarters—no doubt conspired to keep the refugees' stories in the margins of collective memory. Furthermore, as survivors who escaped Europe in the early years of the Holocaust, refugees' memories do not have the same urgency as those of concentration-camp survivors. That being said, in 2000, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum organized "Flight and Rescue," an exhibition about Jewish refugees during the war, which foregrounded the Kobe and Shanghai refugee communities. Whether or not the refugees consistently challenge dominant memories in their oral histories, the fact remains that they are engaged in critical remembering. They "unsettle and challenge established epistemological boundaries and categories"[81] simply by bringing the collective to question dominant narratives themselves and participate in the work of critical remembering.

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80 Fujitani et al., *Perilous Memories*, 7.

81 Ibid., 2.

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Painting the Void:
Chan Buddhism in Guanxiu's Eighteen Luohan (Arhats)

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Though many religious traditions find complement, representation, and focus in artistic practice, there is perhaps no more fitting example of the interconnected lifeblood of the two disciplines than Chinese painter Guanxiu's *Eighteen Luohan*. Composed by a Chan Buddhist master acting on inspiration imparted to him through divine dreams, this series of eighteen hanging scrolls is both a depiction of great spiritual masters and an invitation to join their ranks. A departure in style from previous Chan works, *Eighteen Luohan* displays in ink and light color each of the eighteen named followers of the Buddha in a moment of repose in nature. Each occupies his own silk hanging scroll and is pictured performing a different meditative practice, composing his limbs in a symbolic mudra or reading a bit of sacred script. In seeming stark contrast to their restful bodily positions, the enlightened masters bear the marks of lives of strict ascetic devotion to the Buddha; their limbs are scarred and hobbled, with their thin skin stretched tightly over worn bones. Rather than inviting pity or scorn, these wasted figures, so contrary to contemporary ideals of beauty, are meant to inspire their viewers. Though not considered a sacred text or image, *Eighteen Luohan* serves as sublime meditation nonetheless, providing a throughway from the artist's immense spiritual power to that of his subjects in a warm, optimistic embrace of the Buddha spirit and all who seek to realize it.

Guanxiu, originally called Jiang Guanxiu, was born in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province in 832 A.D. He entered a Chan monastery as a young child and, as per Buddhist custom, dropped his family name in a gesture indicating his renunciation of earthly ways and aspiration to understand more perfectly the Dharma, or the teaching of the Buddha. Like all adopted Dharma names, the

name Guanxiu bears a symbolic, aspirational connotation meant to inspire its bearer to greater spiritual heights; it means "stream of blessings."[1] Later in life, Guanxiu moved to the Shu-Han capital Chengdu and earned a position in the court of the Shu prince Wang Jian. He served with such distinction in that position and demonstrated such spiritual mastery that he was granted the honorary title "Chanyue Dashi," or "Great Master Meditation Moon," and presented with a purple robe, a ceremonial gift offered only to high-level monks.[2] While in court, Guanxiu studied painting under Yan Liben and made a name for himself as a master of poetry, drawing, and cursive writing in the *caoshu* (cursive) style. In 880, inspired by his Buddhist training and a series of meditative dreams, Guanxiu began to paint a series of ten arhats, which were the legendary original disciples of the Buddha. This initial series of ten images formed the basis of what would eventually be eighteen distinct hanging scrolls and the cornerstone of Guanxiu's legacy.

Guanxiu was not the first to paint a series of arhats, nor would he be the last. The tradition hails from Indian Buddhist tradition, which holds that the arhats were the Buddha Sakyamuni's original disciples, enlightened through their own efforts and endowed with transcendent wisdom. Their function, as assigned by the Buddha himself, was to protect the Dharma until the coming of Maitreya, the future Buddha.[3] These original arhats were also ordered to become *futian*, or "fields of merit," "so that people [could] garner great merit through their virtuous acts."[4] Originally composed of sixteen members, the original group of arhats received offerings made by lay Buddhists to monks, monasteries, or the Buddha and ensured the donors received their due benefits. Clearly, the arhats played an essential mediating role for aspiring Buddhist masters, offering up good deeds on their behalf and ensuring proper heavenly communication. It is natural, then, that Buddhist artists all across the world would be moved to paint the spiritual masters whose very existence helped them along their spiritual journey. Unfortunately for medieval Chinese artists, however, when they first learned

1 Dawn Haney, "What's in a Dharma Name?," *Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, December 11, 2012, accessed October 20, 2018, http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/whats-in-a-dharma-name/.

2 Candana Karuna, "The Tradition of Buddha's Robe," *Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia*, accessed October 29, 2018, www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/The_Tradition_of_Buddha's_Robe.

3 Stephen Little, "The Arhats in China and Tibet," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 52, no. 3 (1992): 255.

4 Bong Seok Joo, "The Arhat Cult in China from the Seventh through Thirteenth Centuries: Narrative, Art, Space and Ritual" (PhD diss,. Princeton University, 2007), 52.

of the legend of the arhats, they received very little information about the identities of the sixteen masters in question. This left devoted artists with little choice but to fill in the gaps with their own cultural tradition, imbuing the arhats with Confucian and conventional Chinese morals.[5] Though they were depicted widely throughout the Tang Dynasty, the sixteen arhats were not assigned names until the monk Xuanzang translated *A Record of the Perpetuity of the Dharma* from Sanskrit into Chinese.

Had Guanxiu lived in India instead of China, his series of arhat paintings would almost certainly have been capped at sixteen. In China, however, traditional canon allowed for two other assemblies of Buddhist masters not acknowledged in other parts of the world. The first grouping of arhats to differ from the characterization in *A Record of the Perpetuity of the Dharma*, the 500 arhats, "[represented] a large crowd of unspecified arhats" and was never a feasible number of portraits to paint.[6] Evidently, the number 500 was frequently used in Buddhist teachings to signify a large gathering of any number of objects, inanimate or living. Besides that, there was no reason for Guanxiu to attempt to depict so many figures as there was no specific reference to the 500 being part of the initial group of arhats designated by the Buddha to protect the Dharma. The question remains, then, where the last two figures in Guanxiu's series came from. The earliest mention of a painting of eighteen arhats can be found in Su Shi's poem "Song for the Eighteen Arhats Painting of Zhang of Jinshui," but even that work does not indicate the origin of the mysterious final two *luohan*.[7] Some scholars have suggested that, since they are frequently depicted subduing Daoist symbols such as tigers and dragons, the inclusion of the seventeenth and eighteenth arhats is a veiled assertion of the superiority of Buddhism over Daoism.[8] Not only does this seem like a somewhat aggressive stance for such a solemn art piece to take, it also seems unlikely to be the true explanation of the inclusion of the last two masters, as dragons and tigers also appeared in works featuring only sixteen arhats. Marinus Willem de Visser offers an alternative explanation, suggesting that the increase to eighteen *luohan* references the significance of the number nine in Daoist tradition, while Thomas Watters proposes the change was made in allusion to the Tang

5 Ibid., iii.

6 Ibid., 112.

7 Ibid., 121.

8 Ibid., 127.

Dynasty organizational practice of grouping eighteen scholars together to study.[9] Perhaps the most reasonable explanation for Guanxiu's inclusion of two extra *luohan* is his own. Having no canonical descriptions of the arhats to paint from, Guanxiu was forced to come up with his own reference images. Rather than use human models to approximate the divine spirituality of his subjects, Guanxiu turned directly to his subjects, praying that they reveal themselves to him in dreams; according to *The Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*, "[Guanxiu] said that whenever drawing each honorable one, [he] had to pray to have the true appearance of the arhat in his dream. Only then was [he] able to accomplish this."[10] It has also been said that the arhats approached Guanxiu of their own volition, having been informed of his artistic and spiritual mastery. Though the appearance of the arhats was unknown to his contemporaries, Guanxiu was able to capture what is now accepted as the likeness of the arhats through intense spiritual communion and meditation. Given the unconventional circumstances under which Guanxiu created his work, it might be most accurate to say that he painted eighteen arhats not for any secular or political reason, but rather because eighteen, rather than sixteen, figures appeared to him in his dreams and called out to be painted.

To appreciate fully Guanxiu's great spiritual and artistic achievement, it is necessary to understand Chan Buddhism, the religious foundation of his life and work. Chan Buddhism, which rose to prominence in China beginning in the 6th century, is a pursuit of fundamental, universal understanding characterized by meditation, contemplation, and immersion. Devotees seek enlightenment through introspection, opening themselves up to the essence of things. According to the master Dōgen Kigen, "to learn the Buddhist way is to learn about oneself. To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to perceive oneself as all things. To realize this is to cast off the body and mind of self and others."[11] In theory, meditation constitutes an attempt to experience one's own identity in absolute harmony with that of the Buddha. The waking tranquility of a meditative posture is reflective of this communion with the Buddha nature; in the same way that a practicing monk finds balance between a waking and a relaxed mind, so he must also

9 Ibid., 128.

10 Qtd. in Ibid., 88.

11 Qtd. in Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa, "Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings," *Artibus Asiae* 40 (1996): 11.

seek understanding of his own identity in union with the Buddha. Given that meditation is such a cornerstone of Buddhist practice, it is unsurprising that all eighteen arhats in Guanxiu's series are painted in moments of reflective repose. Their faces are peaceful; their bodies arranged among rocks and trees in traditional meditative poses. Some display mudras, or symbolic gestures of the hands and bodies, to further facilitate their spiritual communion with the Buddha. Compositionally, the arhats tend to occupy roughly half of the hanging scrolls on which they are painted, seeming to indicate their realization of balance and tranquility between themselves and their environment. Their eyes are closed to the physical world but open to the spiritual one, and the implication of their restful expressions is an immense peace with oneself and the universe.

A sect of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Chan thinking holds that theory and intellect cannot lead to enlightenment, because they ignore the spiritual in pursuit of mastery of the physical and analytical—neither of which are conducive to true, transcendent openness to the world. Intellect concerns itself with the exterior world and its machinations, whereas Chan Buddhist meditation is directed towards the interior of all things. This rejection of the concrete and exterior precludes adherence to religious documents or doctrine, as transmission of truth is regarded to be an intensely personal, and therefore interior, act. Chan Buddhism can consequently never be taught; the best masters can only point to the mind of their students and hope their example of enlightened practice makes clear the path to true immersion with the world. This passing on of personal religious experience from master to student cannot be undertaken verbally, though of course there exist verbal cues to spur on enlightenment. One such method of masterful encouragement is the *gong'an*, or "magistrate's table," a paradoxical spiritual quandary meant to inspire enlightened thinking. According to one prompt, a monk asks his master, "Whenever one has a question, one's mind feels confused. How is that so?" To which the master replies, "kill, kill!"[12] These puzzles cannot be understood by rational thought, which, as previously mentioned, is antithetical to the kind of holistic, all-encompassing immersion that enlightenment requires. In keeping with the anti-textual nature of Chan Buddhism, few of the painted arhats are pictured meditating with written aid. Rather, they sit in the solitude of their own minds and their own hanging scrolls, traveling the winding, deeply personal road to enlightenment

12 Ibid., 14.

without significant external aid. They are alone both compositionally and mentally, their meditation largely unhindered by physical distraction. Of course, since meditative tools and resources are not forbidden to Buddhist practitioners, some pictured masters, like the Angaja arhat, are depicted holding scriptures, rosaries, fans, and walking staffs. The idea behind the rejection of such objects and texts is merely that no Buddhist should rely on external or verbal stimuli to attain internal and abstract understanding.

This emphasis on strictly anti-logical, anti-verbal meditation has inspired many Chan Buddhists through the ages to turn to visual art, which also exists in the inexplicable liminal space between word and meaning. Thus, the Chan art object serves as a simile or metaphor, a vessel of spiritual communion, an attempt to render comprehensible the incomprehensible by nonverbal means of pictures. Chan art requires "silent, patient self-absorption" from the viewer, because it expresses a worldview experienced from within.[13] Upon closer inspection, everyday objects reveal a lofty spirituality, as Chan Buddhism affirms the importance and innate beauty of even the most mundane item. The goal of a work of Chan art is to unveil mysteries that cannot be put into words, and the goal of a Chan artist is to become one with the subject at hand: "To become a bamboo and to forget that you are one with it while drawing it—this is the Zen of the Bamboo," writes Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki.[14] In a way, then, the lengthy process of composing the series of arhats enhances Guanxiu's connection with the divine. No doubt the act of praying, dreaming, and writing the piece allowed the artist ample time to contemplate his being and the Buddha spirit, and achieve greater spiritual mastery. In a historical sense, too, creating *Eighteen Luohan* allowed Guanxiu to become one with his subject matter, as his portrayal of the arhats has become definitive and his name has become synonymous with the work; to say "eighteen *luohan*" is to think of Guanxiu and to say "Guanxiu" is to think of the arhats. This idea of becoming one with the subject of meditation or artistic practice is not uniquely Chan; in fact, it represents a profound meeting of Chan, Daoist, and Confucian ideas brought about by the overlap between monastic, noble, literati, and imperial Chinese art traditions. According to Daoist thought, the Dao resides in all things and manifests itself everywhere, composing a "doctrine without words"

13 Ibid., 11.

14 Qtd. in Ibid., 18.

that lends itself well to Chan artistic production.[15]

Given the abstract, fluid nature of the Chan understanding of the world, it is unsurprising that there is no definitive Chan artistic style or iconographic canon. Largely free of formal rules or restrictions, Chan artistic practice encourages artlessness as a reflection of communion with inner truth. On principle, Chan art should be simple, objective, pure, and respectful of nature; the Japanese Chan master Shin'ichi Hisamatsu posits seven qualities that define Chan art: asymmetry, simplicity, unadorned loftiness, spontaneity, spiritual depth, unworldliness, inner serenity.[16] Though perhaps unintentionally, Guanxiu's *Eighteen Luohan* conforms to all of these principles. The masters tend to be located in the corners or towards the sides of their respective hanging scrolls, achieving the requisite asymmetry, and their minimal use of color and line reflects a simplicity and unadorned quality. More striking than their compositional qualities, however, are the arhats' spiritual depth. As divine beings whose very appearance is unknown on Earth, the arhats are truly not of this world, as though they have never existed in it. They have, in a sense, so masterfully immersed themselves in the spiritual realm that they have managed to completely avoid contact with the spiritual world. Even the painted arhats' origin in Guanxiu's mind contributes to their otherworldliness; having appeared to the artist in a dream, they may be said to reside in the subconscious, rather than in the physical world. Scholars and even some of Guanxiu's contemporaries have posited that the *luohan*, with their "thick eyebrows and big-eyes, elongated jaw and voluminous nose… [have] the appearance of barbarians" or foreigners, to which observation the artist responded that "[those are what] he saw from his dream."[17] Of course, the assumption of foreignness is only partially correct. While the *luohan* do indeed hail from somewhere other than China, their true, otherworldly provenance is profoundly outside of the scope of unenlightened human imagination.

In contrast to the loftiness of its subject matter, Chinese religious painting tends to deemphasize formal symbols as seen in Western art in an effort to embrace the beauty and spirituality of everyday objects. Indeed, Guanxiu's arhats are far from divinely beautiful. In contrast to the religious artworks of his contemporaries, Guanxiu's work does not pay homage to secular

15 Ibid., 17.

16 Ibid., 38.

17 *The Record of Famous Painters of Yizhou*, qtd. in Joo, "The Arhat Cult in China," 86.

beauty standards, attempting instead to inject his images with a spiritual element. His arhats do not display the physical marks of the cultural elite in conformation with their society's physical ideals; rather, the *luohan* appear gaunt and sickly and are clothed unfashionably. The grotesqueness of the arhats' bodies emphasizes the goodness within—their unhealthy and wasted bodies displaying the outward result of intense spiritual effort. The hollow cheekbones, overgrown eyebrows, exposed ribcages, and knobby limbs of the figures reflect long lives of asceticism and stoicism spent fasting, meditating, and resisting temptation. Clearly, rejection of the physical world can take a heavy toll on the body that has been transcended. Since any normal human would likely be unable to sustain a harshly ascetic lifestyle to the point of such physical deprivation, the arhats' degradation emphasizes their otherworldly spiritual devotion. So enlightened are the *luohan* that they resemble the Buddha even in appearance, with their elongated earlobes, flowing robes, and mudras all recalling traditional depictions of the Buddha. By societal standards, their bodies are remarkable solely in their ugliness, but that is only because their religious mastery has necessitated a separation from earthly ways and a lean into the spiritual realm.

As indicated by its focus on unpacking the spirituality of the seemingly mundane, Chan art is rarely intended to establish contact between the mortal and the divine; rather, it tends to serve as effigy, admonition, stimulant, seal, or general expression of ideology. So strong is some Chan Buddhists' aversion to using specific texts and images as religious objects that some monks destroy their own written records. Questioning the use of sacred images and texts is not seen as iconoclasm in the Chan tradition, but rather as a thoughtful deconstruction of misguided attempts to render concrete the ephemeral and otherworldly. Accordingly, images should focus on human masters of meditation, rather than such transcendent beings as the Buddha. Old masterpieces, then, are intended not as images to be worshipped, but rather as a means to attempt unity with the masters who painted them and perhaps gain insight into their enlightened ways of thinking. Thus, Guanxiu's series of arhat paintings is not intended to serve as an object of worship; rather, it is meant to help lay Buddhists focus their thoughts and achieve a greater understanding of their own faith. As previously stated, even the best masters can do nothing more than point their students towards enlightenment and equip them with meditative tools to guide them on their individual path. The pictured *luohan* are, indeed, the best masters of Chan

Buddhism that exist, and as such, they can do no better as instructors than to appear to the faithful, as in Guanxiu's dreams, and show them the way to enlightenment. With the great artist's help, the arhats are able to fulfill their mediating role between Buddha and mankind even more perfectly, as their renewed corporeal presence on earth allows them to continue influencing and inspiring lay Buddhists. Guanxiu's art, then, is a sort of visual signpost enhancing believers' connection to the universe by facilitating contact with the original arhats. This communion-by-proxy reflects an understanding of art-making as a simultaneously discrete and continuous process, wherein the product of a moment of creation is clearly in existence (implying the completion of said act), but the experience of perceiving the piece in a specific instant in time and the spontaneity of its brushwork constantly breathes life into it anew.

As to the formal components of Chan painting, along with style and content, much is left to the discretion of the artist. Though there are no set guidelines, many portraits of Chan masters make use of black ink and blank white backgrounds. Sometimes, in pursuit of maximal fidelity to representation, Chan Buddhist artists will incorporate light color into their pieces, as is the case with Guanxiu's arhats. As befitting the intention of the work, it makes logical sense that Guanxiu, having prayed, meditated, and dreamed on the true appearances of the legendary *luohan*, would utilize all formal methods at his disposal to realize the subjects of his visions on silk. Also, in keeping with Chan painting norms, Guanxiu's work features natural elements in the background. Surrounded by trees and stones, the eighteen arhats are at peace with themselves and their environments, paradoxically having transcended the physical world while being fully present in both their bodies and the natural world. Some scholars have postulated that Guanxiu added the natural backgrounds to his work after having seen other popular arhat images in Sichuan.[18] Even without the inclusion of trees, however, Guanxiu's series would still conform to Chan art ideals in its retention of large areas of blank white silk. Rather than being negative space without meaning, the un-inked white page in Chan art represents the incalculable void. Emptiness of being, a prerequisite for understanding the self and reaching enlightenment, is an essential aspect of Buddhist reflection, which means that white space is equally important to painted portions of Chan artworks; according to Donald Keene, "the two worlds, the material and

18 Ibid., 91.

the non-material [represented by ink and its lack, respectively], are both essential."[19] As previously mentioned, even with the addition of the natural backgrounds, the *luohan* occupy only half of the scrolls on which they are painted. This leaves plenty of room for contemplation of the Buddha nature with which Chan practitioners seek communion, understood as the "absolute void," an "open expanse, empty and bright."[20] The tranquil expressions of the arhats has already been noted, but that enlightened stillness is amplified by proximity to the void; though they are surrounded by what can only be described as the incalculable mystery of eternity, the *luohan* smile gently, their minds and bodies at one with their surroundings both metaphysically and in terms of artistic style. Many Chan artworks further evoke the void through their use of flying white, which appears as fleeting fragments of white paper left untouched by dry, distressed brushstrokes, the void and substance locked by a flick of ink into a continuous dialogue. In a world of division and intellect, the flying white serves as a reminder of the possibility of union and intuition. Even the solid lines delineating the subject take on new life, their fluidity and wetness seeming to imply the ultimate lack of division among things; only thin strokes of ink separate the masters from the void, yet they remain resolute and calm.

The simplicity of the interplay between black ink and white page denounces splendor and evokes the void, emphasizing naturalness, accidentalness, and internality. Flowing ink washes, and broad, swift strokes (including broken ink and splashed ink techniques) express the spontaneity and honesty inherent in traditional Chan Buddhism while simultaneously allowing the expression of immediate and fleeting thoughts. Guanxiu takes a slightly different approach. His strokes are decorative, intricate, and delicate, and as in all *gongbi*, it is clear that the figures have been written with painstaking precision. It took fourteen years for the master artist to complete his series of eighteen *luohan*, and that expanded timeframe is clearly visible in the intricacy of the final product. The care with which their bodies have been inked indicates that the pictured arhats did not achieve enlightenment in an instant, as a more *xieyi* or freehand approach might have suggested. Rather, one can imagine them remaining in meditative positions as pictured for all fourteen years of Guanxiu's composition, undergoing great pains in their efforts to achieve complete immersion of the

19 Qtd. in Brinker and Kanazawa, "Zen Masters," 51.

20 Ibid., 55.

self. The aforementioned emaciation of the arhats' bodies also contributes to the sense that their road to enlightenment has been paved with difficulty and suffering. In the extended timeframe of their composition is reflected the painful, lengthy process of becoming a religious master. Neither the meticulous art nor the elevated mental state it depicts were realized in an instant; in that way, the form of the art piece befits the achievement of both its subject and its creator.

Broadly, Guanxiu's work can be said to exist in the ultimate liminal space between spirituality and artistic practice. From conception, the piece was designed to bridge the gap between the spiritual world and the material, revealing the physical image of a group of masters of divinity while refusing to confine them to the burden of earthly beauty standards. In revealing the ascetic desecration of his subjects, Guanxiu reveals the inextricable link between spiritual growth and physical decay, and his alternating use of ink and blank page recalls the interplay between the corporeal world and the void (a concept which contains in itself the duality of everything and nothing). The arhats themselves represent a correspondence between the Buddha and the Buddhist, and their willingness to reveal themselves to Guanxiu in a dream implies a further link between the divine Chan masters and the earthly one. In a way, the Buddha's advocates on Earth find in Guanxiu an advocate for themselves, bringing their image to the people so that they may continue their heavenly summons to protect and promote the Dharma. Through *Eighteen Luohan*, the arhats achieve a creative partnership with the artist and a meditative participation with the viewer, culminating in a work that is pleasurable to look at and that facilitates for all involved a journey of learning, being, unlearning, and ultimately understanding.

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Depictions of Korean Masculinity in *The Marines Who Never Returned*

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Throughout Korea's cinematic history, Korean films have reflected different renditions of masculinity as influenced by the surrounding historical events. War movies, in particular, generally promote a version of masculinity based on violence and demeaning women. This paper will analyze *The Marines Who Never Returned* (1963), a war film from the Golden Age of Korean Cinema in the 1960s, to show how men demonstrated their masculinity and how depictions of masculinity were constructed in the wake of the Korean War. Specifically, this will be achieved by analyzing the story arc of a soldier named Kim Hae-bong and by analyzing the brothel as a site of masculinity.

Content analysis was used to analyze the film. Content analysis is a research method that involves coding texts to systematically examine and interpret patterns. This method was used to examine both the textual and visual elements of the film. I made note of various dimensions of masculinity and wrote down each instance a man performed any of these actions: stayed strong in the face of danger or pain, saved someone, showed emotional vulnerability, treated women badly or as lesser, asserted dominance, was rewarded for an act of heroism, or talked about his manhood. By writing down these instances, I was able to compile a list of noteworthy occurrences regarding masculinity to analyze. To provide a historical context for the analysis, research will include the use of secondary sources to examine the

gendered conditions at the time.

The Marines Who Never Returned[1] was a 1963 South Korean film directed by Lee Man-hee and written by Jang Guk-jin. It tells the story of a group of Korean marines who fought during the Korean War. Lee was given the Best Director award at the Blue Dragon Film Awards in 1963 and the Grand Bell Awards (Daejong Film Awards) in 1964.[2] Lee was among the most prolific Korean directors until his death at age forty-three.[3] He was born in 1931 and grew up during the time of Japanese occupation.[4] Lee had himself served in the Korean War and therefore could draw on his own experiences in the making of the film.[5] *The Marines Who Never Returned* was his third film and was largely sponsored by the Marine Corps.[6] The film's sponsorship by the Marine Corps is an important detail to note because such sponsorship can lend itself to the creation of propaganda. With the sponsorship, Lee was able to produce the film on a grand scale, and it became the highest-grossing film of the year in Korea.[7]

In this film, one can see the beginnings of President Park Chung Hee's nationalist discourse. From 1961-1963, Park, as the Chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, launched the ideology of official nationalism with themes of "self-reliant defense" based on fierce anti-communism and "national character."[8] He deemed cinema as an especially effective medium for propaganda, and aimed to spread anti-communism by revising the Motion Pictures Act and strengthening film censorship and other institutional measures.[9] *The Marines Who Never Returned* was one of the anti-communist films produced in large numbers after 1962.[10] Until 1966, large-scale war movies comprised the most dominant sub-

1 In Korean, the title is 돌아오지 않는 해병.

2 "The Marines Who Never Returned," Korean Movie Database, *Korean Film Archive*, n.d.

3 Hayley Scanlon, "The Marines Who Never Returned (돌아오지 않는 해병, Lee Man-Hee, 1963)," *Windows on Worlds*, 2017.

4 Jun-Hyoung Cho, "Director Lee Man-Hee: His Life and Movies," trans. Han Nool Lee, *Korean Film Archive*, n.d.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Seungsook Moon, "Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea," in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36.

9 Hye-Young Park, "Korean Anti-Communist Films during the Cold War," trans. Free Film Communications, *Korean Film Archive*, n.d.

10 Ibid.

genre of anti-communist films.[11] Although the film may seem like a blatant anti-communist film on the surface, the film was critical of the war itself. Unlike other anti-communist propaganda films, it emphasized elements of humanism and questioned the very nature of the Korean War, with both Koreas being collateral damages of the Cold War between the superpowers.[12]

The film is 110 minutes long, and I watched with English subtitles. The film depicts the story of a squad of marines who participate in the Battle of Incheon against Chinese soldiers during the Korean War. Near the beginning of the film, a mother and daughter run through the battlefield and only the girl, named Young-hui, survives. The soldiers rescue the girl and adopt her into their squad. At first, she is hidden away so that their superiors do not find out about her presence. Later, the superiors give their approval, and she becomes the squad's mascot and a symbol of everything they are fighting for. The soldiers later go to a brothel, but their visit is cut short by an emergency. The soldiers must leave Young-hui and confront the incoming Chinese soldiers on the battlefield. The squad is placed at the front lines and all but three soldiers are dead by the end of the film.

In order to better understand the masculinity depicted in this film, it is necessary to examine past constructions of Korean masculinity. During the Choson dynasty (1392-1910), the idealized masculinity model among commoners included physical prowess and toughness, but it had to be balanced with a demonstration of loyalty to central Confucian values.[13] Confucian values made men structurally relevant members of society and relegated women to social dependence.[14] At the top of Korea's social hierarchy were the *yangban*. The idealized masculinity model for the *yangban*, especially those hailing from scholarly lineages, differed greatly from the commoners. Masculinity in the *yangban* meant conforming to the ideal of being an impassionate leader and of having a great sense of duty and righteousness without being violent.[15] The refined, aesthetic restraint of a scholarly neo-Confucian gentleman contrasted greatly with the unrestrained,

11 Ibid.

12 Cho, "Director Lee Man-Hee: His Life and Movies."

13 Vladimir Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation: Gender Ideologies in Traditional Korea and in the 1890s-1900s Korean Enlightenment Discourse," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 66, no. 4 (2007): 1040.

14 Myung-hye Kim, "Transformation of Family Ideology in Upper-Middle-Class Families in Urban South Korea," *Ethnology*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1993): 70.

15 Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation," 1042.

physically tough and powerful commoner.[16]

Several factors in the early 1900's led to the militarization of Korea. For instance, Korea's experience of Japanese colonization (1910-1945) heightened the status of warriors tremendously.[17] There began to be a focus on physical strength and patriotic sentiment. As written in an article by Kim Huison during this time period, it was stated "the vigor of the nation was dependent on the state of the nation's physical fitness."[18] It was believed that physical weakness of the nation would lead to a weakened "spiritual or mental strength."[19] During these years of Japanese colonization, the model of the patriotic and strong man emerged as an ideal of masculinity. This model combined the previous versions of masculinity of the scholarly gentleman and the physically tough commoner.[20] In addition, a new vision of masculinity began to permeate into Korean society through Japanese translations or adaptations of European ideologues and moralists.[21] These new Western ideas caused Koreans to blame colonization on effeminate Koreans, and to praise and glorify the military tradition of honor and patriotism.[22]

As a result of the Korean War, there was an increased emphasis on militarized national security and the sentiment of a need "for a strong military for decades to come."[23] The military service functions as a way to define manhood because the state has considered the system of universal male conscription the desirable method to recruit soldiers to protect the nation from the impending threat from North Korea.[24] Since its establishment in 1957, the mandatory military system requires all able-bodied, young men of the age of 19 and above to serve in the military for twenty-six to thirty months.[25] The compulsory military service of men in Korea has played a

16 Ibid., 1045.

17 Hoon Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ? The Military and the Catholic Church as Sources for Modern Korean Masculinity," *Society of Christian Ethics*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2012): 76.

18 Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation," 1056.

19 Ibid.

20 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 77.

21 Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation," 1047.

22 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 77.

23 Ibid., 78.

24 Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Masculinity," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 91.

25 Ibid.

large role in instilling military ideals.[26] Aside from instilling military ideals, the compulsory service has also had a large impact on imparting militaristic ideals of masculinity. Mandatory military service is seen as a rite of passage for men. Ideal constructions of Korean masculinity require one to have undergone the hardships of military service. Therefore, participation in military service is required for one to be taken seriously as a man. This military culture reinforces "macho" conventions and forces soldiers to endure like "real" men.[27] Some of these conventions can be seen through the film. However, participation in military service does not automatically make one a man. Men must also conform to the aspects of the ideal military man.

By studying numerous documents, Cho Song-suk observed three common aspects of the ideal military man:

> The real man (chinjja sanai), (a) via common expressions and indoctrination of male supremacy, endures everything with superhuman toughness and fortitude; (b) via the rationalization of power, he accepts authoritarianism and strives for that power for himself; and (c) via sex as amusement or entertainment, he relieves stress by belittling women or by using demeaning sexual words, gestures, and actions. [28]

Throughout the film, Kim Hae-bong, a soldier played by actor Kim Yun-ha, is constantly ridiculed for not being masculine enough. I will use focus on the third observation to analyze the actions and words of Kim and see how he compares to this ideal man. Soldiers who do not fit neatly into these expectations are often treated abusively.[29] Most of the abuse that Kim receives is verbal. Near the first quarter of the film, Young-hui, the young girl they adopt, comes up with nicknames for all of the soldiers, and she gives him the nickname of "big sister (*unnie* 언니)."[30] Out of all the nicknames she gives, it is perceived as the most insulting. The other soldiers are given unflattering nicknames such as hairy-beard, big nose, and toad, but the soldiers simply laugh when they hear this. When Young-hui calls Kim, "Big sister. Because you're a girl," Kim stands up violently and

26 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 78.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 79.

29 Ibid.

30 Man-hee Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned* (Dae Won Films, 1963), 28:16.

says, "you little…".[31] This is due in part to the way in which nationalism has been constructed in Korea. The official nationalism pushed by President Park Chung Hee (1961-1971) and other military regimes constructed the nation as "the community of men and defended by men, in which women exist merely as a precondition."[32] Women are represented as subordinate to men in official nationalism.[33] Thus, being branded a girl or woman makes one as both subordinate to other men and an outcast to this community of men as described in nationalistic discourses.

Mid-way through the movie, the soldiers get the opportunity to visit a brothel called the Lucky Club. Many of the other soldiers act as described in the third observation of an ideal military man. They relieve "stress by belittling women or by using demeaning sexual words, gestures, and actions."[34] When they arrive at the brothel, the men whistle and wink at a prostitute who in turn looks at them with a displeased expression. One of the soldiers says, "Oh, sexy. Sister, you've got a great body, and I bet you have a great heart, too."[35] The prostitutes are remarked on and appraised by how good their bodies look. While the other soldiers are excited to have sex with the prostitutes, Kim backs away when one of the prostitutes approach him.[36] In fact, he doesn't go into the room with the prostitute until his squad commander stares him down. His stiffness and reluctance to have sex with the prostitute breaks with the third observation Cho made about the ideal military man. In this aspect of masculinity, manhood is measured by how many women a man has slept with.[37] Even the prostitute seems exasperated with Kim's unmanly behavior. She says, "You act just like a girl."[38] Kim takes offense to this and stands up and says, "Men treat me like a girl; women treat me like a girl. I'm going to prove today that I'm a man."[39] Kim then starts to aggressively take off his clothes, implying that through sexual conquest of women, he will become a man. Unfortunately for him,

31 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 28:25.
32 Moon, "Begetting the Nation," 52.
33 Ibid., 57.
34 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 79.
35 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 44:35.
36 Ibid., 50:40.
37 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 80.
38 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 56:15.
39 Ibid., 56:20.

an emergency arises, and he is unable to prove his manhood at that time.

By bragging about their sexual prowess, these soldiers distinguish themselves clearly from homosexuals. Men who fail to adhere to hegemonic standards of masculinity are at risk of being labeled as gay. Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men, and gayness represents all that has been symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity.[40] Although Kim is not labeled as gay, his sexuality comes into question during his reluctance to go into the room with the prostitute. However, the film makes it clear to the viewer by the end of the scene that he is not homosexual. It is fear, not lack of sexual interest that inhibits him.

The soldiers' visit to the brothel is especially important as a site of masculinity because this brothel is normally off limits to Korean men. The madam says, "This place is for UN soldiers far from home fighting for our country."[41] Therefore, although sex for amusement and pleasure is a key part of the ideal Korean military man, these Korean soldiers do not have access to this resource. Naturally, there is some resentment. This brothel is the only one on the mountain, so they have nowhere else they can go. The soldiers feel that the situation is unfair, and they feel entitled to these sexual services. When the squad commander tells the soldiers that the brothel is off limits to Korean soldiers, one soldier responds, "That's what bothers me. We're fighting on the same front. Why shouldn't we too feel a woman's…"[42] Another soldier chimes in and says, "Just want to have some fun before I die, sir."[43] This enforces the idea that the soldiers see sex as a source of entertainment. When the soldiers try to go the brothel anyways and are told to leave, one of the soldiers breaks something. The madam demands payment for the damaged goods, and the squad commander says, "As long as we pay, it's okay?"[44] She says yes, and the soldiers start completely trashing the place while cheekily handing the prostitutes money as compensation. They resort to violence to express their dissatisfaction. There is both a sense of resentment that the brothel is off limits to them and a sense of entitlement to the services of these women that leads them

40 R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 78.

41 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 45:56.

42 Ibid., 22:23.

43 Ibid., 22:26.

44 Ibid., 47:11.

to feel justified in wreaking havoc. In a way, it is portrayed as cathartic to the soldiers. Instead of relieving their pent-up stress and anger through sex, they can do it through violence. The madam eventually gets them to stop their destruction and says, "Tonight is a night for patriotic domestic goods. For this one night, we decline foreign goods."[45]

Although this brothel was open to all UN soldiers, the U.S. troop presence stood at about 60,000 in the 1960's, and the U.S. effectively had command over the Korean military through its role as head of the United Nations forces in Korea.[46] Therefore, the brothel probably mainly served U.S. soldiers. Moreover, when the foreign soldiers came to the closed brothel, the Korean soldier who comes out to greet them calls them "made-in-USA soldier."[47] During this time, the U.S. was superior in economic, military, and political capabilities compared to Korea,[48] and Korea relied on the U.S.' help in the war. Since sex is so important to constructions of masculinity, through the designation of the brothel as off-limits to Koreans, foreign powers could be seen as suppressing Korean masculinity. It is these conditions that make it a particular powerful moment when they are able to claim the brothel as their own. In doing so, they are also reclaiming these Korean women who serve foreign soldiers. For one night, the U.S. soldiers do not have the upper hand in the situation. It is a point of pride for their identity as Korean soldiers that they are able to claim a place normally reserved for foreign soldiers.

In the military, women are often seen and talked about as objects of sex to be dominated and used at will.[49] An example of their demeaning actions occurs when one of the soldiers stuffs cash compensation for something he broke under the neckline of a woman's dress and then kisses her without warning. The soldiers view the women, especially prostitutes, as lesser. One of the soldiers says, "Get this straight—we're dying for people like you too."[50] This statement conveys their disdain for people like prostitutes.

Military service itself is a major element of hegemonic masculinity. It

45 Ibid., 50:09.

46 Katharine H.S. Moon, "Prostitute Bodies and Gendered States in U.S.-Korea Relations," in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 1997), 148.

47 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 52:17.

48 Moon, "Prostitute Bodies and Gendered States in U.S.-Korea Relations," 148.

49 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?," 80.

50 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 46:46.

acts as a mechanism that essentializes and naturalizes gender differences, which reinforces the dichotomy of the masculine provider and the feminine housewife.[51] When they must part with Young-hui, one of the soldiers says regretfully, "Stubborn little kid. If she were a boy, she'd make fine marine material."[52] Although Young-hui has traits that would make for being a great marine, she is limited by her gender. The American produced version of this film, *Marine Battleground*, takes place after the events of this film. In the film, Young-hui survives the war and dedicates her life to nursing, inspired by the protectiveness of the Marines who saved her.[53] Since she cannot become a marine, she chooses a career important to the war effort that still embodies ideas of femininity, such as care-giving.

The belief in the inherent differences between men and women are highlighted through Kim's comments toward the end of the movie. At the end when the soldiers are stranded on the frontlines after completing their mission, Kim volunteers to run and contact command for reinforcements. He says to the squad commander: "Of course, I'm a man like a girl, not brave or strong. And more than anyone, I have a strong attachment to life. But the only thing is, I have a sense of responsibility. I'm the signalman. If we can't make radio contact, I feel it's my duty to go make contact in person, sir. If I succeed, acknowledge that I am a man."[54] In his statement to the squad commander, Kim acknowledges his unmanliness through his lack of bravery or strength. These traits are so central to conceptions of manhood that not having them makes one feminine. In talking about his strong attachment to life, he conveys the idea that he lacks the ability to die for the nation, an essential trait for those serving in the military. He goes against the collective ethos of "sacrifice of the individual for the sake of a larger goal, that is, the military security of a nation."[55] Since he lacks these essential masculine traits, he describes himself as a girl. Girls, and by extension women, are therefore cowardly and weak. They cannot protect and must be protected. This sentiment of men as providers was supported by law between 1960 and 1990.[56] Throughout the film, we see

51 Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Masculinity," 101.

52 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 56:48.

53 Robert J. Lentz, *Korean War Filmography: 91 English Language Features through 2000* (McFarland, 2008), 215.

54 Lee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, 01:29:05.

55 Choi, "Brothers in Arms and Brothers in Christ?"

56 Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Masculinity," 101.

how Kim feels insecure about his masculinity and how he tried before to prove himself by attempting to have sex with a prostitute. However, he is able to overcome his limitations through his sense of responsibility to his teammates, suggesting he is willing to die for his teammates. He hopes to prove his manhood by doing this "heroic deed." However, when analyzing how the plot unfolds, his "heroic deed" does not cast him as the masculine military hero in the end, especially when compared to the actions and the ultimate fates of the other soldiers.

When he reaches command, they tell him their situation is too urgent, and they cannot send reinforcements. Kim makes his way back to the base, finds Young-hui, and hugs her in an emotional embrace. Meanwhile, the Chinese soldiers are overrunning the rest of the soldiers. The soldiers die one by one until the Chinese soldiers suddenly retreat. Until they die, each one of the soldiers continues to shoot and kill the enemy. Aside from Kim, there are only two soldiers who survive at the end, and one is severely wounded. The film ends there with them still on the battlefield. Since the Chinese soldiers retreated, it seems likely that they make it back alive, but their survival is not certain. As viewers, our sympathies go to the soldiers who died, and the two soldiers left who watched all of their fellow soldiers die. From the title of the film, *The Marines Who Never Returned*, it is clear who is being honored. Knowing how the film ends, Kim's actions seem especially non-heroic and feeble in comparison. His heroic action of risking his life to contact command ends up being completely useless as command is unable to send reinforcements. In addition, the act required him to run away from the battlefield while his compatriots fought to the death. He is the only soldier we know who survived for sure, yet there is no glory attached to his survival.

Constructions of masculinity in the military in the wake of the Korean War can be seen through an analysis of *The Marines Who Never Returned*. Through the character arc of Kim Hae-bong, one can see how masculinity was defined in terms of femininity and in a way that positions women as lesser. The film offers a fairly narrow definition of masculinity. Kim's lack of conformity to masculine ideals throughout the movie ultimately results in the least heroic end for him compared to the other soldiers in the film. Admiration and a sense of patriotism are felt for the men who died fighting on the battlefield. That same sense of admiration is not cast on Kim, who is shown to not meet the masculine ideals. In addition, the brothel serves

as an important site of masculinity. Through their interaction or lack of interaction with the prostitutes, the soldiers demonstrate how masculine they are. Furthermore, as a brothel that is normally off-limits to Korean soldiers, the brothel is representative of the oppressive force by foreign powers on Korean masculinity and the ways in which the Korean soldiers fought against that. Through this paper, one can get a better sense of the military masculine ideals of the 1960's as shown through film. As the highest grossing Korean film of that year, this movie helped viewers to define the image of masculine Korean men as strong, patriotic, and brave.

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Exploitation Through Healing: Colonial Histories of Subjugation beneath Imperial Japan

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Abstract

Associations between medicine and healing are challenged through this investigation of Imperial Japan's (1895–1945) history of implementing colonial healthcare. Through the lens of Foucault's social theory term "biopower," three focused inquiries (regarding economic history, social history, and women's history) pertaining to Japan's history of governing colonies serve to reveal and clarify complex networks of imperial intentions and outcomes, the colonies' resistances and defeats, and the combined influences of Japan and its colonies over one another's historical trajectories. Economic study reveals pre-imperial Japan's biomedical, educational soft-power over China, positioning the nation for future conquests that implemented biopower. The colonies' social histories reveal that Japan not only internationally imposed its own public health institutions to execute operations of biopower, but also that it appropriated institutions from native colony culture and used them to subjugate the bodies of colonial individuals and societies. The study of biopower over female bodies reveals the core sociopolitical sentiments which motivated and perpetuated Japan's actions of forcible medical modernization throughout their half-century long imperial reign.

Introduction

Japan's fifty years of imperialist colonial reign (1895–1945) profoundly impacted both Chinese and Korean history by way of forcefully implemented medical institutions that defied and ultimately annulled aspects of the colonies' native and local cultures. The empire perceived itself as a "civilizer" of "primitives," modernizing its colonies by imposing a national culture which had been recently westernized and now employed western strategies of statecraft.[1] Biomedicine spearheaded modernization efforts, penetrating all aspects of the colonies' societies with a rhetoric that invalidated local culture's medicinal practices in favor of Japan's newly adopted modern/Western sciences. Thorough investigations of Japan's colonial medical programs have revealed that the nation's motives for colonial modernization were not about mere cultural superiority or public health-oriented humanitarianism; they were methods of subjugation and exploitation. Through modernized public health systems, as well as new biomedical practices and philosophies, Japan wielded what the social theoretician Michel Foucault called "biopower" over the peoples of its colonies, subsequently exploiting them toward ends of imperial growth. This paper analyzes some of the particulars of Japan's biopower-driven exploitations by observing the empire's colonial medical histories through three cultural lenses: economics history, social history, and women's history. Understanding the individual implications and intersections of these three colonial sub-histories reveals and clarifies complex networks of imperial intentions and outcomes, the colonies' resistances and defeats, and the combined influences of Japan and its colonies over one another's historical trajectories.

Within the context of her studies of Japanese imperialism, Jin-Kyung Park defines biopower as "the political administration of bodies and the calculated management of life, [which] was marked by the proliferation of a multitude of techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations."[2] Defined in this way, biopower is central to the three sub-histories studied throughout this paper.

Before Japan began exacting its imperial ambitions, it modernized

1 John E. Van Sant, "Japanese Empire," in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History* vol. 3, ed. William H. McNeill, Jerry H. Bentley, and David Christian (Great Barrington: Berkshire Publishing, 2005), 1045.

2 Jin-Kyung Park, "Bodies for Empire: Biopolitics, Reproduction, and Sexual Knowledge in Late Colonial Korea," *Korean Journal of Medical History*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2014): 207.

through the Meiji Restoration (1868), a period in which the newly ascended Emperor Meiji adopted Western practices of culture and government. One of the major fixations of the restoration was medicine. Universities, especially, became points of national focus, adopting Western methodologies and using them for medical research and development.[3] Japan had long observed Western nations' colonization of and efforts to modernize various parts of Asia. Modernizing its own medical practices was a strategic political maneuver with the purpose of preserving Japanese independence and ensuring national progress.[4] Japan aimed not only to fend off Western encroachment upon itself, but upon Asia as a whole.[5] As Japan modernized, its views of neighboring nations became disparaging, seeing other Asian nations as in need of guidance and assistance in order for them to civilize toward modernity.[6] Possessing modern technology, desiring to keep the West out of Asia, and also perceiving itself as a superior nation and culture, Japan had both the motivations and the means to siege and conquer.

Japan's major efforts of colonization were situated in Korea, Taiwan (briefly known as Formosa as it transitioned from Chinese to Japanese rule), and several territories, such as Manchuria and the Liaodong Peninsula, which are parts of current-day China. This paper will adhere to the present-day names of these historical nations. Thus, Taiwan is differentiated from China, and the mainland territories which now constitute parts of China will henceforth be referred to simply as "China" unless finer historical or geographic context is necessary. Japan acquired Taiwan through the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, at the conclusion of the First Sino–Japanese War; Korea, along with eastern portions of China, were ceded to Japan after the Russo–Japanese war and its resultant Portsmouth Treaty of 1905.[7] Within these colonial territories, Japan reigned until the conclusion of World War II, implementing modern medical practices with varying degrees of success, consistently using modernization as a vehicle of biopower, with which it subjugated and exploited colonial peoples. We now turn to an analysis of

3 Van Sant, "Japanese Empire," 1045.

4 Roberto Padilla II, "Western Medicine in Imperial Japan," in *Japan at War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Louis G. Perez (Santa Barbara: ABC-Cilo, 2013), 468.

5 Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 138.

6 Rustin Gates, "The Dōjinkai and the Promotion of Japanese Modernity in China, 1902-1937," *Studies on Asia Series V*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2016): 72.

7 Van Sant, "Japanese Empire," 1046–47.

those efforts along three different lines of inquiry: economic, social, and women's history.

Economic History

It is important to note that Japan's influence was not always militant or direct; rather than harshly enforced modernization, Japan had in the pre-imperial period influenced by way of soft power. This poised the nation for success in its later efforts of international expansion. Pre-colonial instances of international scholastic exchange of medical studies provided mutual economic benefits to Japan and China. In a joint analysis of Japanese and Chinese modernization, Hu Cheng remarks upon Japan's frequent presence in Chinese public medical literature. For example, Shanghai newspapers frequently featured advertisements for Japanese works in Chinese translation, "popularizing medical knowledge translated by students who studied abroad in Japan."[8] These translated works' common presence indicates the sustained international profitability of Japanese medical scholarship, as well as the publicly exhibited influence which Japan held over China. Japan's student translators were a central pillar of the intercultural foundations which Japan eventually exploited during its imperial era.

Japanese medical presence was not only apparent as a product displayed in literature, but also as a body of medical knowledge that permeated China. Cheng writes about a substantial occupancy of western-trained doctors in China. Their presence was the result of Chinese students studying medicine in Japan, then returning to their homeland with knowledge of westernized practices.[9] Japanese-educated Chinese scholars provided a base population of preemptively modernized/westernized academics and medical practitioners, softening what would have been harsher cultural upheavals during Japan's eventual conquering of several Chinese regions. Influential Chinese figures such as Zhang Zhidong, a public official of the Qing dynasty, encouraged students to study in Japan—rather than seeking Western schooling—for geographic convenience, economic practicality, and cultural closeness.[10] Mutually evading Western influence, Japan and China were in many ways

8 Hu Cheng, "The Modernization of Japanese and Chinese Medicine (1914–1931)," *Chinese Studies in History*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2014): 84.

9 Ibid., 80.

10 Ibid.

symbiotic in their modernizations. Japan, however, would eventually utilize that relationship as an advantage during international expansion, rushing the cultural breach which soft-power exchange had created in Chinese society.

Japan's soft-power influences in China were much due to happenstance, as historical figures like Zhang demonstrate. The Japanese Empire's immense biopower, in large part, may also have been, or at least had begun as, unintentional. Imperial medical-economic influences are visible in Taiwan through records such as average height among the common population. In a paper that debates societal progress made in colonial Taiwan, Stephen Morgan and Shiyung Liu highlight an arc of common quality of life across the island's colonial timeline: a consistent rise in citizens' average heights during the early 1900s revealed a temporary period of progression in local health, but by the 1930s such positive development began to stagnate.[11] The reason for these fluctuating colonial conditions is Japan's hierarchy of concern, a top-down philosophy of government resource delegation. Japanese "colonial officials, troops, and developers" were prioritized over "indigenous laborers or immigrants."[12] This philosophy of resource delegation establishes what is possibly the largest factor of colonial exploitation: imperial disregard for the basic well-being or humanity of colonial subjects. Japan's hierarchy of concern was the foremost force influencing Taiwanese life—"wages and consumption were kept low to repatriate profits to Japan."[13] Though the subjugation of colonies was a widely intentional endeavor for Japan, the empire's principal source of biopower—the fuel of their exploitation—was their disregard, their authority and ability to ignore colonial welfare, such as in Taiwan, by siphoning resources.

The advent of such disregard is when Foucault's biopower actualizes—Japan's power over the bodies of colonial populations weakened them through neglect, making their subjugation all the simpler, igniting a cycle of exploitation motivated by imperial politicking. Japan viewed their colonial subjects primarily as a human infrastructure for the empire, a source of labor and capital—a population not to be considered or cared for beyond their use. When convenient or advantageous, Japan allowed Taiwanese progress

11 Stephen L. Morgan and Shiyung Liu, "Was Japanese Colonialism Good for the Welfare of Taiwanese? Stature and the Standard of Living." *China Quarterly*, no. 192 (2007): 1009.

12 Shiyung Liu, "The Ripples of Rivalry: The Spread of Modern Medicine from Japan to its Colonies," *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2008): 63.

13 Morgan and Liu, "Was Japanese Colonialism Good for the Welfare of Taiwanese," 995.

in public health: "However repugnant the economic, political and social discrimination inherent in colonialism: they [the Taiwanese] were taller, healthier and lived longer lives."[14] But that repugnant and discriminatory power relationship was fragile; the more industrial 1930s saw less concern for the native Taiwanese population, and historically documented signifiers of public health, such as height and lifespan, diminished or stalled.[15]

Social History

While, at the broadest level, Japan's public health driven interactions with its colonies were motivated by resource managing political operations, the specific means of Japan's subjugative practices were social, as was their capability to exploit. Social power, for Japan, converted directly into biopower. With an uncivilized, infrastructural, and inhuman visage of colonial populations, the Japanese Empire, as an enormous international authority, seldom had reason to consider its colonies' populations as made up of individuals worth providing or caring for. That separation—whether conscious or unconscious, individual or institutional—is the social core philosophy which enabled Japan to so vigorously exploit its colonies by regulating their cultures and ideas.

For the success of such regulations, Japan camouflaged itself and its biopower from colonial populations by appropriating their indigenous social systems and manipulating them. The relationships between colonizer and colonial subject are often disguised; a colonizer's colonial interactions being totally public would make the colonizer an easy target—an obvious power that is responsible for the ills of a colony. One example of this larger reality is Japan's takeover of the Taiwanese's *Hokō* system (known as *baojia* under Taiwan's previous Chinese rulership). The *Hokō* system implemented social responsibilities through a hierarchy of communities, scaling from individual households up to regional populations.[16] *Prescribing Colonization* describes this imperial-colonial institution as a main link in the connection between traditional Taiwanese culture and Japan's newly established imperial institutions. *Hokō* was designed to provide population

14 Ibid., 1016.

15 Ibid.

16 Michael Shiyung Liu, *Prescribing Colonization: the Role of Medical Practices and Policies in Japan-Ruled Taiwan*, 1895-1945 (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2009), 58.

oversight through reports and checkups.[17] By adopting it and incorporating its own imperial police force into it, Japan was able to inherit a social infrastructure that could be used not only to administer Taiwan, but also to surveil and dominate it.

The police forces instituted by the Japanese Empire, in efforts to modernize the colonial territories, policed not only crime but sanitation as well. In China, there was police enforcement of sanitary expectations in public settings and in private ones, ranging from outdoor garbage disposals to home tidiness.[18] These policemen, as an upper portion of the *Hokō* chain of command, employed Taiwanese locals to modernize the populous' healthcare. Native *Hokō* representatives were used as instruments of coercion, convincing their fellow natives to be vaccinated.[19] Japan not only adopted *Hokō*, but infiltrated it, denying medical agency to the populace by planting imperial agents. Further diminishing local medical agency, the police were mandated to arrest those who "claimed to cure diseases with magical powers," persecuting native systems of belief as criminal, framing modern/Western medicine as the morally sound alternative.[20]

In China, there was the *Dōjinkai*, an organization employing different methodologies for similar culturally infiltrative means of colonial modernization. The Japanese phrase *Dōjinkai* itself is an item of propaganda—it means "The Association for Universal Benevolence"[21]—appealing to moral, belief-based sentiments to advertise modernization as non-Western. This deliberately termed organization bypassed the foreignness which made it difficult for Western imperial forces to occupy and modernize Asia. Whereas Western colonizers often associated medicine with religion, the *Dōjinkai* was secular, providing China with opportunities for medical modernization with far less of a focus on shifting Chinese culture from its inherited traditions.[22]

Similar to the dilemmas of *Hokō* and *Dōjinkai*, Korea was also subject to cultural infiltration and social manipulation. Representatives of native ethnicity often accompanied imperial authorities as a method of diffusing

17 Ibid., 81.

18 Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 189–90.

19 Liu, *Prescribing Colonization*, 67.

20 Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 190.

21 Gates, "The Dōjinkai and the Promotion of Japanese Modernity in China, 1902-1937," 73.

22 Ibid.

conflicts of foreignness. The Japan-instated residency general of Korea partnered locals with Japanese military doctors in order to provide some familiarity to patients who were unwilling to cooperate with Japanese doctors in isolation. It is worth noting that this was only done "where and when available." Otherwise, Japanese military doctors acted more forcefully.[23] Koreans believed Japanese medical practices to be "poisonous."[24] However, when those practices were peddled or at least accompanied by somebody less foreign, they were more readily adopted. Through this example, and those before, the ethnic and cultural systems of subjugation which Japan adopted, altered, and/or constructed, are made clear as methods of translating social power into biopower. Appeals to local, native cultures were a constant in Japan's colonial designs, but so too was Japan's ruthless disapprovals of those cultures, alongside efforts to overwrite or erase them.

Women's History

Japan and Korea viewed one another as vehicles for literal and cultural poison. As Koreans rejected Japan's modernized medical practices, popular Japanese soldiers' literature warned against sex with "poisonous" women, noting specifically that all Korean (and also Chinese) prostitutes were "poisonous."[25] Examples of such attitudes and policies toward women serve as points of utmost specificity within this enormously complex network of international oppression and native disenfranchisement.

Simultaneously as Japan categorized non-Japanese prostitutes as poisonous, military figureheads such as Mori Rintaro asserted that sex was a fundamental need for their soldiers (ultimately framing women in general as a resource), crediting abstinence as "the source of all sexual dysfunctions."[26] The result of these combined imperial sentiments was a paradoxical dualism: soldiers were expected to have frequent sex for the betterment of their health, but the colonial women surrounding soldiers stationed overseas were defined by their being poisonous. Idealistically,

23 Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905–1919," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 64, no. 3 (2005): 655.

24 Ibid.

25 Jin-Kyung Park, "Picturing Empire and Illness: Biomedicine, Venereal Disease and the Modern Girl in Korea under Japanese Colonial Rule," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2014): 116.

26 Ibid.

it could have been expected that imperial soldiers would enter wholly consensual, non-monetarily motivated sexual relationships with colonial women; but realistically, only prostitutes would have been able to provide sex on such a scale to an influx of soldiers which imbalanced local male to female populations. The Japanese concern for soldiers' sexual health was somewhat remedied by Japanese sex workers' migration to and settlement within the colonies. This situation, however, was of no benefit to Korean women, especially Korean prostitutes, who were subject to conjoined anti-women and anti-Korean rhetorics as a result of demeaning "medical" inquisitions. In 1906—less than a week after the residency general of Korea was established—139 Korean women (mostly prostitutes) were called for compulsory vaginal examinations at a police station in Seoul. In her historical conveyance of this event, Park notes that the examinations were conducted in the police station's garden with little effort for privacy, as well as that these examinations' full exposure of the women's bodies was observed by a "considerable crowd."[27] By 1910, legislation combating contagious diseases made invasive, essentially public, examinations such as this commonplace.[28] These events exemplify biopower in its most direct sense—Japan's culturally domineering and personally forceful actions publicized individual's intimacies in a display of imperial supremacy.

1908 saw the annulling of an official ban on Korean prostitution, and the creation of the Prostitute Control Ordinance and Courtesan Control Ordinance. The Ordinances would sexually examine barmaids and Korean geisha "despite the fact that these women did not live primarily by selling sex."[29] The implementation of these programs would provide data through the regulated medical surveillance of Korean women. As discussed earlier in this paper, distinct social separations were both a cause and a methodology for biopower-driven subjugation. Park frames this phenomenon as the "gaze" of the Japanese Empire working to construct specific, separate identities for itself a colonizer and for the territories as colonized.[30] By labeling colonized women as poisonous while also (publicly) establishing legal and medical precedent that perpetuated that label, the empire founded an institutional idea that Korean women were an issue that needed solving. These women

27 Ibid., 117.
28 Ibid., 118.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 111.

were Othered not only for their sex or their alien nationality, but for being an impairment of the empire that was forcefully targeted for repair. Once again, the biopower-driven empire-colony relationship appears cyclical in nature. Imperial Japan's constructed visage of Korean women resulted in institutions which enforced that constructedness by legitimizing it, defocusing the Japanese gaze away from the broad humanity of its colonial subjects. Instead, the empire favored narrow definitions that allowed for distant governmental control.

The most apparent goal of subjugating women was the exploitation of their procreation and population rearing with aims of erasing colonial culture in favor of imperial nationalism. This is made clear by the era's propagandic posters. Though they targeted Korean women with messages about raising strong children for expanse of the empire, the idyllic, motherly woman depicted on the posters wore a Japanese kimono.[31] Korean women were presented with an imperial duty to procreate while simultaneously facing an example that was not only impossible to attain, but also degrading, telling them that they inherently lacked the womanly goodness of their superior Japanese counterparts.

There is little subtlety in the empire's express demand that Korean women function as devices of birth, biological factories to quicken imperial expansion. With this kind of propaganda, Japan presupposed that its biopower was generational, that its ownership of women's bodies extended to ownership of their children. These children were destined to mature either into an infrastructure which supported the empire, or into soldiers who would use force to broaden Japan's territories. And alongside every militant act of invasion, those soldiers would be entitled by the empire to express their individual male biopower over women, as the satiation of their "ferocious male desire" was documented as a crucial point of individual male wellbeing.[32]

Conclusion

The significance of Japanese imperial medical history is timeless; it is in many ways a disturbing example of the importance and capabilities of national power and perception—regarding both how a population's

31 Ibid., 123–24.

32 Ibid., 116.

perception of power can be manipulated through its governance, and how a governing force's perception of its subjects dictates power's implementation. Perhaps the most critical aspect of this history is humanity's capability to use systems and institutions of public benefit, such as the medicinal, to provoke cycles of mass suppression, destruction, and suffering. Whether through economics, social history, or women's history, the subjects scrutinized throughout this paper present some of the specific mechanisms through which such domination has been orchestrated. The wide economic effects of Japan on nearby nations resulted in those nations being conquered. The intermingling of cultures between Japan and its neighbors weaponized social systems rather than used them as mediums for diplomatic exchange. Individual demographics, such as women, were confronted with much suffering as they were broadly labeled for their functions of biopower rather than recognized for their humanity. However, as a method for implementing biopower in order to subjugate and exploit, medicine is a singular example within a history of countless alternatives. Only through the continual and rigorous study of histories such as these can we now strive to avoid their repetition and instead provoke the better out of our neighbors, rather than seizing them for their worth.

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Notes of a Desolate Man as an Act of Mourning

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Abstract

Chu T'ien-wen's (朱天文) *Notes of a Desolate Man* is a montage of vastly different cultural references, where the authenticity of the floating, west-originated signifier repeatedly comes into question in its oriental context of Taiwan. The novel repeatedly includes names such as Eliot, Goethe, Montaigne, Foucault, Fellini, Levi-Strauss, Satyajit Ray, Ozu Yasujiro, the Bible, and references to Mao's poetry. In my essay, I aim to answer the question: amidst the litter of references and quotes, where do we locate the author in the text, who seems to have created an inscrutable work of pastiche, and in which the different elements don't seem to unify? Many scholars interpret the book in a Barthesian framework—the kaleidoscopic cultural references as the promiscuous expression of the main character's homosexuality. Some of Chu's textual practice is political, aiming to "negotiate Taiwan's cultural identity through the aesthetics of hybridity," giving the postcolonial Taiwan its vitality with the erotic potential of the clashing signifiers.

However, I disagree with this reading, for Chu T'ien-wen's conservative politics does not coincide with the vision of a utopia of hybridity. For her, the identity of Taiwan is not fluid but broken. Rather than advocating a concrete political vision or practice, this paper argues that Notes is about nostalgia and mourning Taiwan's nationalistic past, as she emphasizes the importance of Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History" in the epilogue of the Chinese version. With writing, Chu T'ien-wen attempts to not only

metaphorically reconstitute Taiwan's past through fragments, but also laments that futility of her attempt.

1. Introduction

> In the novel, the narrator's partner "sprinkled salt on the back of his hand, bit into a slice of lemon, licked the salt and drank the tequila." English readers who have tried the drink know that the order is wrong, that the lemon should come last, not first. Again, what should a translator do? Should we have changed the order in the text and inserted the correct way of drinking tequila? But, what if the Taiwanese drink tequila in the sequence described in Chu's novel? Should we, following Nabakov's insistence that a translator's task is to bring the readers to the text, translate without alteration and hope that readers will tolerate an alternative way of drinking tequila?[1]

I open with a quote from Sylvia Li's essay on her translation of Chu Tien-wen's *Notes of a Desolate Man*, a book in which the authenticity of the floating, west-originated signifier repeatedly comes into question in its oriental context of Taiwan. The novel repeatedly includes names such as Eliot, Goethe, Montaigne, Foucault, Fellini, Levi-Strauss, Satyajit Ray, Ozu Yasujiro,[2] and references to Mao's poetry.[3] In translating this work, the translators were presented with the difficulty of choosing between the western original and Chu's own translation of the works in her book. Not only did she adapt western mannerisms, such as that of drinking tequila, she also incorporated her own twists on biblical myths,[4] as well as translated parts of Levi-Strauss's *Triste Tropiques* into Chinese herself. The translation here reveals the central concern of the text: amidst the litter of references and quotes, where do we locate the author in the text, who seems to have created an inscrutable work of pastiche, and in which the different elements don't seem to unify? Describing the process of translating passages from

1 Sylvia Li-Chun Lin, "Poetic License Vs. Translator's Responsibility: Translating Notes of a Desolate Man," *Translation Review*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2000): 37.

2 Chih-Wei Chang, "Bringing Out 'Roland Barthes' from Chu T'ien-wen's *Notes of a Desolate Man (Huangren shouji)*," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2011): 423.

3 Lin, "Poetic License Vs. Translator's Responsibility," 38.

4 Ibid.

Triste Tropiques that was already translated back into English, Li writes:

> In the novel, the narrator relates a passage from the book [*Triste Tropiques*] to his childhood friend over the phone. We could rather easily translate directly from the Chinese, but, as I indicated, we wanted to use a more authoritative version. When comparing the Chinese and the English versions, we found that Levi-Strauss' Chinese translator had, probably, inadvertently altered the meaning somewhat…for me, a personal emphasis on close reading told us that we should translate from the Chinese, not using the English translation of the French text, because that is supposedly how the characters in the novel understand Levi-Strauss. Although it may not have been the accurate understanding of the original, it was, after all, the fictional characters' (and perhaps the author's) experience and intellectual life we are translating here...we decided to use the English "original" rather than translating directly from the Chinese. To this day, however, we remain somewhat uneasy about the decision, feeling as if we had violated the sanctity of the Chinese text.[5]

Given the numerous intertextualities, it is very easy to assume a Barthesian reading, which Chih-Wei Chang has ventured. In his essay "Bringing out 'Roland Barthes' from Chu T'ien-wen's *Notes of a Desolate Man (Huangren shouji)*," he dismisses the tensions in queer studies readings,[6] as well as new-historical readings based on Taiwanese history, proposing to read the intertextualities in a Barthesian frame—the kaleidoscopic cultural references as an expression of the main character's "concern with promiscuous homosexuality."[7] Endorsing Ling-chei Letty Chen's similar view[8] that Chu's textual practice aims to "negotiate Taiwan's cultural identity through the aesthetics of hybridity,"[9] he suggests that Chu T'ien-wen is trying to negotiate a new identity for Taiwan through assembling "floating signifiers," such that Taiwan resembles a hybrid text open to many interpretations. Instead of gaining a stable identity, the hybridity of the text, symbolizing Taiwan's postcolonial identity, gains traction in its

5 Ibid., 37.

6 Chu T'ien-wen is a heterosexual woman who wrote in the perspective of a gay man in *Notes*.

7 Chang, "Bringing out," 423.

8 He also cites Chen-Chi Hsu's essay, which puts forth a similar but different view.

9 Chang, "Bringing Out," 426.

"promiscuous play of signifiers."[10] It is the possibility of meanings of the floating signifiers that gives the postcolonial Taiwan its vitality, just as how Roland Barthes feels liberated in traveling to exotic cities like Tokyo and India, immersing himself in the kaleidoscopic worlds of images and sounds which he cannot pin linguistic or cultural meaning to—they are "signifiers" liberated from their "signified."[11] It is the tension and ambiguity that makes the text so seductive. In the text, Xiao Shao's musings of the city recalls Barthes' experience of India. For Xiao Shao, the city is a map of secret signs and entrances. He says, "I tried to imagine their secret entrances, which led to places where many tribes and rituals were scattered like the constellations. A country of many scents, like the multiple rulers of India, three thousand kaleidoscopic worlds."[12] Barthes muses similarly as he dissolves into a city in India:

> This day, I decide to go to one neighborhood or another, without any goal but a kind of prolonged perception of its name... All these districts produce different races, distinct bodies, a familiarity new each time. To cross the city (or to penetrate its depth, for underground there are whole networks of bars, shops to which you sometimes gain access by a simple entry way, so that, once through this narrow door, you discover, dense and sumptuous, the black India of commerce and pleasure) .... [13]

In *Notes of a Desolate Man*, the reader is entranced by the signifier, trying to find and enter its "secret entrance"[14]—the meanings of its symbols. Like Barthes' description of his experience, it is pleasurable to become utterly lost in the "dense and sumptuous, the black India of commerce and pleasure" of mysterious, seductive images.[15] Indeed, the text as an erotic object has also been interrogated in phenomenological literary theory.

10 The narrative "I" of Chu's novel does not belong to anybody. Far from being a vehicle in which Chu can "express herself," it is an echo chamber inviting Hu Lancheng, Barthes, and many others to indulge in an anonymous and promiscuous play of signifiers." See Chang, "Bringing Out," 434.

11 For Barthes cruising through Tokyo, see Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 30-42.

12 Qtd. in Chang, "Bring Out," 432.

13 Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, 39.

14 T'ien-wen Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 121.

15 Ibid.

Michael Fisher has remarked that, in Cavell's writing, interpretation is often seen as a masculine act, "because [interpretation] is often expressed as a desire to penetrate the object."[16] Describing the act of reading, he writes, "[the book] asks nothing better than to exist outside itself, or to let you exist in it. In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside."[17]

However, I disagree with his reading and presents a different perspective in this essay. How is it possible to hinge the identity of a place based on fluidity? In my opinion, Chang does not fully acknowledge Chu's emphasis on the utopian nature of her postcolonial vision of Taiwan. Rather than advocating a concrete political vision or practice, I will argue that *Notes* is about nostalgia and mourning a lost time, as according to the scene envisioned by Walter Benjamin with his image of *Angelus Novus* in his *Ninth Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Chu cites her inspiration from *Angelus Novus* in the epilogue of the Chinese version but not the English, which may have caused this critical angle to be overlooked. Facing historical change and trauma, the gaze of the narrator is likened to that of angel, who from an elevated position gazes down upon the carnage and ruins of history.[18] For Benjamin, history is not as a series of constructive acts that have built up over time, but a series of destructive acts over time, where "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage."[19] Unable to restore the carnage of past disasters, the angel is haunted by its traumatic images and forced to move on helplessly and unwillingly, pushed forth into the future "to which his back is turned."[20] With writing, Chu T'ien-wen attempts to reconstitute the past through fragments, but also laments that futility of her attempt. In her book, she also acknowledges and the irreversible passing away of time and youth, which writing cannot reverse.

16 Michael Fisher, "Reading the Human Figure: Literary Theory and Other-Minds Skepticism," in Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 32.

17 Ibid., 39.

18 Walter Benjamin, Harry Zohn, Hannah Arendt, and Leon Wieseltier, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 2013), 12.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

2. Chu T'ienwen's Idea of History

Before I explain my ideas further, I would like to introduce one of the images in the book which has touched me deeply, and for which I believe is key to illustrating Chu's mourning and nostalgia.

In the beginning of the book, the narrator Xiao Shao was in Japan, spending the last five years of life he will have with his lover Ah Yao, who is dying from AIDS. Supporting the sickly Ah Yao, he writes, "amid cherry blossoms fluttering down like a rain shower, waiting for the wind to die down, I felt like the wife of Lot, who, thousands of years ago, could not resist the temptation to look back at the burning city and was turned into a pillar of salt."[21] Later, he is reminded of "the pillar of salt" again when he was tempted to cheat on him:

> I heard Ah Yao calling out to me from behind, a place of fire and brimstone, whether it was called Sodom or Gomorrah. It could be an international phone call or some Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee he'd ask someone to bring me; I couldn't help but turn around to take a look, and the instant I saw the smoke rising about the place like a blazing kiln, I too turned into a pillar of salt.[22]

The image of the pillar of salt is unmistakably taken from the Old Testament of the Bible. In the story, God sent angels to tell Lot that he was going to destroy the city of Sodom, which they were in, as many of its inhabitants were sinners. He was to move to the nearby city of Gomorrah with his wife. When Lot was fleeing, he was delayed. So, the angels took he and his family's hands and helped them flee from the city. Paralleling the image of *Angelus Novus*, who is swept forward unwillingly by the storm, Lot and his family are prohibited from looking back, "Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest you be swept away."[23] Traveling behind her husband, Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Like *Angelus Novus* and Lot, Ah Yao is tempted to look back, seduced by the erotic utopia of "Sodom."[24] In the context of *Notes*, the pillar of salt symbolizes the desire to embrace a

21 Chu, Notes of a Desolate Man, 8.

22 Ibid., 36.

23 Genesis 19:17.

24 "Sodom" is similar to the word sodomy, which means homosexual sexual intercourse.

sensuous and promiscuous life, despite its ephemerality. It is an image that is shadowed by death. At Ah Yao's funeral, he describes Ah Yao's ashes as "a burned-out stick of incense that had been laid flat on the floor. Just a line of ashes."[25] One can't help but be reminded of the pillar of salt. By embracing a promiscuous life, Ah Yao has realized the metaphor of looking back at Sodom with is promiscuous life and becoming a line of ashes, similar to the image of the pillar of salt. Like the pillar of salt, the image of the burned-out incense also shows the irreversibility of time, as with *Angelus Novus*, who is helpless to restore the past and forced to move on.

2.1 Strings of the Past

Like Lot's wife, Ah Yao, and *Angelus Novus*, Chu also mourns the irreversibility of time. In Hsu's opinion, Chu's decision to write in the perspective of a gay man anxious of his identity is mainly to mourn the "Patricide" of Nationalist Government (KMT), who invented all sorts of "grand narratives" to control the Taiwanese when they took power in 1949.[26] Ideologically conservative, this period is a time which Chu was nostalgic for. After KMT lost the civil war with the CCP (Communist Party of China), they moved to Taiwan, exerting authoritarian control over the island. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, the civil freedoms the Taiwanese enjoyed dampened the nationalist myths that they were told.[27] Because the ban for travel between Taiwan and mainland China was lifted, the Taiwanese were able to travel to their long-abandoned homeland. After the lifting of the travel ban, images of the Taiwanese' imagined homeland of China were shattered, as China was no longer the China which they were nostalgic for.[28]

Compared to Yao's promiscuity, Xiao Shao is a coward. Shao describes Yao, "he was the photograph of a street demonstration. And me? I was nothing more than the negative, representing hypocrisy, as I hid in a dark closet like a coward."[29] As Hsu notes, Xiao Shao's preoccupation with

25 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 165.

26 For discussions of *Notes of a Desolate Man* as discussed in the context of Taiwan's queer community, read the beginning of Chang's "Bringing Out" paper.

27 Chen-Chi Hsu, "The Ambivalence of Postmodern Taiwanese Existence: Reading Chu T'ien-Wen's *Notes of a Desolate Man," Exit 9: The Rutgers Journal of Comparative Literature*, vol. 4 (January 1, 2002): 22.

28 See her other work "Take Me Away, Moonlight" as described in Chen, "The Ambivalence of Postmodern Taiwanese Existence," 106.

29 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 3.

skincare products reflect his, the desolate man's, psychological insecurity. He fears death to the most extreme degree and is obsessed with self-preservation, while Ah Yao is still "fighting the good fight" for activism, although he is dying from AIDS.[30] He also laments the expected extinction of his "homosexual race."[31]

Shao's attitude towards homosexuality is, however, ambiguous. Quoting Foucault, he is strongly aware society's control of sexuality and Foucault's call for resistance. He writes, "foucault, in a word, refused to be accommodated into the systems."[32] Rather than reading Foucault's theory as having implications to all oppressed sexualities, his focus is on the race of male homosexuality, which, according to him, is dying out. He acknowledges Fairy Slave and Tang's theory of the "Age of Aquarius" in which "feminine ecology" will soon replace "masculine materialism," [33]and identifies with Beibei's remark: "Women are like full sails waiting for the winds of history, while men are a bunch of idiots standing against the wind."[34] Because females are taking the lead, "our consciousness needs to be transformed."[35]

Chu's longing for the past parallels Shao's mourning of society reaching a stage of decadence,[36] where men, due to "male effeminacy or a loss of 'virility,'"[37] indulge in sex rather than reproduce to propagate the next generation. Like Chu's longing for the past, Ah Yao yearns too for a world where he could systematically propagate his race like Levi-Strauss' kinship system. Contrary to Yao's blithe ignorance for self-preservation and preference for chaos, he yearns for an ordered, idealistic life:

> Those were happier times, when we believed in everything and doubted nothing. There was no identity issue, for God was in his heaven, all was right with the world. It was orderly, mathematical,

30 Ibid., 32.

31 Hsu, "The Ambivalence of Postmodern Taiwanese Existence," 21.

32 Ibid.

33 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 89.

34 Ibid., 117.

35 Ibid., 89.

36 Yao takes the idea from Foucault. Shao thinks that they are at a stage of decadence where sex is carried out for the sake of pleasure, but not for the sake of reproduction, and Foucault himself is aware of this when he wrote *The History of Sexuality*, despite critiquing the regime's encouragement for the ideal of virility that is conducive to reproduction (thus increase in economic productivity). He thinks Foucault had experienced the "erotic utopia" at the price of being the "terminator of the kinship system." See Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 46.

37 Hsu, "The Ambivalence of Postmodern Taiwanese Existence," 22.

> the world of Bach, with the golden structure that Levi-Strauss had pursued all his life. A world I longed for, one I thought might exist only in the collective dream of the human race.[38]

The old utopia which Chu yearns to attain is in mainland China, which is shattered by the lifting of the martial law. This is symbolized by the world ordered by Levi-Strauss' golden structure, which Shao yearns for. As a second-generation mainland Chinese, Shao also mourns the loss of the imagined China, as he writes, "it was there, like the sloughed-off skin of my youth, like the remains of a love, cast into a heap. I walked by it indifferently, sensing it to be more alien than all the distant countries of the world. I had no intention of going there."[39]

2.2 A Written Utopia

Battling the "epistemological uncertainty" of Taiwan, from which a new order is "expected to arise from the ruins and ghosts of the past," Shao chooses to write.[40] The novel ends in such a way: "As time passed, I would see one after another off to be cremated…Time cannot be turned back, nor can life. However, in the process of writing, I am able to turn back everything that otherwise couldn't be. So my writing, it continues."[41]

Writing, for Xiao Shao, is an attempt preserve the past. Facing Yao's death and regarding those of his "race," he writes, "I feel as if I should do something for people like me, for those who have died. But I can't do anything for anyone. I must do it for myself. I must write. Write in order not to forget."[42] For him, writing has a personal significance but not a public one. He is aware that he "can't do anything for anyone" and that writing is as a psychological space that he can return to, when forced to face a fearful, unknown future.[43]

As Chang has noted, Chen and Hsu are similar in their new-historical approach to *Notes*. While they are similar in this respect, their analyses differ in the role of "writing" in *Notes*. Hsu's interpretation is closer to

38 Qtd. in Ibid., 23.

39 Ibid., 24.

40 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 32.

41 Ibid., 166.

42 Ibid., 24.

43 Ibid.

the analysis in this essay, suggesting that his writing, for Shao, is a self-defeating act. On the other hand, Chen's view is more sanguine, suggesting that Chu's aesthetic hybridity, like Chang's analysis, is an attempt to give rise to a hybrid Taiwanese identity. I will now compare and contrast their views and show that their views lead to a Benjaminian interpretation of *Notes*, which seems to be intended by the author.

2.2.1 Chen's view

The idea of utopia is crucial in understanding Chen's perspective on "writing" in *Notes of a Desolate Man*. Like Hsu, Chen believes that finding salvation in reality for Xiao Shao is futile.[44] Trapped in a debilitating fear of the extinction of his race and the desperation to consummate his passion, Chen writes that "if he catches a glimpse of utopia, it would be when he gets temporarily lost in the brief moment of orgasm or when his senses are dulled by incessant sexual encounters."[45] Utopia for Chen is when he can consummate his sexual desires without fearing for his death. As the word *utopia* denotes, it is idealistic. Xiao Shao desire to unify his "external chaotic state and the inner desire for order"[46] is represented by his preoccupations with the Foucault's deconstructionism and Levi-Strauss' structuralism,[47] which contradict each other. The two states are represented by Xiao Shao and Ah Yao respectively—Xiao Shao representing the desire for order and Ah Yao chaos. The physical realization of this utopia is impossible, as shown by Ah Yao's death. Fearing to fulfill his sexual desires as a homosexual, he establishes a "material" utopia through language as a replacement.

For Chen, Chu's written utopia has a political function. In her essay, Chen claims that Xiao Shao's preoccupation with Levi-Strauss' studies of the kinship system suggests a wish to preserve his dying "homosexual tribe."[48] After examining Levi-Strauss' study of the Caduveo tribe, who preserve their culture through body painting, Xiao realizes that "members of his

44 Letty Ling-chei Chen, "Rising from the Ashes: Identity and The Aesthetics of Hybridity in Zhu *Tianwen's Notes of a Desolate Man*," *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese*, vol. 4, no. 1 (July & Aug., 2000): 118.

45 Ibid.

46 "For order in the narrative both point to a common goal: an affirmation of identity based on a utopian unification of the two contradicting tendencies as demonstrated by Ah Yao and the narrator." See Chen, "Rising from the Ashes," 120.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 115.

"homosexual tribe" does not have its own language to record its own unique existence."[49] Chen writes, "members of the 'homosexual tribe' may have to borrow others' languages, but then, as the narrator contends, at least they have their own body. Thus, his search leads to a focus on language and the body."[50] Believing that there is a connection between body and the language, Xiao starts to believe that words can convey the textures and dimensions of materiality. Chen quotes Xiao, who believes that the "materiality of words… can raise him to a higher ground of perception"[51] with its capacity to record and convey material reality, seen and felt. Chen is not clear in her explanation, but I assume that her idea of the "materiality of words" is similar to Chang's Barthesian interpretation of *Notes*—that language has a seductive power in evoking the senses, especially when they are "floating signifiers," when no meaning is fixed to them and when they are purely sensual. Therefore, Chu's technique of borrowing words and references to other languages and literatures can serve to build an imagined utopia. As Chen quotes Xiao Shao, "my supernatural was words, writing."[52] Believing that he can find utopia in the "magical realm of words – words that record mysterious sounds, names, phrases, found in sutras," Xiao Shao summons a utopia through his words.[53]

Chen further parallels Xiao Shao's desire for utopia to the possibility of establishing a new Taiwanese identity based on an aesthetic hybridity. Remarking on her excessive references, Chen writes:

> Zhu Tianwen's[54] hybridization is undoubtedly intentional as her attempt to cross cultural and ideological boundaries is clearly the drive behind her practice. Throughout the novel, there are many passages which are superfluous, not connected to the main thrust of the narrative…on the surface they seem to reflect the author's uncontrollable urge to display her knowledge of historical places and anecdotes of well-known figures, as well as her enthusiasm about describing the trends of material subcultures. But this urge or enthusiasm actually reflects her attempt to re-negotiate a new cultural position by validating cultural hybridity, which is precisely

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 116.

52 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 124.

53 Ibid.

54 Pinyin of Chu T'ienwen.

what Werbner proclaims in the quoted passage above, "[an] aesthetic challenge to an implicit social order and identity."[55]

Chen suggests that Chu T'ienwen's technique of hybridization is political, hoping to establish a new cultural position by redefining and reassembling the cultural products of the west, as she herself had done in her book through translation and a montage of references. And yet, the cultural identity she envisions cannot be national. It is, rather, individualistic. Chen writes, "Zhu Tianwen envisions this globalized world with a center that is the self… Zhu Tianwen's vision is one in which identity – whether gender identity [as in the case of her gay narrator] or cultural identity [as in the case of herself] – does not exist outside of the self because the self can be more stable than its Other which is constantly changing."[56] For Chu, the individual is not defined geographically by a place or a group of people. Rather, the individual and his belonging is defined on how he chooses to define oneself in his choice and consumption of culture. However, viewed in the lens of Taiwanese history, her resolution is problematic. Chen writes: "She is able to achieve a new sense of cultural identity, one that is not based on ethnicity or nationhood, but is built upon a sense of belonging to the community of cultures around the globe. The question is, can she, a writer who carries the colonial legacy of Taiwan, afford to be so apolitical and ahistorical?"

2.2.2 Hsu's view

In my opinion, Hsu's view resolves the contradictory aspect of Chu's establishment of a cultural identity as individual by highlighting that "writing" in *Notes* is a self-defeating act. In *Notes of a Desolate Man*, Shao replaces Descartes' motto by writing, "I write, therefore I am."[57] In Descartes' motto "I think, therefore I am," he suggests that identity is based on thought. This conception of the self has been criticized in the postmodern age as identity can also influenced by somatic factors and can be performative.[58] With the postmodern critique of the Cartesian subject as the foundation and source of

55 Chen, "Rising from the Ashes," 131.

56 Ibid., 133.

57 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 25.

58 Such as Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity.

knowledge, Hsu writes that Shao's use of writing "to counter the erosion of time" and to build his identity is doubtful.[59] The fact that writing is counter to the establishment of identity is further shown by the fact that the book is written as a series as notes, which are fragmentary. For Hsu, the fragmented form of "notes" baffles the intention of "unifying" something. Hsu evokes Derrida to explain his point. For Derrida, writing as a concept is closely related to *différance*—that is, in writing, "the signified is continuously differed and deferred; any arrival of final termination is impossible."[60] In writing, some unoriginal signification will always intrude into the process of writing, deferring the reaching of ideals of "authenticity" or becoming a "transcendental signifier." For Hsu, the ending sentence of the book, "so my writing, it continues" is resonant with Derrida's idea of *différance*, the endless deferral and difference of reaching the concluding "transcendental signifier."[61] To end the book by claiming that Shao continues to write seems to suggests the definition of the new Taiwan, like the interpretation of *Notes*, should be deferred. The impossibility of giving Taiwan an identity through writing is shown when Shao navigates Taipei. Navigating Taipei, Xiao Shao describes how the urban signifiers seem to float, unhinged from their assigned places on the map; "then I started reading the map of the city, made up of numerous shop names, interpreting them with no clear understanding, mixing and matching them at will."[62] For him, the existence of the city depended on language, but language itself is unreliable, depending on his subjectivity; "the city appearing under my pen existed only in words, and when the words disappeared, so would the city."[63]

3. Conclusion

There is plenty of evidence to suggests that Chu T'ienwen may be tempted to construct a utopia. For example, the references to Foucault's erotic utopia,[64] connections with her past work,[65] and the influence of Hu

59 Hsu, "The Ambivalence of Postmodern Taiwanese Existence," 24-5.

60 Ibid., 25.

61 Chu, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, 165.

62 Ibid., 121.

63 Ibid., 122.

64 See footnote 36.

65 Chen suggests that the need for an erotica in her former work is replaced with the need for a utopia. See Chen, "Rising from the Ashes," 110.

Lancheng, her mentor.[66] And yet, the act of writing or words as the "bricks" for this utopia are contradictory, because meaning as constructed by writing endlessly propagates and defers, just as the passing of time and our deeds in our lives cannot be reversed. It is not language that is at stake in the establishment of Taiwanese identity, as Hsu's analysis of Chu's use of writing show. Language is insufficient to stabilize or define an individual identity, much less a national identity. Rather, the irreversibility of time is more crucial to understanding *Notes*. *Notes of a Desolate Man* is not an attempt to establish a utopia based on the stuff of language. Rather, the elaborate, "superfluous" words are written to mourn a time which has passed.[67]

In a speech at the debut of *Notes'* English translation in New York, as featured in the epilogue of the Chinese version, Chu affirms the influence of Benjamin's idea of history on *Notes*. Remarking the image of *Angelus Novus*, she writes:

> Benjamin's Angelus Novus is a painting by the expressionist painter Paul Klee. Benjamin bought the painting, taking it with him even when he was escaping from the Nazis to France. He even planned to establish a new magazine called Angelus Novus. Angelus Novus looks like this. He has glaring eyes, an open mouth and spread wings. He faces the past, witnesses how disasters have agglomerated its wreckage into piles, shattering them at his feet. Angelus Novus wants to stop moving on and call the dead, restoring the shattered pieces back into an integral whole again. And yet, the storm blasts forth from the sky, pushing him forth to the future, to which is back is turned. The carnage he faces piles higher and higher, peaking into the clouds.[68]

The point of the baffling, encyclopedic range of references in the book is not to establish a linguistic utopia. Rather, *Notes* is written as an act of catharsis, mourning the irreversibility of time and a past that cannot be recovered. In emphasizing that the act of writing self-defeating, she is undermining the possibility of the realization of a "written utopia" in any form. Rather, in acknowledging the vulnerable nature of words, she also acknowledges the pointlessness of her writing. Writing despite its

66 See footnote of Chen's essay "Rising from the Ashes."

67 Chen, "Rising from the Ashes," 131.

68 T'ienwen Chu, *Huang ren shou ji* (Taibei Shi: Xin jing dian wen hua chu ban, 2011), 223.

pointlessness, she writes out of an emotional necessity, rather than from an ambition to construct. As her description of *Angelus Novus* shows: *Angelus Novus* wishes to restore the carnage of the past to a whole again, but is prevented by the forward motion of time from doing so. Like *Angelus Novus*, she cannot restore the past with writing. Rather, writing serves as a means for emotional expression, for mourning. Chu affirms this purpose for writing *Notes of a Desolate Man* during her acceptance of the *China Times* Million Yuan Novel Prize, which it won: "To write a novel,[69] is merely to prove that my existence is not merely delusional."[70] She comments further on the pointlessness of this form of proof, "what a pointless proof, what an extravagant practice!"[71]

Not only Chen and Hsu, but also many critics have pointed out the unstable nature of the narrator, as intended by the form of "notes" which the novel takes. Chang writes, "because the novel is presented as the 'notes' of a fictional character detailing fragments of his life experiences and his discontinuous thoughts, Tsai Yuan-hung, one of the judges for the China Times Million Yuan Novel Prize, did not know whether the work should be read as a novel or essay or both."[72] While "notes" may defy the notion that Xiao Shao has a unified psyche, human beings often do not act consistently, especially in moments of emotional disturbance. In Xiao Shao's case, his lover Ah Yao is dying. Rather than attempting to construct a new Taiwanese identity, *Notes of a Desolate Man*, like *Angeles Novus*, shows an attempt to grapple with disaster on the personal and the collective level—both historical change in Taiwan and the passing of Ah Yao. It is ultimately not a book about constructing a utopia, but a book written as an act of mourning.

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69 *Notes of a Desolate Man* is her first novel. She had only written screenplays and short stories before *Notes*.

70 Chu, *Huang ren shou ji,* 219.

71 Ibid.

72 Chang, "Bringing Out," 246.

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