Mutual Images

Issue 4

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JAPAN AND ASIA:

REPRESENTATIONS OF SELFNESS AND OTHERNESS

MUTUAL IMAGES

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Mutual Images

A Transcultural Research Journal

Previously published issues

Japan and Asia:

Representations of Selfness and Otherness

Edited by

Marco Pellitteri & Aurore Yamagata-Montoya

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A Transcultural Research Journal

Mutual Images is a semiannual, double-blind peer-reviewed and transcultural research journal established in 2016 by the scholarly, non-profit and independent Mutual Images Research Association, officially registered under French law (Loi 1901).

Mutual Images' field of interest is the analysis and discussion of the ever-changing, multifaceted relations between Europe and Asia, and between specific European countries or regions and specific Asian countries or regions. A privileged area of investigation concerns the mutual cultural influences between Japan and other national or regional contexts, with a special emphasis on visual domains, media studies, the cultural and creative industries, and popular imagination at large.

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MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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Issue 4

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Marco Pellitteri & **Aurore Yamagata-Montoya** (Kōbe University, Japan; MADE'IN, Sainte Marie-Lyon, France)

Dedication

Vale Romit DASGUPTA

In the demanding world of academia, dear friends are precious. On 2 July 2018, the Australian and international Japanese/Asian studies communities lost one of their most loved and respected members, Romit Dasgupta.

Romit was a presenter at the April 2017 Mutual Images workshop, held at Nagoya University. His warmth, compassion, incisive analytic ability and his self-deprecating humour – which was never directed towards others – were all evident during the two days of that gathering. Presenting early in the programme, Romit generously shared comments and feedback with younger (and not so young) scholars, whose talks were scheduled later in the workshop. This he did in his signature positive and encouraging way.

Romit was awarded his doctorate in 2005 for a thesis entitled *"Crafting" Masculinity: Negotiating Masculine Identities in the Japanese Workplace*. The thesis was awarded the Best Doctoral Thesis Prize in 2006 by the Australian Association of Asian Studies. Published as a book by Routledge under the title *Re-Reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities* (2012), this work established Romit as an international authority on gender in the context of corporate masculinities in Japan. Romit's research reputation grew as he worked and published in associated areas that included expressions of gender and sexuality-based identities through popular and visual culture in Japan and across East Asia, and, indeed, in regional East Asian identity generally.

While maintaining an interest in these fields, Romit had recently expanded his research base to examine cultural and human interactions between Turkey and Japan. As the University of Western Australia website noted, Romit's interest in this topic was part of a larger study with researchers from Australia, Turkey and Japan, considering the conceptualisation of "Asia" and "Asian Studies" from the fringes. This was the theme of his 2017 Mutual Images workshop presentation. Having published his presentation elsewhere,

Romit did not contribute to the current collection. Nevertheless, an example of his writing on this topic can be found here in the Australian online collection, *Asian Currents.*[1]

Romit's contribution to academia was not confined to research. He was a dedicated teacher who supported and mentored students, and was Asian Studies Discipline Chair at the University of Western Australia. With funding cuts and the questioning of the value of humanities research, academic work has become difficult. Conferences present an annual circuit-breaker that provides participants with an opportunity to present and test research findings while also socialising with friends. Romit was one of the people that Australian Japanese and Asian studies conference participants very much looked forward to meeting each year. His uncompromising humanity, his erudite scholarship and his delightfully warm and even loving personality touched and moved both established and emerging scholars. He can never be replaced.

Romit had a deep and abiding love for his family. He was the very devoted son of Mihir and Mira (deceased) and the beloved brother of Arijit (Bapi). We send his family and friends our fondest thoughts and deepest condolences.

This edition of *Mutual Images* is dedicated to Romit Dasgupta, and the depth and value of the contribution that he made to that gathering. We join others who are closer to Romit in mourning his early and unexpected death.

<div align="right">Barbara HARTLEY (University of Tasmania, Australia)</div>

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[1] Available at: http://asaablog.tumblr.com/post/111049548726/pushing-boundaries-turkey-and-the-reframing-of

Editorial

Marco Pellitteri & Aurore Yamagata-Montoya | Kōbe University, Japan; Made'in, Sainte Marie-Lyon, France

D ear readers, students, fellow scholars,
welcome to this fourth instalment of *Mutual Images*.

This is the output of our fifth yearly international workshop, which our research association organised and held at Nagoya University (Japan) on 22 and 23 April, 2017. This workshop was organised in collaboration with G30 Japan-in-Asia Cultural Studies Program (JACS) from Nagoya University, directed by Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt. This collaboration led to a geographical delimitation of both the workshop and this issue that differ from previous events and publications done by Mutual Images Research Association. In the previous issues, the articles explored mainly the "images" bridging between Japanese and European cultures. For this issue, we seek to consider the representations between Japan and Asia. However, as it will become apparent with the articles that compose this issue, Europe is omnipresent. The relationship between Japan and Asia also goes through Europe as another "Other". The concepts of Selfness and Otherness in and between Japan, other Asian nations and Europe are the common grounds that link the articles.

In breaking away from the binary coupling of "Self" and "Other," what new visions and directions can be generated in the investigation of cultural processes and products? The essays hosted hereby explore these thematic areas keeping as their core framework and conceptual mindset a cross-cultural perspective, declining the two guiding concepts under multiple approaches. Rather than being confined within contested geographical definitions of Asia, the included papers consider "Japan" and "Asia" as imaginary, constructed spaces/notions.

What parts have colonialism, war, and contemporary transnational flows of people, goods and ideas played into the formation of Selfness, Otherness, and their conceptual, literary, visual and broadly cultural representations?

Beyond the geographical delimitation of the research area mentioned above, the collaboration between Mutual Images and JACS relied on a shared will to give an opportunity to postgraduate students and early researchers to have an equal voice alongside established academics. Let us remind you that the creation of Mutual Images was an impulse by a Masters degree student and a first-year PhD student. Now it is our turn to give young academics the possibility to be part of this project. For the 5th edition of the international workshop, postgraduate students of the JACS program, under the supervision of Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, selected the theme of the workshop, redacted the Call for Papers and helped with the hands-in organisation, including chairing panels. One of the students, Kara Dischinger, also contributed a book review to this issue. Another review included here is by Christopher Hood. You will also find an exhibition review by Jamie Tokuno. The choice of the analysed works is perfectly suited to the notions of Selfness and Otherness we identified as the issue's *fil rouge*.

The four articles that compose this issue each explore in an innovative way the concepts of "Selfness" and "Otherness" applied to the geographical zone indicated above. The first two papers consider "mutual images" through the medium of cinema. Seán Hudson relies on film studies and political theory to survey the recurring narratives in films known as "victim's history". He analyses through examples how "selfness" is equated with victims for wartime Japan while Asia is actively erased. Hudson furthermore looks at construction of East Asia as Japan's Other and the material technologies through which this Othering (and/or erasure) takes place in the cultural sphere, which has received little attention.

Like Hudson, Fabio D. Palumbo's article relies on the political, as well as socio-historical, context that frame the cinematographic narrations. Palumbo focuses more specifically on Korean-Japanese relations. Japanese and Korean contemporary filmography seems to reflect people's present worries about a significant Other, geographically and historically linked to the Self, as well as to portray the ethnic and national identity rebuilding through a retelling of history.

The next two articles interrogate Self and Other through visual art. Barbara Hartley provides a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and consider how these uncover the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. These images convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting itself.

Finally, using the example of Avant-Garde in Japan during the 1920s and 30s, Olga Isaeva's paper will put these movements into the context of their inspiration by the European Avant-Garde and their struggle to define what Japanese modern art was in order to unpack uneven and complex legacy of Meiji in the early Showa period.

Before inviting readers to dive into this issue, we would like to make them aware of some useful information related to *Mutual Images*, both the journal and the association.

1. The next issue will appear in Autumn 2018 and will include papers from the workshop "Japan Pop Goes Global- Japanese Pop Culture on Aesthetics and Creativity" that was held at Aoyama Gakuin University on 25 November, 2017. A special section will also include some papers presented at the international workshop "Reflective Transitions of Politics in Japanese Art" organised by and at University of East Anglia on 24 August, 2017.

2. The issue after that will be published in Spring 2019 and will collect papers from the international workshop held at Cardiff University on 1-2 May, 2018.

3. *Mutual Images Journal* also accepts individual submissions for both articles and book reviews that can be sent through the Open Access website or by email.

4. One of the guiding intellectual criteria of *Mutual Images* is scholarly inclusiveness: whilst the journal is a strictly peer-reviewed publication, we consider it a place where young as well as senior scholars can experiment with new ideas and approaches, with some more intellectual freedom than that usually permitted in more institutional journals. Therefore, we invite readers to spread the word and forward information about *Mutual Images* to their undergraduate and graduate students, post-doc researchers, and colleagues at more advanced stages of their careers.

5. Mutual Images Research Association is an independent and international association. We partner with universities across the continents to organise our workshops. To this day, Mutual Images is run entirely by volunteers. Academics of all stages of their careers and from all over the world contribute to this publication by editing, peer-reviewing, proof-reading, layout editing, building the website. We would like to thank them all for their time and energy without which Mutual Images would not exist.

Enjoy *Mutual Images*, 4.

Marco PELLITTERI, *Main Editor*

Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, *President of Mutual Images Research Association*

Deconstructing Japanese Avant-garde as Espigonism

Olga ISAEVA | University of Bonn, Germany

ABSTRACT

The aesthetic avant-garde is an international literary and artistic network and project, which arose in the early 20th century. The military and political origins of the term can be summarised into the more general meaning of the avant-garde as progressive and politically engaged art with a pioneering approach. This heterogeneous project is not a monolith but rather an ever-changing network, which is primarily characterised by its boundlessness and transgressiveness. This paper will argue that the avant-garde concept offered Japanese artists in the 1920s a method with which to overcome the legacy of the Meiji period (1868-1912), to "self-colonise" through Western concepts of art, and to enter a discourse of questioning the foundation of Japanese modern art as a transplantation and absorption of Western models. Beginning first with a general overview of the term avant-garde, this paper next examines roughly Meiji politics as one of the core reasons behind the perception of the early Japanese avant-garde in the 1920s as a simple imitation of the European model. Radical avant-garde groups such as MAVO and Sanka will be introduced as main examples for the movement, which questioned the foundation of modern art and avant-garde in Japan. Their tools for achieving this goal in the form of tendencies toward transgressions can be located in the diversity of artistic styles and genres, in the blurring of the boundary between the so-called high and low art, and in the passing from the visible to the invisible. The resulting performative act—of demonstrating the new movement in the form of a manifesto as an artistic practice and the elimination of the boundaries between the artwork and the audience—is outstanding.

Introduction:

Proclaiming to be the "first European presentation of the most important Japanese collections of early Modernism", the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn in Germany exhibited in 2016 artwork by French Impressionists and Japanese *yōga* (Western-style painting) painters under the title *Japan's love for Impressionism: From Monet to Renoir*. The main objectives included first, introducing modern Japanese art to Europe, and secondly, portraying this relationship as a "history of the mutual artistic influence" or, more precisely, as a "mutual inspiration between Japanese and French Art" (Marks-Hanßen 2015, 12–13). The usage of terms such as "love", "fascination" and "mutual inspiration" illustrates, however, only one side of the coin. *What happens if one deconstructs the illusions of modern Japanese art being*

on equal footing with its European counterpart by questioning the reasons for excluding Japanese art from the European definitions of modern art?

By deconstructing the still-popular Orientalistic vision and illusion surrounding Japan,[1] one may experience a not-so-pleasant and not at all "gentle" image of Japan as a country that struggled at the end of the 19th century with the ugliness of modern everyday life, with high-speed self-Westernisation as the only plausible way out of colonisation by a Western power, and, last but not least, with the selling-off of Japanese art by Western collectors. In order to achieve the "same" artistic level as Europeans, Japanese artists began to copy the Impressionists and their technique; they studied abroad, preferably in Paris, and gradually developed an understanding of the theoretical background of the Impressionists. It has to be pointed out that these studies were for the most part initiated or funded and encouraged by the Japanese government (Marks-Hanßen 2015). Hence, it was originally a nationalistic practice, rather than an individual one.

The most astonishing aspect of this influence is the fact that, by studying the European Impressionists, the Japanese artists (re-)discovered their own artistic tradition. European Impressionists and post-impressionists—for instance, Claude Monet (1840-1926) or Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)—collected woodblock prints during the Japonisme wave in the 19th century, first out of pure fashion but subsequently discovering in those prints inspiration for their own art.[2] Japanese artists, who studied Impressionism, consequently studied not the "Other" but actually themselves, their own artistic tradition, culture, and the art (*ukiyo-e* woodblock prints) that had been officially defined as not-art by the government. The variety of conflicting perceptions is striking: firstly, the Western perception of *ukiyo-e* on the one hand as a unique Japanese artistic

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[1] Concerning the topic of Orientalism please refer to Reyns-Chikuma (2005) and Said (2003).

[2] Philippe Burty (1830-1890), a Parisian collector and art critic, is regarded to be the inventor of the term *Japonisme* as he used this word initially in the magazine "La Renaissance littéraire et artisque" in 1872 (Burty 1872, 25–26). The usage of the term *Japonisme* itself is often misleading and vaguely presented in art history research. A single form of "*Japonisme*" does not exist; on the contrary, there are different developments, each one within a different stage on its own. Thus, it is not a static system but rather a process, which grows with time and through the artists who adopt and reinterpret this influence (Berger 1980, 7-14). The *Japonisme* used by the Impressionists (among every single one of them) differs from the concept of *Japonisme* in the Jugendstil / Art Nouveau or Bauhaus movements. In terms of the art situation during the 19th century in Europe, it can be generally said that dealing with Japanese art enabled European artists to question critically their own artistic heritage in contemplation of the Other. Japan was seen as either a utopia or as a dystopia, in which one could recognise one's owns wishes and fears. It has as a many-voiced and multifaceted structure as Europe, so said, is "Japan" as well as "Europe" a fiction. (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1993, 17). Unfortunately, this paper cannot cover a full explanation of this multifaceted phenomenon. For more information and the discourses surrounding *Japonisme*, refer to Berger (1980), Delank (1996), Lehmann (1984), Reyns-Chikuma (2005), Said (2003).

expression, and on the other hand, as non-artistic, everyday objects made by and for the lower classes within Japan, and secondly, the high appreciation of modern Japanese *yōga*-artists within Japan and their rejection in the West for simply being "not-Japanese" (Satō 2011, 90–92). These issues also inspired various discussions on the part of Japanese scholars themselves. The most notable among them is Kitazawa Noriaki and his book *Me no shinden: Bijutsu juyōshi nōto* (*The temple of the eyes: Notes on the reception of art,* 1989) and Satō Dōshin and his research publication *Meiji kokka to kindai bijutsu: Bi no seijigaku* (1999), which was translated into English in 2011 as *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State. Politics of Beauty*. Both scholars raise fundamental questions and concerns about the existence of Japanese art and Japanese art history. They define Japanese art as a transplantation and adaptation of Western constructs of art and describe Japanese art history as a discovery determined and shaped by the policies of the Meiji government (Satō 2011; Kitazawa 1989, 9–11). Even modern artists themselves experienced contemporary Japanese art as a mere copy of the Western model. For instance, the theoretical leader of the Japanese avant-garde group MAVO, Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977), condemned his fellow artists from the Action group for being nothing less than "monkeys" and "slaves" dominated by Western art. Both art groups, MAVO and Action, experienced influences by European modern art and were active during the 1920s in Japan. The Action group, however, showed primarily fauvist-, cubist- and futuristic-style paintings while MAVOs repertoire was far more radical and ranging from performance art to painting, book illustrations, magazines, and even architectural projects. In his review of the second Action exhibition in 1924, Murayama emphasised his disgust and appealed vehemently to the Action painters to throw away these artworks, leave imitation behind, and simply be themselves (Murayama 2013, 43–44). Thus, right from the start, the relationship between the Japanese and European art models was ambivalent and conflicted, as the artists continued to use the language of the European avant-garde but questioned simultaneously its role in Japanese art fundamentally.

The present essay focuses primarily on early avant-garde artists and art movements in Japan during the 1920s who strived to deconstruct the mentality behind Japanese art politics. Before diving into pre-war avant-garde art in Japan, it is necessary to fit these movements into a theoretical and historical framework. The paper will thus present an outline of the term "avant-garde" by referencing the theoretical foundations of Hubert van den Berg and Walter Fähnders. Then the essay will move on to a brief sketch of the

construction systems of Meiji politics in terms of creating, promoting, and writing about (modern) art, and introduce the key figures of avant-garde art in Japan during the 1920s, such as the groups MAVO and Sanka. The final section will close by summarising the results and discussing possible approaches for answering the following fundamental question, which challenges the whole foundation of modern art in Japan: *Was Japan's avant-garde simply another new mode among others, transplanted from the West "without attempting to destroy or transcend them"?* (Kitazawa 1989, 9–11).

Avant-garde: a project and a network

The present paper operates under the assumption of the literal meaning for avant-garde, not with its English equivalent "modernism", due, on the one hand, to the original military meaning behind avant-garde, which will be elaborated in detail below, since it expresses in a more visually striking manner the core idea of the concept: acting at the very front of all artistic styles and movements. On the other hand, the term "modernism" is far more vague, abstract, and difficult to date as avant-garde or at least the early avant-garde movements (for example, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism).[3] Here, considering the publication date of the first *Futuristic Manifesto* in 1909 as a starting point and the outbreak of the World War II as a turning point offers a far or less precise orientation in the modern Western art.

Within the aesthetic context, "modernism" refers to literary and artistic developments starting at the end of the 19th or at the very beginning of the 20th century, and is considered to be a literary, artistic self-reflection of the modern times (van den Berg 2009, 213). This period includes artistic tendencies such as Expressionism, which arose, chronologically speaking, before the publication of the first Futurism manifesto and thus the research on "modernism" does not agree on whether this should include or exclude the avant-garde. Additionally, researchers argue that the artistic language of "modernism" is associated with stylistic restrictions and a conservative aesthetic, which the avant-garde movements revolted against in the first place.[4]

Finally, since the main examples of Japanese avant-garde groups in this essay had evidently close relationships with the avant-garde artists in Europe, the literal term avant-garde gives a revealing insight into the process of defining Japanese avant-garde.

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[3] For more information, please refer to: Asholt (2004), Bürger (1996), Bürger (2013), and Weightman (1973).
[4] For more information, see Eysteinsson (1990) and Fokkema (1984).

This could also be the case for the avant-garde movements that started in the 1920s, continuing into the 30s and moving into the post-war period; but that is an issue that is beyond the scope of this essay.

Due to the obvious relationships between early Japanese and European avant-garde movements, it is essential to introduce the term "avant-garde" itself and the problems surrounding its definition in order to grasp at least the contours of the phenomenon. In this paper, the aesthetic avant-garde is first and foremost characterised by an international literary and artistic network and project, which arose in the early 20th century. This interconnected system consisted of art groups, movements, "isms", tendencies, individual artists of all genres, art dealers, magazine publishers, and others who challenged in a radical and often aggressive way the common perspectives and definitions of art in order to enforce a new position of art within society (van den Berg & Fähnders, 2009, 1). The avant-garde network is an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon including artists and movements, which competed with and replaced each other at a motion picture-like speed. Even the usage of the term itself is inconsistent and, depending on the language and geographical location, varies from "avant-garde/ Avantgarde" in French or German to "modernism" in English-speaking regions or "アヴァンギャルド" ("abangyarudo", as derived from the French term) or "前衛" ("zen'ei", the Japanese translation of "vanguard") in Japanese. Despite these discrepancies, avant-garde can be broken down into a project and network structure, revealing and emphasising all the various connecting points and crossroads that refer to one other and interact in a multifaceted yet simultaneously consistent manner.

The performative act—of demonstrating the new "ism" in the form of a manifesto that distinguishes avant-garde from prior art styles and genres and declares the act itself as an artistic tool—is outstanding. This highly programmatic approach, the conscious self-presentation and proclamation continued even until the late 20th century. The metaphoric language of space, appearing in some of the iconic manifestos by David Burliuk (1882-1967) or Filippo Tomaso Marinetti (1876-1944), is linked to the proclamation of this new "ism". The Russian Futurists, for instance, gazed from the heights of skyscrapers at the insignificance represented by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, or Pushkin, and did not hesitate for a second to slap their own tradition in the face (David Burliuk, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchonykh, Vladimir Mayakovskij 1995, 28). Marinetti located the birth of Futurism and Futurists in a city during the middle of the

night, a discovery embodied by proud beacons or forward sentries guiding the army away from the hostile stars (Marinetti 1995, 3). This idea of presenting oneself on the highest building or alerting the army and showing them the direction in which to advance is clearly related to the literal, military meaning of the term avant-garde.

Generally, two main contexts are relevant for the etymology of the term "avant-garde". The first is the more obvious military context referring to the French term "avant-garde" that first appeared at the end of the 18th century. The term describes a force that explores an area ahead of an advancing army in order to provide a secure advance and, in the event of an attack, the avant-garde stops the enemy from moving forward until the troop that follows is ready for the battle (van den Berg & Fähnders 2009, 4–5). The second context appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, referring to the Marxist-Leninist party system in which the Bolshevik party was operating as an "avant-garde", guiding the working class (Lenin 1971, 103). By summarising these contexts, we can extract the more general meaning of the avant-garde as progressive and politically engaged art with a pioneering approach. The militant language, the demand for war and battle, as seen in the Futurist manifesto, or the communist background of Russian Constructivism reveal a different, totalitarian, and fascist side of the early avant-garde movements. This dark image strongly contradicts the more international aspects of avant-garde art and draws radical reactions from art historians who propose adopting new terms such as "post-avant-garde" or even proclaim the death of avant-garde.[5]

Nevertheless, this heterogeneous project of avant-garde is not a monolith but rather an ever-changing network, which is primarily characterised by its boundlessness and transgressiveness. Simply by counting the various artists, including their artistic practices, offers an endless picture of activities often undertaken by one individual: visual artists, writers, poets, composers, musicians, filmmakers, dramatists, stage artists, dancers, photographers, gallery owners, and publishers of magazines or newspapers. The call by many artists for an international or "supranational" network conflicts with the totalitarian perspective of the avant-garde movement. In his essay *Nationale Kunst* (national art) published in 1925, Dadaist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) distanced himself from so-called "national art", because art, he wrote, is not reserved for the Germans, French, Bolshevists, or the bourgeoisie (Schwitters 2004, 199). It is

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[5] For more information on the militant side of avant-garde and death of avant-garde see Lindemann (2001), Keith (2005), Ehrlicher (2001), and Mann (1991).

an expression of pure humanity and must not be misused in the name of war, hate between nations, or any sort of violence:

> How can art arise out of the love for a nation? The outcome of this can only be the sense of nationality. However out of the love for art arises only a work of art. (Schwitters 2004, 200)

His proclaimed "supranational" art (übernationale Kunst) manifests itself, for example, in the magazine *Merz* (1923-31)*,* which includes contributions in different languages from international experts. Schwitters himself also published articles in many international art magazines.

The experimental Dutch artist, typographer, and printer Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman (1882-1945) published, between 1923 and 1926, an avant-garde magazine titled *The Next Call*. He distributed this magazine worldwide by networking with a wide range of avant-garde artists from all over the world: Antwerp (*Het Overzicht, De Driehoek*), Buenos Aires (*Inicial*), Berlin (*Der Sturm, G*), Belgrad (*Zenith*), Brünn (*La Zone, Pásmo*), Brussels (*7 Arts*), The Hague(*Het Woord*), Hannover (*Merz*), Kraków (*Zwrotnica*), Leiden (*De Stijl*), Lyon (*Menomètre*), Northampton (*S4N*), Paris (*Mécano, L'Esprit nouveau, Le Disque vert*), Prague (*Disk*), Rome (*Noi*), Warsaw (*Blok*), Vienna (*Ma*), and Tokyo (*Mavo*) (Werkman & Martinet 1978, 20). Being aware of the international facet of the avant-garde movements, the theoretical leader of the Japanese avant-garde group MAVO, Murayama Tomoyoshi, promoted the *MAVO* magazine in several important European publications. Thanks to his one-year stay in Berlin in 1922, Murayama was acutely conscious of the theories, manifestoes, and developments of the European avant-garde. He also maintained contacts with El Lissitzky (1890-1941) and Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) after his return. [6] His experiences informed his art as well as his theoretical writings, including the so-called "Bewusste(r) Konstruktionismus = Conscious Constructionism". Here Murayama reflected on the ideas of individual artists such as Wassily Kandinksy (1866-1944), Marinetti, Schwitters, and the theories proposed by the German Expressionists and the Russian Futurists.[7]

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[6] The back-cover page of *MAVO* magazine no. 1 shows a list of worldwide new art magazines: *Der Sturm* (Berlin), *Ma* (Budapest/Vienna), *Noi* (Rome), *Blok* (Warsaw), *Broom* (Rome), *Het Overzicht* (Antwerp). The list was continued in *MAVO* no. 2, no. 5, no. 7 and no. 9 (Odagiri 1991b). Lissitzky sent Murayama the magazine *Merz* vol. 8, no. 9 and Van Doesburg sent *Der Stijl* no. 2 Murayama (1925). Van Doesburg apparently owned six issues of *MAVO* (Kawahata 1995, 8).

[7] For a brief discussion, see Weisenfeld (2002, 42ff).

The "supranational" appeal should, however, not camouflage the specific historic developments of each individual artist and art movement. On the contrary, it should encourage new discourses. Partha Mitter illustrates the role of avant-garde art on a global level as a weapon against colonisation as follows:

> The enormous expansion of the European cultural horizon in the 'heroic' age of the avant-garde cannot be gainsaid, as the modernist technology of art, not to mention the formal language and syntax of Cubism, allowed artists around the globe to devise new ways to represent the visible world. The modernist revolt against academic naturalism and its attendant ideology was openly welcomed by the subject nations who were engaged in formulating their own resistance to the colonial order. (Mitter 2014, 37)

In the case of Japan, however, it has to be pointed out that Japan was not colonised; it colonised, westernised, and constructed art itself. This paper will argue that the avant-garde concept offered Japanese artists a method to overcome the legacy of the Meiji period and to enter a discourse of questioning the foundation of modern Japanese art.

MAVO – An explosive transgression

Constructing art, museum, exhibition –
The mimesis mentality behind Japanese art politics

During the Meiji era, besides the wide-ranging and radical innovations in economic and military aspects, art received a rich focus from the government. This included the import of Western concepts of art (including the distinction between higher and lower art), art history (in particular the continuous, linear, and development-oriented art history), exhibition (as an aesthetic experience), museum (as an institution, which collects, exhibits, and educates the public about art), and art schools (focused on teaching the Renaissance single-point perspective).

Specifically during the world exhibitions of the 19th century, Japan encountered the Western constructs of art, museum, and exhibition.[8] At the beginning of the 1860s, the Japanese government sent out several missions abroad, during which the members of the delegation could experience the Great London Exposition. Since standardised

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[8] However, this does not mean that Japan did not exhibit and collect art before the 19th century. The Japanese approach to these concepts was indeed different in comparison to Europe. For a brief discourse see: "The Dream of a Museum. 120 years of the concept of the 'bijutsukan' in Japan," (2002) and Kornicki (1994).

expressions for the exhibited Western art concepts did not exist in the Japanese language yet, many written characterisations of these events by travellers made use of a variety of vocabularies in order to attempt to grasp the meaning and function of a Western museum (Hedinger 2011, 53f.; Fukuzawa 1995, 355–382). Gradually, using a combination of Chinese characters, a term that aligned with the original Western idea of an exhibition was invented, namely *hakurankai* 博覧会 (*haku* 博 = broad, far, wide, many; *ran* 覧 = look at; *kai* 会 = gathering, society). In comparison, the expression *bijutsu* 美術 (art) was for the most part a neologism, compiled by the words *bi* 美 (beauty) and *jutsu* 術 (technique) (Satō 2011, 66–93). What is interesting is the application of this term, as in 1872 *bijutsu* was used for the first time in a translation of a German article regarding the preparations for attendance at the world exhibition in Vienna (Kitazawa 1989, 144f.). This description included the following definition of art: "*Seiyō nite ongaku, gagaku, zō wo tsukuru jutsu, shigaku nado bijutsu to tsuta fu*" (The ability to make/ create music, sculpture, poetry and so on are called art in the West) (Kitazawa 2000, 336).

Due to the simultaneous import and translation of both terms "museum" and "exhibition" into Japanese, their practical application initially caused confusion. This meant that, for instance, the term "museum" was applied mistakenly on permanent exhibitions during the Meiji era. In the case of the "art museum", this expression (*bijutsukan* 美術館) was for a long time used explicitly for temporary halls, which were destroyed after the exhibition or reused for other purposes.

Besides inventing a new vocabulary, the art administration system after the Meiji restoration established several policies to provide these terms with content, in order to avoid falling short compared to the Western model. For instance, the export of Japanese products was mainly focused on catering to the Western "thirst" for Japonisme craft objects, and the world exhibitions and domestic industrial exhibitions were used for Japan to self-present itself as a "civilized" nation with its own national Art History (Satō 2011, 106). To prevent the outflow of ancient Japanese art to the West and to protect art objects from destruction, the government passed several laws and policies even through the post-war years. On the one hand, the government was continuously fearful of losing Japan's own heritage, but on the other hand, approved the export of objects to the Japonisme-obsessed West in order to promote industrial production (Satō 2011, 106–107).

Using the slogan *kōko rikon* (learn from the past to benefit the present) the government encouraged contemporary artists to create high-quality craft products for export. In this sense, the national museums (so-called Imperial Museums) supported the promotion of Japanese art in the West (Satō 2011, 107). Their main role lay in collecting, protecting, and exhibiting old Japanese art, which means art up to the end of the Edo period, so that contemporary artists could learn from the past and create objects which would be useful for the present. In other words, the craft objects exhibited at the World Exhibitions were not pre-Meiji items but contemporary items created with the explicit purpose of exportation.

Since the museums (Imperial Museums) focused mainly on collecting old Japanese art, modern art appeared only in art education and was neither valued as art for the purpose of collection nor as worthy of protection. The exhibition system "Bunten" (Monbushō bijutsu tenrankai 文部省美術展覧会, shortened to Bunten 文展), which has carried out annual exhibitions since 1907, played a crucial role in shaping appreciation for and a canon of modern art in Japan. Bunten is based on the model of the French salons, in other words, on the official art exhibitions of the French Academy of Fine Arts since 1663. The artwork exhibited in these salons first had to be approved by a jury, mainly consisting of members of the academy, in order to enter the exhibition. In many ways, as the central educational exhibition institution, Bunten gathered the entirety of contemporary art of Japan into one exhibition, including *yōga* 洋画 (Western-style painting), *Nihonga* 日本画 (Japanese-style painting), and sculpture. More concretely, this was the first system which introduced standards for modern art in Japan.

In this way, the construction of art, exhibitions, and museums by transplanting and absorbing Western models was politically motivated to create a self-serving myth of a colonial state comparable with Western powers. The industrial and manufacturing policies geared toward the economic demands of the West. Art education promoted the Western concept of art and value system by placing painting and sculpture over crafts. In short, religious and academic art were considered high art in contrast to popular art, which related to everyday life.

Hence, all the necessary conditions needed for the avant-garde to thrive and flourish were established during the Meiji era: a differentiation in terms of the art system including museums, exhibition salons, and a linear art history. The avant-garde movements of the Taishō era (1912–1926), especially the more radical ones, strove to

overcome this system of conservative, hierarchical, and bureaucratic art institutions. Subsequently, as the bourgeoisie embodied the image of the enemy for the European avant-garde, so did transplanted Western art canon and its supposed superiority for the Japanese. While still referring to the international language of the avant-garde, Japanese artists searched for a way to overcome and go beyond the legacy of the Meiji era.

It took the Japanese artists, from the first introduction of avant-garde ideas in Japan until its actual birth and flourishment, over 10 years to embrace the movement. The reception of the early avant-garde in Japan between 1920 and 1922 was for the most part limited to poetry and literature due to the high availability of these written works. Based on Omuka Toshiharu's discussion of the development of the avant-garde in Japan, this paper will distinguish between three stages:

1. The literary stage (1920-1922);
2. MAVO stage (1923-present);
3. The aggressive stage (1925-present) (Omuka 1998, 225f.).

Literary avant-garde in Japan – a pre-stage for MAVO

One remarkable example of the interconnected nature of the avant-garde is the dissemination of the first *Futuristic Manifesto* by Marinetti in 1909, which marked the birth of Italian Futurism:

- Paris, 20th February 1909: the first publication of the Manifesto in French on the cover page of *Figaro* with the title *Le Futurisme* (the manifesto was also distributed as four-page-long pamphlet);
- Milan, March 1909, Italian version (including text variations): four-page-long pamphlet titled *Fondazione e Manifesto des Futurismo* is released; the manifesto was also published at the same time in Marinetti's magazine *Poesia*;
- Moscow, 8th March 1909: the Russian translation of the manifesto appeared in the newspaper *Vecer*;
- Japan, May 1909: the eleven points of the manifesto were published in the literature magazine *Subaru*, translated by Mori Ōgai;
- Lisbon, 5th August 1909: the manifesto was released in *Diario dos Azores*;
- Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, 1909: the eleven statements of the manifesto, some excerpts, and summaries appeared in *Vossische Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and *Kölnische Zeitung*;

- ❧ Madrid, 5th April 1909: the eleven points were published in *El Liberal*;

- ❧ Buenos Aires, 1909: the eleven statements were released in *La Nacion* and in *El Diario Espanol*;

- ❧ London, March 1912: the eleven points appeared in the exhibition catalogue *Exhibition of works by the Italian Futurist Painters*;

- ❧ Berlin, March 1912: the manifesto appeared in the magazine *Sturm* by Herwarth Walden;

- ❧ Moskow, 1914: a Russian translation was published by G. Tasteven as *Futurizm* (van den Berg 2009, 13–14).

Less than three months after its first publication in *Figaro*, the eleven statements by Marinetti were published in Japan (Mori 1909). However, little enthusiasm was displayed until October 1920, when the so-called father of the Russian Futurists, David Burliuk, arrived in Japan and remained until August 1922. The Ukrainian artist Viktor Palmov (1888-1929) and the Czech Vaclav Fiala (1896-1980) accompanied him but most significantly, Burliuk brought over three hundred modern Russian paintings, which were exhibited in October 1920 in the *Exhibition of the latest Russian Paintings in Japan* at the Hoshi pharmaceutical headquarters in Kyōbashi.[9] The year 1920 was thus crucial for Japanese artists, as they encountered avant-garde and modern art in person for the first time. The discussion on avant-garde was also stimulated by the publication *Miraiha to wa? Kotaeru* (What is Futurism? An Answer), released by a key figure of the *Miraiha bijutsu kyōkai* (Futurist Art Association), Kinoshita Shūichirō (1896-1991) in cooperation with Burliuk in 1923 (Burliuk & Kinoshita 1923).

During the second exhibition of the "Futurist Art Association" in 1921, the poet Hirato Renkichi (1894-1922) distributed a pamphlet, including his own futuristic manifesto *Mouvement futuriste Japonais*, on the streets of the district Hibiya in Tokyo. Even without mentioning direct quotes from Marinetti, the metaphorical language about dynamics, the speed of motors, the fresh smell of gasoline, the space of a metropolis, and even the appeal to embrace the modern technology instead of the mouldy smell of books recall the original programmatic publication in 1909 (Hirato 1986, 146). Hirato's poetry reflects his eclectic attitude towards avant-garde movements, as demonstrated by how he divides his poetry into four categories: "Futuristic poetry of time", "Cubistic poetry of

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[9] For detailed information about David Burliuk's activities in Japan, refer to Omuka (1995, 129ff).

space", "four-dimensional poetry", and "late Expressionistic and analogical poetry" (Hirato 1931, 182–193). This strategy of combining and multiplying the "isms" is not a singular case, as the various avant-garde tendencies were received simultaneously in Japan and this generated a unique symbiosis.

The young poet Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-1987) accompanied by the essayist and translator Tsuji Jun (1884-1944) was the first artist to experiment with Dada poetry during the early 1920s. Tsuji declared himself the first Japanese Dadaist (Tsuji 1982, 286), but both writers used the Dada concept to reflect on their individual lives rather than to guide a radical art movement (Takahashi 1982, 50–52).[10] This progressive and pioneering context of the avant-garde was brought to the forefront in 1923, when avant-garde groups surrounding the anarchistic literary magazine *Aka to kuro* (1923-24) and, far more essentially, the group MAVO (1923-1925), sprang to life.

MAVO-Stage – In-between Expressionism, Dadaism, Futurism, and Constructivism

A German Expressionism in Berlin attracted international artists, among them Murayama Tomoyoshi, one of the founding members of MAVO and the main theoretical leader of the group. Between 1922-1923, Murayama chose to live in Berlin during his year abroad and there encountered various important and influential artists at the Galerie Sturm, who left a deep impression on him: Franz Marc (1880–1916), Lyonel Feininger (1871–1956), Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), August Macke (1887–1914), Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) and Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964). Additionally, Murayama participated in international exhibitions and congresses, and experienced theatre pieces by the dramatists Georg Kaiser (1878–1945), Ernst Toller (1893–1939), and Max Reinhardt (1873–1943), and revolutionary free dance work by Niddy Impekoven (1904–2002). Just a few months after his return to Japan, Murayama presented concrete results of his travels in the form of a solo exhibition, and announced his newly born art theory *ishikiteki kōsei shugi* ("*Bewusster Konstruktionismus* = Conscious Constructionism"), which laid the foundations for the new avant-garde group MAVO (Murayama 1991, 5).

There are several rumours surrounding the myth about the foundation of MAVO as well as the origin of the group's name. The aforementioned "Futuristic Art Association"

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[10] For further reference, see Hackner (2001).

(FAA) was a crucial component of the group's formation, as many original members of MAVO were initially active as Futurists.[11] Two months after the dissolution of the FAA, MAVO proclaimed their establishment in July 1923. One of the myths surrounding the foundation of MAVO illustrates the Dadaistic method used by members Murayama Tomoyoshi, Ōura Shūzō (1890-1928), Ogata Kamenosuke (1900-1942), Kadowaki Shinrō (dates unknown) and Yanase Masamu (1900-1945) to invent an avant-garde group name by writing down their names on a piece of paper, which they tore apart and spread all over the room. Four pieces were randomly chosen and the result was the combination MAVO (Yurugi 1991, 12–13). It is questionable, however, as to what kind of alphabet the artists used, since, for instance, the letter "V" does not appear in any of their names. A second version of this myth does not include a nonsensical technique, instead suggesting that each letter was given a certain meaning: "M = mass, A = alpha, V = vitesse, O = omega" (Yurugi 1991, 12–13). This code seems to refer to a more conscious reflection, but the metaphysical meaning of the acronym is difficult to grasp and ultimately unnecessary. A far more important aspect is that first the creation of an avant-garde group name, in the form of a mysterious and random act, was in itself celebrated; and secondly, the group demonstrated an ability to create something without any reference to history or tradition, in other words, to create something out of nothing.

In many ways, this idea of a myth surrounding the formation of a name for an avant-garde movement reminds one of the stories surrounding the foundation of the Dada group in Zurich in 1916. The famous Cabaret Voltaire, a platform for avant-garde art and literature where expressionistic, futuristic or cubistic experiments were presented and iconic poetry performances demonstrated, was the very place in which the name origin myths were born. Various members claim to have the one true story that explains the meaning behind "Dada"; it might embody the French expression for "hobbyhorse", or personify in German the first attempts of a child to speak, and lastly, "Dada" was also a Swiss brand for soap products (van den Berg 2009, 69–70).

The MAVO members were certainly aware of the Dadaist tradition, due to early distribution of Dada literature in Japan and Murayama's personal contacts with Dada artists. By this means, the MAVO naming act and the various myths and versions surrounding it are a way of identifying with the international avant-garde. In order to

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[11] For a brief discussion, refer to Omuka (1995).

establish the newborn movement, consequently the next step lay in the performative act of proclamation in the form of a manifesto.

MAVO's first exhibition took place in the Buddhist temple Denpōin in the district Asakusa in Tokyo between 28th July and 3rd August, 1923. Here the artists presented themselves not only through their work but also through their manifesto. The "MAVO manifesto" can be divided into three major paragraphs:

1) The introduction of the group, its name, and members;

2) Characterisation of the group's ideology;

3) The actions and concrete intentions of the group.

The Mavoists, as the members called themselves, possessed different beliefs, passions, and theories but nevertheless were still connected by the same tendency in art manifested in the form of Constructivism. The MAVO group claimed to be unrelated to any past art group, and to create original and new art:

> We stand at the front. We will stand forever at the front. We don't have any ties. We are radical. We revolutionize. We move forward. We create. We incessantly affirm and negate. We live in every meaning of the word. There is no comparison to us. (Odagiri 1991a)

In order to transcend the boundaries of art, the MAVO group planned, in addition to art exhibitions, lectures, theatre performances, concerts, and the publication of a magazine (Odagiri 1991a). The relatively reserved attitude of this manifesto might be misleading, considering the performative and provocative character of their activities. However, in comparison to the mystical atmosphere surrounding the origins of the name MAVO, the manifesto made no use of metaphorical language; for instance, in contrast to the dynamic language of Marinetti in his Futurist manifesto and his constant references to the high-speed character of the city as the birthplace of the avant-garde movement (Marinetti 1995b). Then again, the nonsensical attitude of the Dada manifesto by Tzara is obviously reflected in the MAVO manifesto through such expressions as, "We incessantly affirm and negate" (Tzara 1995, 151.). This revolutionary attitude is particularly noticeable in the direct demand of standing as an "avant-garde" in other words, in front of all artistic styles, genres and traditions.

The critic Asaeda Jirō (1888-1967) was not convinced of this revolutionary claim by the MAVO group after viewing their first exhibition, and remarked in his review that they remained the bourgeoisie, left undestroyed by their own radical tendencies

(Asaeda 1923, 7). He criticised Murayama's montage works the most, while praising the non-figurative and abstract paintings of Yanase and Ogata. This paper puts the montage pieces into more focus than other artworks by the MAVO members, firstly due to their striking reception by the critics and the audience and, secondly, due to the transgressive nature of their technique, which allowed the artist to deconstruct the established art canon.

Deconstructing causality and narrative unity – the montage technique

One of the works that Asaeda viewed in this exhibition was the *Piece made of flowers and a shoe*[12] (see Figure 1). However, only a photograph of the work remains.[13] In a small, probably wooden, box, the artist assembled a woman's shoe next to a round bin with flowers inside and crowned with a bow. The inside of the box is pasted with Japanese newspaper articles. The assembled materials do not hide behind an illusionistic depiction of space or causality represented through unity in the materials. They are neither painted over to simulate an oil painting nor transferred to decrease their three-dimensional nature. The montage technique itself becomes the main motif of this work since its construction is visible. Asaeda's uncertain and vague language that attempted to classify the technique or the style of this type of art suggests that Murayama's constructions were something that the critic was experiencing for the first time. "Am I able to feel this artwork?" he questions, and he immediately arrives at the conclusion that shoes, socks, and hair were not worthy of being included in artwork (Asaeda 1923, 7). By adding real objects and letters, Murayama decreased, according to Asaeda, the quality and positive effect of art. Asaeda appeals to the artist that, instead of importing materials and objects into his art pieces, Murayama should emphasise the purity of art and the immediate transmission of emotions (Asaeda 1923, 7). Murayama reacted furiously to this critique, saying it was not his nor MAVO's purpose to create art with one obvious message or to express emotions free from any confusion or doubt (Murayama 1923, 6). Murayama's art was neither meant to be subjected to an art category nor to be enjoyed as an after-dinner tea. Instead, it was meant to cross the boundaries of art styles and the barriers of everyday life (Murayama 1923, 6). Asaeda's

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[12] Murayama Tomoyoshi, *Piece made of flowers and a shoe* (Hana to kutsu no tsukatte are sakuhin), ca. 1923, Mixed media, presumed lost. Photograph taken from: Odagiri, S. (Ed.). (1991a). Mavo dai ikkai tenrankai [Special issue]. *Mavo fukkokuban furoku*. Tokyo: Nihon kindai bungakkan.
[13] For the list of exhibited works, see Odagiri (1991a).

pursuit of an experience of causality or "purity" in materials conflicted with MAVO's aim of transgression, and perhaps with the motivations of avant-garde movements in general. A famous quote by Juan Gris (1887-1927) neatly summarises the problem: "Why should one paint something if one can show it?" (Möbius 2000, 141). Murayama's montage method revealed provocatively a technique that is not hidden behind an illusionistic depiction. The distinction between the subject of the work and its artistic realisation is deconstructed to the point where the material becomes the actual subject matter of the art piece. The main focus is instead directed towards the choice of the foreign materials, their relations with each other, the origins of the found objects, if possible to guess, and the tactile characteristics of the surface.

A striking example of this new artistic language can be found in Murayama's montage piece *Construction*[14] from 1925, which consists of an assembly of various found objects and scraps such as wood, fabric fragments, metal pieces, photographs, and written numbers. The objects were not randomly or chaotically inserted without any alterations, but rather are edited in order to fit into a very clear and structured geometric composition. Some of the scraps are painted over, making it difficult to guess the appearance of the original surface. Observing the individual fragments, one can see that the texture of the material varies from hard and smooth to rough and soft. The origin of the assembled photographs on the right upper side of the work is difficult to ascertain, but motifs such as industry, architecture, electricity, the military, and images of fashionable women, probably actresses or dancers, seem to suggest that the artist's chief inspiration was modernity. The confused and shocked reaction by critics towards similar montage works is not surprising because of their unfamiliarity with the principle of the deconstruction of causality and narrative unity in art and the radical three-dimensional and tactile experiences of the works, which literally reach out to the viewer.

In the case of MAVO, the mass media and consumerism were some of the topics for inspiration. The artists used magazine and newspaper articles as sources, which possessed their own reality as historical documents and as reflections on everyday life. One of example is the representations of women or, to be precise, modern women depicted in mass media, starting in the late Meiji era (1868–1912). During the rapid

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[14] Murayama Tomoyoshi, *Construction* (Kōsei or konsutorakushon), 1925, Oil and mixed media on wood, 84 x 112,5 cm, Collection National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo: http://search.artmuseums.go.jp/search_e/gazou.php?sakuhin=4912&edaban=1

process of industrialisation and modernisation, Japan followed Western concepts of economic, political, military, and cultural development. As part of this process of Westernisation, the number of working women increased and Japanese women began to seek independence as embodied prominently through the adoption of Western fashion and cosmetics. Some magazines released special issues that focused on a particular part of the female body various illustrations (Silverberg 1991).

Shibuya Osamu (1900–1963), a member of the MAVO group, assembled images of women's legs and shoes in his 1925 montage work *Kyōkansei no toboshii zōka no aru konsutorakushon* (Construction of Artificial Flowers Lacking in Sympathy) (see Figure 2).[15] In addition to the use of mass media, materiality is an essential topic in this piece. The artist constructed his montages by referring to the theories of Italian Futurism and Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious and his model of psychic structure, or the Pleasure Principle and Reality Principle (Marinetti 1995a). According to Shibuya, it is possible to represent hidden pleasures and unconscious ideas while employing the tactile sense as a tool. Wire, wood, artificial flowers, or the cut-out magazine images, depending on their glossy, rough or sharp surface, induce unconscious impulses, emotions, and reactions. These invisible elements are part of everyday life and should be, as Shibuya explained, represented in art (Shibuya 1925).

The practice of montage art is only one aspect of the transgressional flourishment of artistic expression during the 1920s in Japan. Discourses on industrialisation, Westernisation, the spread of consumerism, and the mass media found their expression in paintings, collages, constructions, three dimensional objects, theatre pieces, design as well as architectural models, and lastly performances, which surpassed the previously supposed limits of artistic expression.

Third aggressive stage – elimination of boundaries between artwork and audience

Besides the critics, the art establishment also experienced the MAVO's provocative attitude. In August 1923, after their works submitted to the Nika Art Association's tenth annual exhibition were rejected by the jury members, the MAVO artists gathered in front of the venue for the Nika exhibition, Takenodai Exhibition Hall in Ueno, and simply displayed their rejected works in front of it. Some of the works were placed on park

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[15] Shibuya Osamu, "Construction of Artificial Flowers Lacking in Sympathy". (Original work is presumed lost. Photograph taken from the magazine *Mizue* nr. 245, p. 38, 1925).

benches, some against trees, and a red flag was draped from the roof of the building displaying the word "MAVO". Originally, they had planned to carry the works accompanied by music from Ueno Park to the district of Shimbashi. But as soon as they left the park, the police stopped their procession and took several members into custody (Omuka 1995, 424). Besides the Anti-Nika "Moving-Exhibition", MAVO submitted anarchic and expressionistic architecture designs[16] (see Figure 3) for the reconstruction of Tokyo after the Great-Kantō Earthquake in September 1923 and stirred up a discussion about architecture created by non-architects (Omuka 1995, 301f).

Not only was their art often unpredictable, but also their magazine was literally explosive. The cover of the third issue of *MAVO* published in September 1924 originally contained a real firecracker, but was later removed by censors. Although readers were denied an explosive encounter with MAVO's magazine, they were offered instead a transgressive experience of the concept of the everyday as art during their performative exhibitions. The critic Kawaji Ryūkō (1888-1959) explicitly defined the exhibited artwork in the second Sanka exhibition using the term *seikatsu geijutsu* (everyday art), and struggled to approach their underlying new concept: "Why and how should one understand these works?" (Kawaji 2011, 123).

Sanka zōkei bijutsu kyōkai (The third division of the cooperation for plastic art, shortened to Sanka) was an innovative art association that arose after the Great Kantō Earthquake with the purpose of offering artists, especially modern artists, an exhibition space beyond the official art establishment. Mavoists as well as members from the above-mentioned Action Avant-Group formed the core of Sanka. The first exhibition, which took place in May 1925 at the department store Matsuzakaya in Tokyo's district Ginza in Tokyo, had already caused irritation and confusion among critics, as Kawaji's remark illustrates. In comparison, the second exhibition was referenced much more in newspapers, providing clues about how the unique atmosphere of the exhibition space was created.

"Strange", "mysterious", "grotesque", and "similar to a haunted house or the underworld" are just a few descriptions to be found in the reviews of the exhibition.[17] After passing through a gate made of burnt iron wire, the visitor would enter the main hall of

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[16] Takamizawa Michinao, *Café* (Kafe), Plaster model exhibited at the "Exhibition of Plans for the Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital", April 1924, presumed lost. Photograph in "Teito fukkō sōan tenrankai shuppin shashin jusanshu", Kenchiku shinchō 5, no. 6 (June 1924).

[17] *Asahi shinbun* (1925, 6); *Hōchi shinbun* (1925, 4); *Jiji shinpō* (1925a, 2); *Jiji shinpō* (1925b, 9); *Asahi shinbun* (1925b, 7); *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō* (1925, 2).

the governing board in Ueno (Kii no sekai wo chinsetsu shita Sankaten. Ueno jichi kaikan de kaisai, 1925). Inside were paintings, montages, assemblages that made use of everyday materials such as hair and shoes, rope ladders and fluttering newspapers hanging from the ceiling. Also on display were a piece titled *Lumpenproletariat* by Okamoto Tōki (1903-1986), and architectural designs such as *A draft for an open air theatre using stage design* by Maki Hisao (dates unknown), which challenged the definitions of art.[18] Some of the photographs illustrated the *Idō kippu uriba* (Moving ticket machine)[19] (see Figure 4), which welcomed the irritated visitor before a black-painted hand would stretch out to sell entrance tickets (Kisō tengai: Sankaten no shuppin kimaru. Keishichō kara niramaretsu suppadaka de daiku no mane, 1925). The machine was built on wheels so that it could be moved freely around the entire exhibition space. Another attraction in front of the main hall was the monumental *Sankaten montō* (Sanka exhibition tower)[20] (see Figure 5), constructed out of pipes, spiral cables or ropes, and metal poles.

A representative of the security commission apparently ordered some of the works to be removed, with the comment: "I don't understand this but all of it is terrible" (Kii no sekai wo chinsetsu shita Sankaten. Ueno jichi kaikan de kaisai, 1925). The number of exhibited art pieces varies in the press from 91 to 200 selected works out of 603, or 722 originally submitted pieces for the show.[21] Adding to the provocative atmosphere were the characterisations of the Sanka artists as being radical, anti-establishment, capable of being disputed, and attracting police due to the Bolshevistic ideas of some members (*Jiji shinpō* 1925a, 2).

The discourse of defining art that Kawaji raised in his review of the first Sanka exhibition, appears to continue in the same or even more radical vein during the second show. Kawaji chose the term "everyday art" because of the usage of found objects as elements of the montage technique and also due to the elimination of boundaries between the artwork and the visitor. He describes how, in the process of trying to grasp the meaning behind "everyday art", the unprepared viewer is taken by surprise by its impulsive and direct expressions of reality (Kawaji 2011, 129).

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[18] *Asahi shinbun* (1925b, 7); *Jiji shinpō* (1925b, 9); *Jiji shinpō* (1925a, 2).

[19] Okada Tatsuo in the *Gate and Moving Ticket-Selling Machine*, second Sanka exhibition, September 1925. In Murayama Tomoyoshi, "Sankaten no ben" (The diction of the Sanka exhibition), Chūō bijutsu, no. 119 (October 1925), p. 189.

[20] NNK, *Sanka Exhibition Entrance Tower* (Sankaten montō), exhibited outside the second Sanka exhibition, September 1925. In Murayama, "Sankaten no ben", p. 189.

[21] *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō* (1925, 2); *Jiji shinpō* (1925a, 2); *Hōchi shinbun* (1925, 4).

Mavoist's experimental lust went beyond montages and constructions, even entering the field of book design, stage design and theatre (Murayama's experiments in *Gekijō no sanka*, Sanka Theater). The eclectic use of Dadaistic, Constructivist, Futuristic, and Anarchistic thoughts blended MAVO into an explosive mix which may have been responsible for the dissolution of the group in only two years. In many ways, however, the gradual moving away by Murayama, as the main theoretical core, from MAVO and Sanka activities and diving into the field of theatre was responsible for the end of MAVO.

Conclusion: Japanese Avant-garde – a multi-layered phenomenon

When defining the nature of Japanese avant-garde, it is necessary to discuss the multiple historical layers and the relationships between them as the conceptual Japanese artist Kawara On (1932-2014) proposed. He participated in a round table discussion in Tokyo in 1955 with the title *Atarashii ningen zō ni mukatte* (Approaching a new idea of a man). Here he defined the modern era (including modern art) as a coexistence of histories and as historical layers. Kawara suggested that if, instead of viewing modernity as dominated by America and Europe, one begins defining modernity as a local matter and as a mutual exchange, it is possible to break the insistent centralisation in our thinking about art (On 1952-1957).

The development of modern art and avant-garde in Europe is one of those layers, which is closely connected to modern and avant-garde Japanese art history due to the fact that Meiji politics dictated the definitions of art by imitating the European model. "Infected" by the spirit of the world exhibitions during the 19th century and the competitive atmosphere among the European powers, Japan sought to represent itself as modern as possible on all levels. This goal of blind imitation of artistic tendencies found in France or Germany simultaneously caused a shift among young Japanese artists of the early avant-garde movements. Aware of the Meiji legacy, groups such as MAVO still referred to the artistic language of the European avant-garde and at the same time raised fundamental questions about who defines what art is. This language was neither "European" nor "Japanese" but, to put it in Schwitters' words, "supranational" (2004, 197.). The reactions of critics and the audience (Kawaji 2011, 122ff.) illustrate the radical intentions behind the art works, the manifestos and performative interventions to challenge the perception of the audience and the art world.

The tendencies for transgressiveness in the early Japanese avant-garde can be located in the diversity of art styles and genres, in the blurring of the boundary between the so-called high and low art, or popular art and mass media, in the passing from visible to invisible, as explicitly seen in the montage pieces of the MAVO members which operate through association and the tactile sense. Thus, viewing the phenomenon of Japanese avant-garde in the context of the *Politics of Beauty* during the Meiji era offers an understanding of the usage of the avant-garde methods as a possibility for transgression. By referring to a space above the tradition or a time in the future ahead of current art tendencies, avant-garde aims to focus on the present by inviting participation from the audience. In other words, by changing the roles of art and the artist, and by encompassing the audience as part of the artwork, the present time becomes the topic or the main principle of avant-garde.
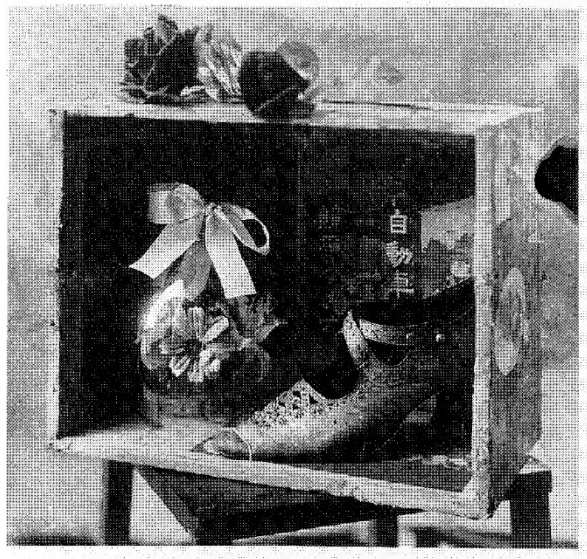
Fig. 1. *Piece made of flowers and a shoe* (Hana to kutsu no tsukatte are sakuhin), ca. 1923, Mixed media, presumed lost. Photograph taken from: Odagiri, S. (Ed.). (1991a). Mavo dai ikkai tenrankai [Special issue]. *Mavo fukkokuban furoku*. Tokyo: Nihon kindai bungakkan.

Fig. 2. Shibuya Osamu, "Construction of Artificial Flowers Lacking in Sympathy". (Original work is presumed lost. Photograph taken from the magazine *Mizue* nr. 245 p. 38, 1925).

Fig. 3. Takamizawa Michinao, *Café* (Kafe), Plaster model exhibited at the "Exhibition of Plans for the Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital", April 1924, presumed lost. Photograph in "Teito fukkō sōan tenrankai shuppin shashin jusanshu", Kenchiku shinchō 5, no. 6 (June 1924).
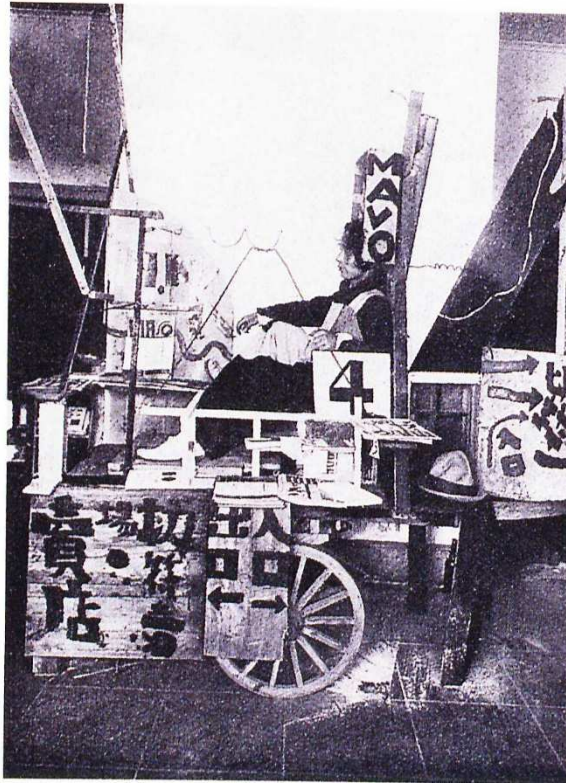
Fig. 4. Okada Tatsuo in the *Gate and Moving Ticket-Selling Machine*, second Sanka exhibition, September 1925. In Murayama Tomoyoshi, "Sankaten no ben" (The diction of the Sanka exhibition), Chūō bijutsu, no. 119 (October 1925), p. 189.
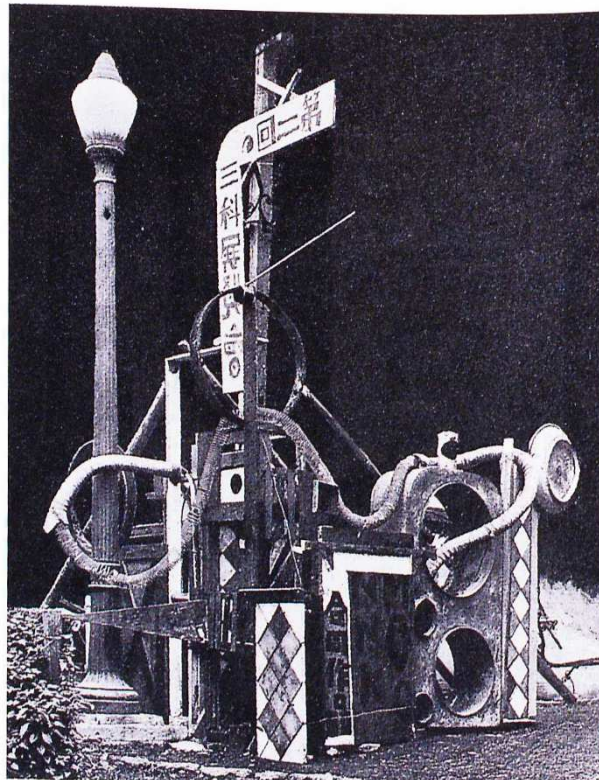
Fig. 5. NNK, *Sanka Exhibition Entrance Tower* (Sankaten montō), exhibited outside the second Sanka exhibition, September 1925. In Murayama, "Sankaten no ben", p. 189.

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Japan and Korea in the mirror of Cinema: Selfness and Otherness between mutual understanding and recurrent nationalisms

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ABSTRACT

The mutual representations and understanding of Korea and Japan can be approached by means of a socio-historical framing of the relationships between the two countries in the last decades, stemming from the tragic turmoil of World War II and the postcolonial heritage, including the 'comfort women' issue and the problems of the Korean minority in Japan, to the spreading of Japanese pop culture in South Korea and the 'Korean Wave' during the 1980s and the 1990s in Japan. Though nowadays resurgent nationalisms in both countries seem to highlight the limits of soft power in mutual acceptance, popular culture can be used as a privileged resource to investigate reciprocal representations between both societies. This paper aims to retrace the above-mentioned issues in a few selected recent Japanese and Korean movies, whose reception in Japan and Korea is connected to the audience sensitivity to the 'Self and Other' representations. The topic of the Korean minority in Japan is addressed through Hiroki Ryūichi's Sayonara Kabukichō *(*Kabukicho Love Hotel*, 2014), partially shot on locations in Shin-Ōkubo, Tokyo's Korea Town. On the other hand, the rediscovery of Korea's colonial past, linked to the 'comfort women' issue, is seen through the lens of Choi Dong-hoon's* Amsal *(*Assassination*, 2015) and Cho Jung-rae's* Kwihyang *(*Spirits' Homecoming*, 2016). Japanese and Korean contemporary filmography seems to reflect people's present worries about a significant Other, geographically and historically linked to the Self, as well as to portray the ethnic and national identity rebuilding through a retelling of history.*

The mutual representations and understanding of Korea [1] and Japan can be approached by means of a socio-historical framing of the relationships between the two countries in the last decades. Such a preliminary overview provides a 'secure base' for an exploration on a media studies perspective of a number of popular culture [2]

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[1] When writing 'Korea', the reference is, implicitly, to 'South Korea'. The division between North and South Korea occurred after World War II, after the end of Japanese rule over Korea (1910-1945).

[2] Even if the meaning of the terms 'pop' and 'popular' partially overlap, the term 'pop' refers more specifically to something containing qualities of mass appeal and is sometimes equated to mass culture (e.g. *kawaii* culture), while "popular" refers to what has reached popularity, regardless of its stylistic traits. In this study the two terms are used more or less interchangeably. See also Storey (2006).

works offering examples of reciprocal representations between Korean and Japanese societies. In a context of globalisation, where cultures are more and more connected, media works and processes definitely influence people's mutual understanding and value-orientation. Following Bourdieu (1979), there is indeed a tight link between aesthetic dispositions and social aspects.

Though nowadays resurgent nationalisms in both countries seem to highlight the limits of soft power[3] (Hayashi and Lee, 2007) in mutual acceptance, popular culture can be used as a privileged resource to investigate reciprocal representations between Korea and Japan. In the following pages I will firstly outline the historical framework of the relationship between the two countries from colonisation to World War II. Secondly, I will examine, on the one hand, the influence of Japanese popular culture in Korea, on the other hand, the phenomenon of the 'Korean Wave' in Japan. In this regard, I will discuss soft power potential and limits in determining mutual perceptions between Korea and Japan. Finally, I will consider a few recent Japanese and Korean movies, whose reception in Japan and Korea is connected to the audience's images of Self and Other. The topic of the Korean minority in Japan will be addressed through Hiroki Ryūichi's *Sayonara Kabukichō* (*Kabukicho Love Hotel*, 2014), whilst the rediscovery of Korea's colonial past will be seen through the lens of Choi Dong-hoon's *Amsal* (*Assassination*, 2015) and Cho Jung-rae's *Kwihyang* (*Spirits' Homecoming*, 2016). These movies have been selected because of their specific relevance in relation to three aspects of Japan-Korea relations which I consider extremely significant with regard to the mutual representation of the two countries: the *Zainichi* (Korean residents in Japan) condition, the Japanese rule of Korea from 1910 to 1945 and the 'comfort women' issue. Other Korean and Japanese movies could surely be useful for this purpose and I will make a quick reference to some of them in this paper, but I will extensively discuss the three I have selected because of their vivid representation of the above mentioned aspects.

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[3] A country's 'soft power', according to Nye (1990), is the ability to attract and influence another country by using culture, political values and foreign politics. Whilst Nye has used the notion particularly with respect to America, which dominated the world culturally, politically and economically in the immediate post-World War II, several scholars have considered soft power in Asia, where Japan has played a leading role thanks to its imperialist past (see Iwabuchi, 2002).

Japan and Korea from Colonisation to World War II

The unavoidable premises to further considerations are the Japanese rule of Korea from 1910 to 1945 and the tragic turmoil of World War II with its postcolonial heritage, including the 'comfort women' issue and the problems of the Korean minority in Japan. This is the historical background of the above mentioned conflicting nationalisms, representing the counterpart of the spreading of Japanese pop culture[4] in South Korea and the 'Korean Wave' during the 1980s and the 1990s in Japan.

Korea's involvement with Japan in modern times must be dated back to the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), mostly fought on Korean soil. With the turn of the twentieth century, Korea was formally annexed to the Empire of Japan (1910); during the Japanese domination, the country underwent drastic and significant changes, which affected politics, economy and culture. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were crucial for the rebuilding of Korean national consciousness amid the colonial ambitions of China and Japan, also thanks to the role of newspapers (Schmid, 2002) and literature (Zur, 2016), which followed and shaped the process of social transformations during modern (and contemporary) history.

The colonisation of Korea marked the end of the Joseon dynasty, which lasted for about five centuries, starting from 1392. Early Japanese colonialism in Korean peninsula was characterised by the military rule (1910-1919) of General Masatake Terauchi, the first Governor-General of Korea. Occupation forces controlled politics, education, morals, public welfare and tax collection, generating an early nationalistic movement among Korean people, which led to riots severely repressed by the occupants. In 1910 there was a massive round-up of nationalists due to an alleged plot to assassinate Terauchi[5]. During his rule, Terauchi had prohibited "meetings, closed newspapers and ordered burned over 200,000 books" containing information on Korean history and geography as well as "free-thinking modern ideas". By 1918, over 200,000 Koreans had been "labelled rebellious, arrested and tortured" (Kang, 2013). The concept of 'nation' (*minjok*) was first used within an editorial of Seoul's gazette, *Hwangsong sinmun*, on January the 12th, 1900. This ethnic concept of nation was linked to the old myth of Tan'gun, the progenitor of

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[4] Japanese popular culture encompasses cinema, *anime*, *manga*, videogames, TV-shows, music, cuisine, and so on. It is one of the leading and most widespread popular cultures in the world.

[5] See: Early Colonialism and Rise of Korean Nationalism and Identity 1910-1919. *The University of British Columbia – Department of History* [Online] Available from:
http://www.history.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/courses/lectures/%5Brealname%5D/early_colonialism_and_rise_of_korean_nationalism_1910-1919.pdf [Accessed 15 May 2017]

Korean people. "Traditional armed resistance faded by 1913, but invoking Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination, the Koreans surprised their masters with two Declarations of Independence in February and March, 1919", which opened the way to a nation-wide civil-disobedience movement (Wells, 1979). Though the rebellion was repressed by the Japanese forces, it marked the beginning of the Korean separatist movement, which lasted at least until Sino-Japanese War. Despite their divisions, the Korean nationalists endured their actions in country and abroad (China, Manchuria), addressing the social, political and ideological issues of the colonial situation (*ibid.*). Despite the fact that "in the last decade of the colonial period, colonial authorities pursued a policy of forced assimilation under the banner of *Naisen Ittai* (Interior [Japan] and Korea as one body)" (Em, 2001), this slogan highlights the ambivalence of Japan's attitude towards the occupied Korea: how can the outside (Korea) become one with a pre-existing interior (Japan) (*ibid.*)?

According to Em, the Japanese conservative discourse in the post-colonial era insisted on a reassuring view of the colonial past: following this narrative, Japan only attempted to "drive out Western colonial powers from Asia", and "colonial rule had ushered Korea into the modern age and that many Koreans had actively supported the Japanese colonial government and the goal of expanding Japan's empire" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, in Japanese neo-nationalist discourse, the Japanese occupation of Korea is presented "as a case of annexation (as opposed to colonisation)" (Caprio, 2010). On the other hand, in South-Korea, during the Cold War, the problem of collaboration was avoided by the anti-communist historiography, while dissidents criticised the role of the propertied classes for their collusion with the Japanese authorities. "In democratic South Korea the unresolved grievances of the colonial past have become exceptionally politicised in ways that have undermined bilateral relations in significant ways" (Porteux, 2016).

The colonial regime was characterised by a massive exploitation of Korean resources and workers (Suh, 1978), and a harsh racial discrimination. Hundreds of thousands of male workers were conscripted by Japanese industry and forcedly sent to Japan, particularly during World War II (Weiner, 1998), adding to the equally large number of spontaneous immigrants during the early years of Japanese colonisation; "in 1940 the population of Koreans living in Japan exceeded 1 million" (Nozaki, Inokuchi and Kim, 2006, 2). Conversely, many Japanese merchants settled in Korea in search of economic chances, mainly land ownership (Kang, 2013). Next to the forced labourers' issue, during World War II thousands

of women from the colonies (between 100,000 and 200,000 according to the International Commission of Jurists, 1994) were forced into sexual slavery in Japanese military brothels ('comfort women'). The latter included an unknown number of Korean women (Bruce, 1997, 155; Hicks, 1996, 312). According to the NGO-led *Women's International War Crimes Tribunal* (2000), the 'comfort women' were one of the greatest unacknowledged injustices of WWII[6]. The issue of the 'comfort women' has been recently interpreted in terms of a 'double bind' between Japanese colonialism and Korean patriarchy, in the cases of women forced to sexual slavery after fleeing sexual abuse at home, or of victims press-ganged to prostitution with the help of Korean procurers (Soh, 2008). The recent history shows that the 'comfort women' issue is still an open wound in the bilateral relationships: "In 1995 the Japanese government helped establish the Asia Women's Fund to provide compensation for the former comfort women, but civil society organisations in South Korea opposed this gesture of atonement because it did not admit state responsibility for the comfort women system. In 2011 the Constitutional Court ruled that the government had violated the rights of former comfort women by not pressing Japan to take state responsibility and provide redress, thereby forcing the most pro-Japanese government since Park Chung-hee to aggressively pursue the matter" (Porteux, 2016). In December 2015 "the Japanese government agreed to pay $8.7 million to dozens of Korean women who were forced to become prostitutes serving Japanese soldiers" (Chelala, 2015, n.p.). The payment started a few months later: "Of the 46 former comfort women who were alive as of Dec. 28, 2015, when the two governments announced the landmark agreement to solve the comfort women issue, 29 of them or their families have expressed their willingness to receive the grants. Six of the 46 have died since the agreement" (The Japan Times, 2016, n.p.). This did not settle the issue, because "Japan apologized and compensated for the general suffering of the comfort women, but not for the specific act of forcible enslavement [for which Japan cites lack of evidence]. Until this happens, Korean protesters consider any apology incomplete" (Yi, 2017, n.p.). In December 2016, a South Korean citizen group provocatively erected a statue in memory of the 'comfort women' in front of the Japanese Consulate in Busan, which resulted in a three-month-long absence of the Japanese ambassador to South Korea. Nagamine's return was accompanied by the public dismay of the noted Japanese novelist

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[6] The transcript of oral judgment delivered on 4 December 2001 by the Judges of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery is available from: http://www.iccwomen.org/wigjdraft1/Archives/oldWCGJ/tokyo/summary.html [Accessed 15 May 2017]

Tsutsui Yasutaka (author of the sci-fi novel *Toki o Kakeru Shōjo* [*The Girl Who Leapt Through Time*]), who had blogged derogatory comments about the statue (Osaki, 2017, n.p.).

The category of 'double bind' can be used again to describe relationships between Japan and Korea during the colonial period. Borrowing the terms Hascom (2013, 55) used in literary criticism about Korean writers during Japanese rule, the colonial narrative is essentially 'split', causing a 'double bind' between the drive to assimilation and the persisting difference of the colonised. In other words, the 'colonial intimacies' between rulers and ruled are basically contradictory (Kwon, 2015, 15). Still, it is possible to argue that these bind and intimacies endured after the turmoil of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Pacific War (1941-1945), the surrender of Japan, and the end of the colonial era at the conclusion of World War II, mark the mutual perception and understanding of the two countries until contemporary days.

After the end of WWII, there "were two intertwined issues: the repatriation of Koreans from the Japanese archipelago to the Korean peninsula and the legal status of Koreans remaining in Japan, specifically, their nationality/citizenship. A massive wave of repatriation of Koreans living in Japan took place within a very short period of time. [...] In 1952, the number of Korean residents was slightly more than 535,000" (Nozaki, Inokuchi and Kim, 2006, 2, 4).

Repatriation was only one side of the coin. The Korean residents in Japan were deprived of Japanese citizenship and civil rights, having been categorised as foreign residents (*zairyu gaikokujin*). The condition of the Korean residents in Japan, the *Zainichi-ron*, is still a political issue in Japan: *Zainichi* (literally "present in Japan") is used for the permanent ethnic Korean residents in Japan tracing their roots to the colonial period, distinguished from the 'newcomer' Korean migrants who have come to Japan mostly since the mid 1980s (Hester, 2008, 145). Some of the permanent ethnic Korean residents in Japan acquired Japanese nationality; one of the terms more commonly used to emphasise their double belonging (they are ethnically Korean but they are Japanese citizens) is *Nihonseki Chōsenjin* (146), i.e. "Korean with Japanese nationality". This term is in competion with *Kankoku-kei Nihonjin*, or "Korean-Japanese", where Japanese is not to be intended as an ethnic descent, rather as a civil-political category (*ibid.*). We will address again the topic of the Korean minority in Japan further on, while considering Hiroki Ryūichi's *Sayonara Kabukichō*.

Japan's Pop Culture in Korea: From Colonial Power to 'Soft Power'

It is possible to affirm that in the post-war period there was a shift in Japanese foreign politics and diplomacy in Asia from colonial power to 'soft power' (Nye, 1990, 2004), as Otmazgin (2013) asserted[7]. The worldwide diffusion of Japanese pop culture since the mid-1980s combined with the fascination it exerted over European, American, and, in the first instance, East Asian audiences made clear to the Japanese government the significance of 'soft power' in terms of diplomatic and economical relationships with foreign countries. Soft power can be an effective way to gently achieve important geopolitical goals in a globalised context, where cultures stand as a vehicle of global influence through the process of transnational cultural consumption (Appadurai, 1996). As Befu (2001) affirmed, "in addition to the West there is at least one other centre of globalisation in this world, namely Japan" (4).

On the basis of these considerations, the role of cultural power cannot be underestimated. Rather, the debate is still open about the 'Japanisation' phenomenon and the value of the spread of Japanese pop culture in other countries (for our purposes, specifically in Asia). Igarashi (1997) does not associate 'Japanisation' to a specific Japanese cultural influence, arguing that the success of Japan's pop culture must be conceived in terms of consumerism and "materialistic cultural dissemination" (6). This somehow recalls Azuma Hiroki's view about the animalistic trait of the cultural consumption within the *otaku* subculture (2001)[8]. On the other hand, scholars as Iwabuchi (2002) do not "dismiss the pervasiveness of Japanese influence", emphasising the re-centring and de-centring of power structures as "cultural imperialism" to the benefit of "vitalized local practices of appropriation and consumption of foreign cultural products and meanings" (35).

When considering contemporary "cultural invasion", it is evident that Japanese political influence took advantage of its historical legacy of colonisation in Asia, and one must not forget that in Korea and Taiwan "the number of people who speak Japanese […] is by far the largest in the world" (125). Actually, the penetration of Japan's pop culture throughout East Asia was not so easy, and this represents the detrimental heritage of the colonial period. Until recently, "Japanese films, TV programs and music had been totally

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[7] This was also the topic of some recent lectures by the same Nissim Otmazgin (2016).

[8] One must consider that the reference to Azuma when considering foreign people (e.g. Korean youth) Japanese pop culture is acceptable only once the necessary changes in terms of context have been made.

banned" (86); the ban on Japanese media broadcasting was removed in Taiwan in 1993, and the process of abolishing restrictions on importing Japanese cultural products started in South Korea in 1998 (218 n. 10)[9]. At any rate, Japanese pop culture was gradually absorbed in countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and South Korea in the 1980s through dynamics of imitation (Ching, 1994) and cross-cultural hybridisation (e.g. idol groups made of Japanese and Koreans) (Iwabuchi 2002, 207).

Some researchers have considered the appreciation of Japanese pop culture in Far East countries as part of a progressive process of community building in the East Asian region (Katsumata, 2012). Otmazgin (2008a) stated that the recently created Japanese cultural markets in East and Southeast Asia must be framed within a regional paradigm, in terms of cultural flows, regional economic inter-penetration and cultural confluences of popular cultures, particularly American, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean ones.

Focusing over Japan and Korea, an effective use of confluences and multilateral cultural flows for promoting diplomacy was the co-hosted FIFAWorld Cup 2002, or TV co-productions as the serialised drama *Furenzu* (*Friends*, 2002), a love story between a Korean man and a Japanese woman, which drew a large audience from both countries (Iwabuchi 2002, 207). In 2000, the Korean film *Shiri* (*Swiri*, 1999) had attracted one million viewers in Japan, and the same had happened in Korea with the Japanese movie *Rabu retā* (*Love Letter*, 1995) (*ibid.*). Still, Korean respondents to surveys conducted in 1995 and 2000 showed a strong resistance to the spread of Japanese pop culture and to the abolition of the restrictions on importations of Japan's pop culture products, in a spirit of cultural protectionism (221, n. 11). Nevertheless, children who grew up after the ban on Japanese cultural products was lifted became consumers of Japanese pop culture (cosplay, *manga*, *anime*, etc.). South Korean drama based on Japanese pop culture works, such as *Kkotboda namja* (*Boys Over Flowers*, 2009), based on the *shōjo manga Hana Yori Dango*, *Naeil's Cantabile* (2014), based on the *josei manga Nodame Cantabile*, *Jangnanseureon Kiseu* (*Playful kiss*, 2010), based on the *shōjo manga Itazura no Kiss*, gradually surged in number (see also Teramura, 2008). Already in 2008 the consumers' demand for Japanese pop culture products had significantly raised, with the market of Japanese *manga* worth 4 trillion won and the main actor of *Kkotboda namja* being the country's most sought-after celebrity (Chung, 2009).

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[9] On this point, see also Kirk (2000).

Recently, resurging nationalisms and political disputes between Japan and Korea over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets, as well as the drop of the strength of Japanese yen, which discourages import, are triggering a competition, if not a 'culture war', between *Hallyu* (or "Korean Wave") and 'Cool Japan' (Choi, 2004)[10]. Is the 'Asian century' going to be dominated by Japan's model of development and its social organisation, or is the Korean paradigm offering a more reassuring and charming paradigm?

The Korean Wave in Japan

The Korean Wave signifies the increasing popularity of South Korean culture since the 1990s, starting from East and Southeast Asia and progressively developing into a global phenomenon. We will look closer to the image of Korea within the Japanese audience, or, in other words, to the Japanese discourse on Korea (*Kankoku-ron*). As Yamanaka (2010) suggested, 'ignorance' is a key expression in tracing the genealogy of popular representations of Korea in Japan from the late 1980s to the first year of this century. This was particularly evident in the analysis of the reception in Japan of the k-drama *Gyeo-ul yeon-ga* (*Winter Sonata*, 2002, broadcasted in Japan in 2003); Hayashi (2005, 201-202) claimed that the lack of realistic notions about Korea by the Japanese (mainly female) audience allowed the latter to invent a Korea of their own. In this sense, it can be useful to attempt a short history of the relationship between the Japanese public and Korea, in order to unveil the historic legacy of colonisation, in a sort of 'return of the repressed'. Following Yamanaka, what the Japanese affirm they don't know is something they should know.

Atkins (2010) pointed out that the 'Korean Wave' of the last decade is not a novelty. Actually, the first 'K-Wave' dates back to the Japanese colonisation of Korea. Koreans were then conceived by Japanese colonisers as 'primitives'[11], in an ambiguous mixture of idealisation and devaluation. After the defeat in World War II and the withdrawal from the Peninsula, there was a long hiatus in Japan's appeal towards Korea. A significant interest in Korean culture emerged again in Japan in the 1980s. According to Chung (1995, 18), 1984 can be considered the beginning of an increasing interest in

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[10] On this ongoing 'cultural war', see also: Beyond Hallyu (2013).

[11] With 19th-century modernisation, Japan adopted the way of *Wakon-yōsai* ("Japanese spirit and Western techniques"), trying to reach the technological level of Western powers, whilst applying to the East Asian countries and to its neighbours with a sort of Orientalist attitude, in the sense of Said (1978). This is remarkable if one considers that Japan is a more 'eastern' country than Korea, geographically speaking. See also Bellah (2003).

Korea among Japanese people, in view of 1988 Summer Olympics, which were to be held in Seoul. Up until then, Japanese concern about Korea had been focused over the democratisation process, particularly during the 1970s under Park Chung-hee government. After Korean democratisation at the end of the 1980s, "movements of people, goods and information between Japan and Korea became increasingly bi-directional" (Yamanaka, 2010). During the 1990s Korean popular culture (TV-dramas, K-pop, cinema) started to become popular in East Asia, Japan included, also thanks to Korean government support (Tuk, 2012).

At the peak of this process, *Hallyu* (or *Hanryu* in Japanese), the 'Korean Wave', established itself as a cultural consumption trend in Japan after the broadcasting of *Gyeo-ul yeon-ga* from April 2003. "The number of Japanese who travelled to Korea in 2004 recorded a growth of 35.5 percent compared to the previous year" (Hirata, 2008). As Yamanaka summarised, Japanese attraction towards Korea took two directions: a trend, mainly limited to younger people, "towards consumption of Korean cultural commodities", similarly to the Japanese audience's interest in Hong Kong movies and stars during the 1980s; and a "fascination with the image of the Self (Japan) as seen by the Other (Korea)", including Korean anti-Japanese nationalist discourse as shown in entertainment and pop culture products.

In 2005, the *manga* by Yamano Sharin *Manga Kenkanryū* (*Hating the Korean Wave*, 2005-09), a polemical story about Korean nationalism, can be taken as a sample of the 'anti-Korean Wave' which on the other hand affected Japanese society. Again, in August 2010, six thousand people "demonstrated against Fuji TV, because they were 'airing too many Korean dramas'. The catalyst for this protest was the firing of the Japanese actor Takaoka Sosuke from his agency after he criticised the Korean wave publicly through his twitter account" (Kozhakhmetova, 2012; see also Hicap, 2011).

Nevertheless, in this phase "exchange between Japan and Korea is unprecedented in its bilateral and continuous nature [...] Japan's Korea boom not only promoted the circulation and consumption of media products, but generated a desire to know the background of media products" (Yamanaka, 2010). Again, the diffusion of Korean pop culture in East Asia since late 1990s has challenged the dominant paradigm of cultural globalisation, usually conceived in terms of cultural imperialism (Shibata, 2013). Differently, the spread of the Korean Wave "can be considered as a manifestation of cultural hybridity, a new form of 'Asian modernity' that challenges the domination of

Western cultural imperialism" (118). Korean cultural hybridity is a carrier for traditional values which are enthusiastically received as a model for Asian modernity. This, according to Shibata, explains the appeal of Korean dramas, imbued with traditional Asian values, in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Japan (again, see the case of *Gyeo-ul yeon-ga*). The 'cultural proximity' principle is a crucial factor in explanation of the Korean Wave (*ibid.*): nations of a same area, sharing languages, values, history and culture, can appreciate TV programs, music, comics, which they perceive close to their cultural codes (Straubhaar, 1991).

Soft power potential and limits in mutual perception between Korea and Japan

As previously mentioned, according to many observers, soft power plays a role in the building of a regional community in East Asia. Particularly, Yasumoto (2009) seems quite optimistic about the role of Japan and Korea as sources of media and cultural capital: "The growth in cultural flows between the countries, despite historical antipathy, is creating a new cultural geography" (311). Yasumoto (2016) goes further, affirming that popular culture can contribute to boosting ties and harmony in East Asia, even to healing historical wounds and "instilling mutual respect and understanding". Despite persisting and recurring political issues, according to Yasumoto popular culture can establish "a new form of citizenship, where the commonality of enjoyment of content transcends politics" (*ibid.*). This vision assumes a relationship between consumer and citizen, which is problematic on a number of points, but this is not the right place to discuss the matter.

Desideri (2013) is more pessimistic about the soft power potential in boosting harmony in East Asia, analysing the perception of Japan by the neighbour countries. To be honest, many doubts have been advanced about soft power value in general, apart from the Japanese case (for an overview of the opposite views about soft power and a critical approach to its value, see Yukaruç, 2017). Desideri admits that Japan has become an international cultural powerhouse, but contends that the "spread of Japanese cultural products offered the country incredible levels of cultural influence, but it could not translate its new cultural capital into political power" (47). Thanks to Japanese government's efforts, Japan is trying to foster a positive image of itself through cultural products. "By marketing its products as embodying long-held Japanese cultural values like harmony, compassion, and coexistence, Japan creates a

paradox that highlights the impotence of its soft power policy" (48). Asian citizens of South Korea and China interviewed for a pan-Asian poll (Otmazgin, 2008b, 95-96), for instance, though appreciating Japanese cultural products, reflected critically upon Japan's wartime responsibilities (Desideri, 2013, 48-49). A recent study of the U.S. think tank Pew "found the three countries mostly have negative views of one another, which are reinforced by cultural depictions — China and Korea want to see Japan as a villain, while Japan wants to feel like it didn't do anything too bad in the conflict" (St. Michel, 2015, n.p.).

Desideri reckons that South Korea, also by means of public aid of the Korean Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), which helps the entertainment industries in the spread of *Hallyu*, is profiting more than Japan of its increasing soft power, not only because Korean products are less expensive than Japanese ones to the average consumer (Sung, 2008, 14), but also because of historical differences between the two countries. "The first and most important difference between *Hallyu* and Cool Japan is that South Korea's lack of historical baggage facilitates easier 'attraction' between messenger and receiver. The regional image South Korea must change is far less severe than Japan's" (Desideri, 2013, 52). This means that Asian audiences can more easily reshape the image of Korea with respect to a past of economic underdevelopment than the colonial and imperialistic legacy of Japan (see Armstrong 2008, 156-157). For instance, the consumption of Korean dramas made Japanese (and Asian) viewers reconsider their understanding of Korean history (Mori, 2008, 130). As already mentioned, East Asian consumers also consider South Korean products as more 'Asian' than Japanese ones, because of the westernisation of Japan accelerated by post-World War II reconstruction (Desideri, 2013, 35).

This strategic advantage of Korea over Japan in the Asian context can be approached by a different point of view in terms of gender issues and cultural consumption (Mori, 2008, 141). "*Hallyu* fandom motivated women to spend money on their own desires. For example, traveling to popular K-drama filming sites, which East Asian women have started doing *en masse*, represents a form of female financial independence previously unseen in the region. [...] Women from Japan, China, Thailand, Taiwan, and other countries then form transnational relationships based on these shared consumer tastes. *Hallyu* has homogenized regional consumer cultural consumption" (Desideri, 2008, 55). This lets us consider the other side of the coin: if Japanese pop culture finds

resistance in East Asia at the level of changing people's view about Japan as a country, Korean pop culture's spread, apart from the anti-Korean Wave recent phenomenon, seems to encounter as well some resistance in the media discourse. For instance, the popularity of *Gyeo-ul yeon-ga* or the whole 'Korean Wave' was reduced to the image of middle-aged female fans seeking romance stories and good-looking actors (Hayashi and Lee, 2007). This underestimated the meaning of the cultural practices performed by Japanese women reaching across borders to Japan's former colony, reducing Japanese female fandom of Korean drama to a stereotyped representation (*ibid.*). Indeed, the "show's [*Gyeo-ul yeon-ga*] popularity in Japan was surprising to many, including the producer Yoon Suk-ho and then-Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who in 2004 famously said, 'Bae Yong-joon is more popular than I am in Japan'" (Korea Herald, 2011, n.p.). Furthermore,

> In 2003 - the first year this drama was introduced to Japanese audience, NHK, Japan's national public broadcasting organization, hurriedly aired Winter Sonata twice due to explosive popularity, then re-aired a third time in mid-2004. Due to viewers' demand, the drama had been re-broadcast at least thirteen times across different channels in Japan, and had been watched by two-thirds of Japanese households. (PrKorea, 2012, n.p.)

Japan and Korea in the mirror of Cinema

I have started my analysis of the mutual representation and understanding of Korea and Japan by citing the newspapers published during the Japanese rule over Korea, then proceeded to evaluate the reception of Korean dramas by Japanese audiences. Now I will shift to the medium of cinema, a few recent Korean and Japanese movies being the focal point of this case study. In any case, I want to highlight how my method must be considered accurate for all the media I have addressed, because I have always stressed the relationship between the medium and the self-/other- images of Korea and Japan in terms of public discourse. Moreover, as for the connection between the topics I am considering in this paper, the reader must keep in mind that both the colonial past and the reciprocal influence between Korea and Japan, in terms of popular culture, define the context behind the media representation of Japan-Korea relations. Last century's colonial heritage and nowadays' 'culture war' intertwine and contribute to mutual understanding and misunderstanding between the two countries, casting

new light upon historical and contemporary issues such as the condition of Korean minority in Japan and the tragedy of the so called 'comfort women'.

 ꙮ *Zainichi* condition in the mirror of a Japanese movie

The question of ethnic identity of the Korean minority in Japan involves the process of self-representations and other-representations[12], i.e. the perception of Korean residents in Japan by the same Korean minority and by the Japanese population. Visočnik (2013) researched this issue in the general framework of multiculturalism in Japanese society. As highlighted by Visočnik, Koichi (2005, 55) points out that "no nation is pure or homogeneous in terms of race, ethnicity and culture", and there are many ethnically marginalised communities in Japan, both migrant and indigenous, but

> Koreans constitute the largest 'foreign' community permanently residing in Japan. Despite their similarities in physical appearance and considerable acculturation to mainstream Japanese society, Koreans in Japan have been discriminated against by both the Japanese state and Japanese society. (Visočnik, 2013, 114)

Therefore, presence of ethnic Korean residents in Japan challenges the notion of a 'homogeneous' Japan (Macdonald 1995, 296; Chapman, 2008). The homogeneity of Japan is indeed challenged at many levels, considered the presence in Japan of Chinese, Filipinos, Brazilians of Japanese descent or Japanese of Brazilian descent, etc. (Norimitsu, 2008). Visočnik (2013) underlines that post-World War II nationalist discourse on Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*) implied the denial of the existence of minorities in Japan (115), in other words the concept of Japanese mono-ethnicity (Lie, 2005). Nevertheless, "multi-ethnicity continued to be the social reality in post-war Japan, since former colonial subjects like Koreans still lived in Japan" (Visočnik, 2013, 115). The linguistic controversial between *zainichi kankokuchōsenjin* ("resident South and North Koreans in Japan") and "Korean-Japanese" was already mentioned; the hyphen between Korean and Japanese implies hybridisation, and this obviously clashes with the concept of mono-ethnicity.

The stigmatisation of Korean minority entails a linguistic shift of the term *Chōsenjin* ("Koreans"), linked to *Chōsen*, the name of an ancient Korean state which the Japanese

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[12] The ideological construction of Self and Other boosts positive self-representation and negative other-representations because of the operating self-serving bias (van Dijk, 1998). Furthermore, intergroup relations are marked by in-group favouritism (Billig and Tajfel, 1973).

colonial government used to indicate the annexed Peninsula. *Chōsenjin* was originally neutral but, during the colonial period, it "took on the connotation of inferiority through the Japanese media reports" (117). Post-war Japan was characterised by media correctness (censorship of discriminatory language) in a sort of attempt of coping with colonial heritage (*ibid.*). Still, ethnic discrimination against Korean minority in Japan "exists on a societal level, from governmental discourse down to the everyday life of ordinary citizens" (119) and, obviously, media discourse.

On the side of self-representations of the Korean minority in Japan, most *zainichi* experience a conflictual situation with regard to their identity. Indeed, attachment to the homeland of older generations conflicts with the representation of Korean expats in Korea, since Koreans of the 'diaspora' are considered as inauthentic if not traitors. Moreover, one must consider the issue of the two Koreas, and the fact that third and fourth generation Koreans were born in Japan and are native Japanese speakers. Korean minorities in Japan are a sort of "inbetweeners" (118). According to Iwabuchi (2005), they are searching for a third way between the tendency towards assimilation and the "homeland nostalgia", "looking neither to naturalisation, which would require them to abandon their ethnicity, not to returning to a divided or even unified homeland" (68). This could be identified as the hybrid trait of the younger ethnic Korean residents in Japan. Even if they have to face racial discrimination, hiding their descent thanks to the physical similarities between Korean and Japanese people or even the adoption of Japanese names, the new generations of *zainichi* generally seem inclined to integration into Japanese society (Visočnik, 2013, 120; Ryang 2005, 7).

The topic of the Korean minority in Japan is addressed here through Hiroki Ryūichi's *Sayonara Kabukichō* (*Kabukicho Love Hotel*, 2014), partially shot on locations in Shin-Ōkubo, Tokyo's Korea Town.

Sayonara Kabukichō is a portrait of Tokyo's entertainment and red-light district, situated in Shinjuku ward. Kabukichō is the location of many host and hostess clubs, as well as love hotels. The Hotel Atlas shown in the movie (the English title is *Kabukicho Love Hotel*) is one of these short-stay hotels which allow guests privacy for sexual activities. The movie events are supposed to take place within a chaotic 24-hour period, following the intersecting stories of the protagonists, who decide to get out of their dead-end lives as a result of that day's turmoil.

Lee He-Na (Heya in the English version, interpreted by Lee Eun-Woo) is a Korean migrant who is going through her last day of work at the "Juicy Fruits" agency as a *deriheru* ("delivery health"), an escort service where call girls are dispatched to their customers' homes or to hotels. He-Na's residence permit expired, and she decided to go back to Korea to open a boutique with her mother, while her boyfriend, An Chonsu (Chong-su in the English version, interpreted by Roy) wants to remain in Japan where he plans to open a restaurant. Chonsu, who works hard as a cook at a Korean eatery, seems to reckon that He-Na is just a hostess, apparently not being aware of her involvement in prostitution. Still, the impending separation looks like it will be an end to their relationship. Later on, we see He-Na being cuddled by her manager Kubota, then meeting at the hotel one of her habitual clients, the shy and passionate salaryman Amemiya, who finally proposes to her. In the end, Chonsu finds out the true nature of He-Na's job, admitting to her that he also worked as a prostitute to make ends meet. The two reconcile, resolving to leave Japan and make a return to Korea.

As already mentioned, the movie was partially shot in Shin-Ōkubo, Tokyo's Korea Town, serving as a useful start to our considerations on reporting the 'impressions from the field'. As director Hiroki said in 2015 during the press talk at Far East Film Festival 17 in Udine, Italy[13], lots of Korean stars and idols live in Shin-Ōkubo, and "there are a lot of Japanese people who go there just to have a look at the Korean way of life". This seems to support Yamanaka's belief that *Hallyu* generated "a desire to know the background of media products" (2010). Asked about the relationship between the two communities, Hiroki said that their contrasts "are not that harsh as they are depicted by the mass media". As Visočnik (2013) pointed out, the discrimination against ethnic Korean minority is often alimented by media discourse. Hiroki added that:

> As far as I am concerned, the relationship between the Korean and ourselves is absolutely perfect. However, inside the film, there is the hate speech scene, in which we hear Japanese people shouting at Koreans to go back home, but there was also a group opposing them and telling them: why do you say so?[14].

This can be read in the light of Yasumoto's considerations (2009, 2016): despite recurring nationalisms, the growth in cultural flows can instil mutual respect and

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[13] The author of the present paper was present at the press talk.
[14] Hiroki's interview at Far East Film Festival 2015 is available from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpqqoeQfkog

understanding. Though the prejudice against the Korean minority from Shin-Ōkubo is testified by the Japanese people shouting "go home!", another part of Japanese public opinion protested against this manifestation of nationalism and ethnocentrism.

Hiroki marked the differences existing in Japanese society with regard to the Korean minority, blaming the neo-nationalist discourse:

> So, these are two elements of the society and you may find the right-wing supporters that behave like that. Of course, there are people who demonstrate against the Koreans in Japan, but we… we Japanese… are ashamed of these behaviours actually.

Hiroki finally mentioned the Korean audience reaction to the movie:

> In the film you find an actress [Lee Eun-woo] who strips off her clothes, she is totally naked and there is a very sexy scene, and I know that the Korean community was not happy about that and they complained with me. So most probably many Koreans may have objected to her: 'Why do you make film with the Japanese? They only ask you to get undressed!'[15]

It cannot be underestimated the involuntary link that a Korean audience could make between the representation in a Japanese movie of a Korean escort in Japan and the 'comfort women' issue. The Korean viewers might have perceived the scene as a stereotypical representation of the Korean woman as subordinated to the Japanese man, in continuity with the colonial heritage. About the Korean audience's general reception of the movie, Hiroki finally stated: "[…] we presented *Sayonara Kabukichō* at the Busan Festival [the most significant film festival in Korea], and who could see the complete film for the first time there highly praised the film… it was very well accepted by the Busan audience". Cinema as a form of popular culture can contribute to establishing "a new form of citizenship" (Yasumoto, 2016), but this involves a social and political responsibility of directors and screenwriters. In this regard, we have just mentioned the outcry sparked in South Korea by Tsutsui's derogatory comment about the 'comfort woman' statue.

Speaking of the two Korean protagonists of Hiroki's movie, He-Na and Chonsu, they initially seem to follow different approaches about Japan and their future: He-Na can be ascribed to the approach Visočnik (2013,119) calls *sokokushikō* ("inclination

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[15] Also from the link above.

towards the homeland"), while Chonsu tends to *dōkashikō* ("inclination towards assimilation"). In the end, despite the fact they belong to the younger generation of Korean migrants, usually more inclined to consider Japan as their new home (*ibid.*), they choose to return to Korea, showing the same attachment of older generations to the homeland and deciding to invest in a future together in Korea.

✑ Japanese colonialism in the recent Korean cinema: *Amsal*

Colonialism and nationalism have been explored many times by Asian cinema (Dissanayake, 1994). The rediscovery of Korea's colonial past, linked to the 'comfort women' issue, can be seen through the lens of Choi Dong-hoon's *Amsal* (*Assassination*, 2015) and Cho Jung-rae's *Kwihyang* (*Spirits' Homecoming*, 2016). *Amsal* is one of the biggest box-office hits in Korean film history, with over 12.7 million admissions[16]. The complex plot of this espionage action film extends from 1911, at the beginning of the Japanese rule over Korea, to 1949, after the defeat of Japan in World War II. A Korean resistance fighter, Yem Seok-jin (acted by Lee Jung-jae), tries to kill both the Japanese Governor-General and Kang In-gook (interpreted by Lee Kyoung-young), a businessman in collusion with the Japanese, but his attempt fails. In 1933, more than thirty Korean independence factions operate in Korea, China, and Manchuria. Yem, apparently serving as a captain for one of these factions, has indeed become a spy for the Japanese, having been tortured by them in 1911. The destiny of Yem intersects with that of three resistance members, Big Gun (acted by Cho Jin-woong), Hwang Deok-Sam (Choi Deok-moon), and An Ok-Yoon (Jun Ji-hyun, also known as Gianna Jun). During the movie, Kang is killed by the Korean resistance, while Yem, who had been made head of the secret police for his collaboration with the Japanese, is investigated for war crimes in 1949. Yem manages to escape the condemnation by protesting his innocence, but he is subsequently killed by An and another former member of the Korean resistance.

Choi's movie represents some of the most significant traits of the Korean resistance during the Japanese rule: the presence in different countries and territories such as Korea itself, China, and Manchuria; the inner divisions within different factions of the resistance movement; the co-optation of the Korean elite (see the character of Kang In-gook); the recruitment of the poorer Koreans for the police forces (considerable

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[16] See on this point: List of highest-grossing films in South Korea. *Wikipedia* [Online] Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films_in_South_Korea [Accessed 15 May 2017]

numbers of the police force included Koreans) (Kleiner, 2010, 31); the existence of a large network of informants (as in the case of Yem Seok-jin). The film shows some historical Korean politicians whose role in the resistance was prominent, such as Kim Koo, a member of the independence movement *Sinminhoe* ("New People's Association"), exiled to Shangai in 1919 where he joined the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, and Kim Won-Bong, a Korean anarchist and independence activist. As for the attempt to kill the General-Governor shown in the movie, in actual history, in 1910, there was a plot to assassinate the general-governor Terauchi Masataki, leading to the arrest of An Myung-geun.

The anti-Japanese theme characterised some of the earliest Korean movies, such as *Arirang* (1926), which caused Japanese censorious reaction on cinema in the 1930s. In the 1960s it was time for the so-called 'Manchurian Westerns', set along the Chinese-Korean border in the 1930s, when China's Northeast became a frontier land for outlaws and resistance fighters against the Japanese colonisation. The topic was addressed more ironically in movies like *Hanbando* (2006), which represents a Japanese attempt to occupy the Korean Peninsula again. If *Amsal* takes place during the Japanese colonial period and its programming in theatres coincides with the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, *Myeongryang* (*The Admiral: Roaring Current*, 2014), which is still the highest-grossing Korean film ever, is inspired by the Battle of Myeongnyang (1597), where the Korean Admiral Yi Sun-sin defeated a Japanese fleet of 330 vessels with the only 12 ships remained in his command. The colonial period was also the setting for a television series broadcasted in 2007, *Gyeongseong Seukaendeul* (*Capital Scandal*), representing the conflict between the independence fighters and the collaborationists. A recent period drama movie by Hur Jin-ho (*Deokhye-ongju*, international title *The Last Princess*, 2016) depicted the thirteen-year-old Princess Deokhye's attempts to return to Korea after she was forced to move there by the Imperial Japanese government. Even more recently, *Gunhamdo* (*The Battleship Island*, 2017), a movie by Ryoo Seung-wan, is based on the story of an attempted prison break from Hashima Island in Nagasaki prefecture, a forced labour camp for hundreds of Korean workers during World War II.

In conclusion, it can be said that the recent nationalist wave in East Asia influences the cinema audiences in China, Japan, and Korea, stimulating their taste for epic. It seems that "consumers in China, Korea, and Japan are embracing" big patriotic movies "against the backdrop of real-world geopolitical drama, and the demand for them has

grown as diplomatic relations have worsened" (St. Michel 2015, n.p.). Specifically, in recent years we assist to a nationalistic trend in Korean cinema, "where the Japanese serve as the villains" (*ibid.*). One must notice that female characters play a significant role in the plot of both *Gyeongseong Seukaendeul* and *Amsal*, for instance: the yearning for national independence combines with the goals of the modern self in a coherent national narrative, pervaded by "affective nationalism" (Choi, 2017).

☙ Japanese colonialism in the recent Korean cinema: *Kwihyang*

Kwihyang is a 2016 period drama film written and directed by Cho Jung-rae. The first screening was March 1, the Anniversary of the Sam-il Independence Movement (the March 1st Movement), one of the earliest public displays of the Korean resistance during the Japanese rule; actually, the movie was scheduled to be released in time for the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, i.e. 15 August 2015, but it had to be delayed because of distribution problems. Director Cho took inspiration for the movie by a painting of Kang Il-chul, a former comfort woman, who drew it as a part of her art therapy[17]; Cho meant the movie as a form of consolation for the traumatic memories of the former 'comfort women'[18]: "These young girls suffered such lonely deaths on foreign soil. This movie is about honouring them so at least their spirits can come home" (Asian Movie Pulse, 2016, n.p.).

The movie takes place during the Japanese rule of Korea, in 1943, telling the story of 14-year old Jung-min (Kanga Ha-Na) and 16-year old Young-hee. Jung-min grows up in a poor but happy family, while Young-hee lost her parents during the war, assuming the care of her younger brothers. The two girls are taken by the Japanese soldiers, then sent to Manchuria and forced to prostitution. The film depicts the terrible life of the 'comfort women' and the effort of the latter to cope with this intolerable situation, characterised by mistreatment, beatings and torture, trying not to lose their sanity. During a counter-attack to the Japanese forces by the Chinese army, the Japanese soldiers decide to kill all the girls, but the Chinese interrupt the execution, which permits Young-hee and Jung-min to escape the massacre. Unfortunately, Jung-min dies, shot by a Japanese soldier, while Young-hee manages to survive. The old Young-hee makes friends with a shaman, who performs a

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[17] Check on this topic: Asian Movie Pulse (2016).

[18] The 'comfort women' issue was recently addressed by Herman Yau's *The Sleep Curse* (Hong Kong, 2017), which takes place in 1942, when Hong Kong was under Japanese occupation.

homecoming ritual for the spirits of the 'comfort women' killed by the Japanese. Finally, Jung-min's spirit manages to return to her parents' house.

A movie like *Kwihyang* shows how crucial it is to deal with the 'comfort women' issue in order to reconcile Japanese and Korean views of the colonial past. The most conservative fringe of Korean society still considers the 'comfort women' issue a taboo. As Director Cho reported about the potential investors' reactions to the film's subject: "They asked me why I wanted to throw salt on an old wound. They see the subject of comfort women as a history of shame" (Qin, 2015, n.p.). There was also the problem of the links between South Korea's main film distributors and Japan, where the topic is controversial and divisive for the public opinion and the political debate. Indeed, also thanks to the resurgent Korean nationalism and to the call for Japan "to reassess previous apologies for its wartime actions" (*ibid.*), the movie's fortunes changed: Cho Jung-rae resorted to crowd-funding, collecting up to 500 million won ($457,000) thanks to donations by South Koreans and Korean communities set in Japan and in the United States. Furthermore, several main actors as Son Sook, Oh Ji-Hye and Jung In-Gi took parts in the movie *pro bono* to show their support for the cause (Asian Movie Pulse, 2016, n.p.).

"*Spirits' Homecoming* is different from other movies or documentaries released in Korea that deal with 'comfort women' in that it is almost the first time for such a film to be released commercially" (Hong, 2015, n.p.) and it has been compared by a Korean press article to *Schindler's List* (1993), *La vita è bella* (*Life is Beautiful*, 1997), and *The Pianist* (2002). Director Cho Jung-rae "said he wants this film to act as cultural proof regarding the comfort women issue" (*ibid.*). The ideological meaningfulness of the movie is revealed not only by the massive crowd-funding among Koreans in the motherland and overseas, but also by the Japanese public's response at different levels during the movie's production. *Korea Joongang Daily* reports that "when Kang's acting in the role went viral on the Internet, she suffered from threatening comments" (*ibid.*) in Osaka, where the young actress lives. Furthermore, according to *Korea Daily* and *Korea Joongang Daily*, there was pressure from Japan "by lawsuits against the movie" (Ko, 2016, n.p.).

Kwihyang was acclaimed in Korea, gaining the 21st Chunsa Film Art Awards for the most popular film. Nevertheless, the narrative on which the movie is built is quite controversial, because "director Cho Jung-rae relied on the oral testimony of one comfort woman and cast Korean actors to portray Japanese; he did not cast Japanese actors or seek corroborating evidence from other survivors" (Yi, 2017, n.p.). We already

mentioned Sarah Soh's (2008) interpretation of the 'comfort women' issue: according to Soh, the work(ers) at comfort stations has to be explained through many different factors: abduction by militaries, economical support to the women's families, escaping oppressive parents. In her work, Soh gave voice to the different situations experienced by the 'comfort women', which included both narratives of abuse and of less dramatic conditions. In 2013, Park Yu-Ha published a Korean-language book, *Comfort Women of the Empire*, whose findings are quite similar to Soh's ones. Indeed, "a Seoul court partially censored Park's book and fined her 90 million won ($74,000) for defaming survivors of enslavement. Prosecutors also requested a three-year jail sentence" (*ibid.*). One could not find a most distinctive (definitive?) proof that the 'comfort women' topic is still a 'burning issue' in the public debate between Korea and Japan.

Conclusions

Until this point I have conducted a case study of selected movies. Particularly, I have considered one Japanese and two Korean movies, whose contents are deeply connected with the mutual perception of the two countries. The topic of the Korean minority in Japan has been considered through Hiroki Ryūichi's *Sayonara Kabukichō* (2014), the rediscovery of Korea's colonial past has been analysed through the perspective of Choi Dong-hoon's *Amsal* (2015) and the 'comfort women' issue has been discussed through Cho Jung-rae's *Kwihyang* (2016). Japanese and Korean contemporary filmography seems to reflect people's present worries about a significant Other, geographically and historically linked to the Self, as well as to portray the ethnic and national identity rebuilding through a retelling of history. The resurgent nationalisms influence the audiences in Japan, Korea, and East Asia as well as media discourse, so that some of the highest-grossing blockbusters are permeated with patriotic feelings. Crucial topics such as the 'comfort women' issue hit the public's attention, representing an open wound in the relationship between Japan and Korea, in the more general frame of a reinterpretation of the colonial past. Nevertheless, the media representations of the 'comfort stations' remains problematic, swinging between silence and denial of the Japanese state's responsibility (Morris-Suzuki, 2006). The screening of *Kwihyang* in Japan had to resort to the 'indie' distribution (Korea

Herald, 2016, n.p.)[19]. Today's problems related to the Korean migrants in Japan are in tight connection with the two countries' shared past. Popular culture can reflect these tensions influencing and being influenced by public opinion in East Asian countries.

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[19] There exist recent Korean animated short movies about the 'comfort women' issue: *Herstory* (2011) by Kim Jung-gi, which has been followed by a sequel financed by the Korean government, and *Never Ending Story* (2014). On this topic, see Yoo (2015) and Oh (2015). *Herstory* has also become a live-action movie by Min Kyu-Dong in 2018. Both *Herstory* and *Never Ending Story* have been made available through YouTube, therefore also to the Japanese audience.

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Spaces of sympathy: The role of Asia in contemporary Japanese popular cinema

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of two discourses in the study of Japanese popular film, while also bringing the two into conversation with one another in relation to their constructions of "Japan" and "Asia" as conceptual spaces. The discourse known as "victims' history" is discussed first, drawing on a few relevant films as examples of how the war period is articulated in terms of Japanese suffering. The contemporary political implications of this apparatus within Japanese film are explored. For example, films such as Grave of the Fireflies *(1988,* Hotaru no Haka*) have been internationally lauded for their pacifist stance, despite the fact that this pacifism is, I argue, constituted by the same victims' narrative that sustains feelings of distrust towards Japan's East Asian neighbours. In other words, we must consider these films not only in terms of passive victimisation, but also in terms of active erasure. The second discourse considered is that of "New Asianism", or the modern boom in representations of Asia in popular films. Various commentators have forcibly challenged the idea that the internationalisation of Japanese cinema (from the late 1980s to the present), both in terms of industry and narrative representation, has had a decolonizing effect on the Japanese cultural sphere. On the contrary, these films are accused of the exoticisation and Othering of Asia, and I argue they are therefore similar to victims' history films in their positioning of Asia "outside" of the space of subjectivity.*

Introduction: Asia Erased or Asia Othered

One way of conceptualising popular cinema is as a systematic process of reproducing enclosed spaces of sympathy. Consumers invest time and money to be allowed into the process and gain access to its manufactured spaces, and then to dwell within their borders for around one and a half hours before returning to a world where the limits of sympathy are less clear. In this paper the effects of exposure to these enclosed spaces, while highly relevant, is less my focus than the identification of the borders themselves – that is to say, the politically-sensitive enclosures that are erected with the aim of channelling an audience's sympathy towards this or that area, or this or that group of people. In this instance, the borders are those which separate "Japan" and "Asia" into two

conceptual spaces, with the latter expanding and contracting to variously include North East Asian and South East Asian countries, but always outlined to exclude Japan.

Following this line of thought, there are two discourses in the study of Japanese cinema which I aim to bring together: that which takes as its object "victims' history", recognising a significant body of films in which the Second Sino-Japanese War is articulated primarily in terms of Japanese suffering (Orr, 2001); and that which takes as its object "New Asianism" in film, recognising that non-Japanese East Asians have in recent years gained a higher level of representation in Japanese films, and aiming to understand the manner and the effects of their representation (Ko, 2010). What these two discourses clearly have in common is their critique of Japanese cinema's conceptual positioning of "Asia" in relation to "Japan". Beyond this, both touch on the political implications of a body of Japanese films, and identify how certain political ideologies are reflected, reinforced, or resisted in these films. Through bringing these two discourses together I hope to build on their current investigations into the political role, and potential, of the films which constitute the object of their focus.

Therefore, the films I will be considering as examples are those which have already become involved, to greater or lesser extents, in these debates. While I will mention earlier films to give context, my focus is on modern films from the 1990s to the present day, a time period in which Japan's relationship with its neighbouring countries has undergone significant political and cultural transformation. During this time, numerous popular films that are relevant to the relation between Japanese nationalism and its history with the Asian continent have been produced, including some which clearly promote an overtly militaristic nationalism (Gerow, 2006). However, to keep my focus narrow, I will only be considering those films which I believe can be categorised as either victims' history or New Asianist films.

A preliminary friction should be highlighted regarding the words "othering" and "erasure". When it comes to victims' history, the usual trope is not that Asia has been represented problematically, but rather that it has not been represented at all. By removing it from the viewer's frame of reference, the Asian experience and victims of the war are said to be culturally erased (Lo 2014, 208). On the other hand, the approach dealing with New Asianism focuses on the problematic ways in which Asians have been represented in film, for example as exoticised objects of consumption, alternately gendered feminine and alluring or masculine and threatening in relation to a subjectivity

figured as Japanese (in the form of protagonist characters or the viewers themselves) (Lo 2014, 215). While the term "other" is more appropriate following this line of critique, it would be misleading to ignore the large overlap between the practices of erasure and othering. For example, Kwai-Cheung Lo's essay, which I will discuss below, is entitled "Erasing China in Japan's 'Hong Kong Films'", despite the fact that he discusses the representation of China at least as much as he does its absence (2014). This is understandable when we consider that erasure is not distinct from but a distinct form of othering. To put it another way, if Asia does not appear in a Japanese film about the War, we can consider this a representation of its absence, rather than an absence of its representation. These representations intersect with other forms of power, such as the narrative which frames the main conflict of the War as a clash between Japan and the United States (Napier 2001, 162), or that which denies the victimhood of East Asian countries under Japanese colonialist rule. Presence/absence often maps neatly onto the distinction between Self/Other, for the Other is always seen as something absent or at a distance from the Self. Thus, while the terms "erasure" and "othering" are not interchangeable, the concepts they denote here are closely enough aligned to be critiqued in tandem with one another: both hinge on a border drawn between "Asia" and "Japan", whether that border is at the edge of the cinematic experience (as in most victims' history films), or whether it cuts through a film's narrative (as in New Asianist films).[1]

Victimhood: I Still Want to Be a Shellfish

Before its film versions, *I Wish I Was a Shellfish* (*Watashi wa Kai ni Naritai*) began as a novel and was then adapted into a television drama in 1958 – the same year that the Japanese cinema industry reached its financial peak (Richie 2005, 161). Indeed, the drama was so successful it can be seen as a key contributor to the cementing of television as a popular medium and the subsequent decline of cinema in Japan (Richie 2005, 177). The story is about a soldier first forced to kill American prisoners of war during the war period, and then, after the war has finished, executed for doing so. The soldier is so disillusioned by the cruelty of humanity that he wishes that, should he be reborn, it should be as a shellfish rather than a human. The narrative, remade into a film the following year, is a

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[1] Some films have something of both positions, as can be seen from Lo's analysis of the role of China as a conceptual space in *Hong Kong Night Club* (*Hon Kon dai yasokai: Tatchi & Magi*, 1997), which I will discuss at the end of the paper.

classic example of what scholars have dubbed victims' history: the audience is made to feel compassion for a soldier who has clearly been caught up in events beyond his control, oppressed by both his military superiors and a foreign occupying force, and has never been shown to intentionally cause harm in any way (Orr 2001). That such a narrative would be so popular in the late 50s makes sense, given the ongoing suffering of Japanese people as a result of the War and the Occupation, and the need to find ways to dramatise and memorialise these events that would satisfy people's emotional needs, as well as propagating the aims of the state. At this time, in order to better control and make use of defeated Japan, the Occupation forces chose to maintain the Emperor system and direct war guilt at only a few military "bad apples", said to have misled both the Emperor and the Japanese people – it was emphasised that the populace were first and foremost victims (Sakai 2010, 246; Tanaka 2017, n.p.). However, top-down political schemes or government conspiracies do not account for national identity formation simply by virtue of existing – it is the successful dissemination of this victim ideology at a popular level, through simple and relatable stories like *I Wish I Was a Shellfish*, that allowed such ideology to achieve hegemonic status.

This particular story is also notable for its revival in recent years – firstly as a television drama in 1994, and then once again as a film in 2008 (Schilling 2008). Strikingly, the victims' history element of the story remains unaltered even in 2008 – not only the uncomplicated sympathy for the protagonist, but also the nonexistence of other Asian countries or people in a film that aims to depict the moral dilemma of existing as a Japanese soldier during the War period. To exclude Asia as a physical or conceptual space in such a film is a way of reinscribing the War within Japan's borders, of fixing it as an old wound in the national body, and of reaffirming the War as a "tit-for-tat" confrontation between Japan and the United States. While the explicit reason for reviving *I Wish I Was a Shellfish* in 2008 was to mark the 50th anniversary since the original series was released (Schilling 2008), the resurgence of right-wing nationalism and the modern fears of a rising China provide a contemporary climate in which viewers are more likely to embrace such a narrative, as they did in the past.

In order to make sense of victims' history as a persistent cultural phenomenon, we need to understand the historical context from which it emerged as an ideological tool. In Susan Napier's definition, Japan's victims' history

> ... is partly due to the collaborative American-Japanese efforts under the Occupation to create an image of a postwar democratic Japan that would free the Japanese from an inescapable fascist and militarist past. By shifting the burden of responsibility for a devastating war onto the military and the government, it was felt that the slate could be wiped clean and Japan could undertake the task of rebuilding, liberated from the dark shadows of war guilt and recrimination. Consequently, both official and cultural versions of the war have played down citizens' involvement with the actual machinery of combat and aggression to the point that they ignore or elide Japan's aggression against China, which began in 1931. Instead, official vehicles, such as textbooks and government ceremonies as well as popular and elite culture, emphasize the period from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima, which, in Carol Gluck's neat phrase, "set a balanced moral calculus" essentially allowing the atomic bombing to cancel out responsibility for Pearl Harbor and simply glossing over the colonization of Korea and the previous ten years of aggression against China. (Napier 2001, 162)

Napier then goes on to explain how this history is embodied by Studio Ghibli's film *The Grave of the Fireflies* (*Hotaru no haka*, 1988), listing both narrative and cinematic techniques. For example, in terms of narrative she mentions how the focus on children as victims of war results in "an unproblematic response of heartfelt sympathy on the part of the viewers" (2001, 163), and in terms of cinematography she discusses the spatial tension between horizontal lines and "defiant" vertical lines (2001, 164), in which the horizontal lines are formed by aerial bombers and the vertical are formed by the children's bodies, until bombs begin to rain down, and a series of downward movements dominates/eliminates the children's spatial autonomy. These, and other techniques, contribute to a "nightmarish vision of passivity and despair" (2001, 163). The war is thus embodied as "relentlessly oppressive" towards innocent Japanese children, and this relentlessness "shuts out the possibility for action" (2001, 165).

Napier stops short of highlighting the political implications of the aesthetic she lucidly describes. From the perspective of international film criticism, the despondency and passivity of *The Grave of the Fireflies* need not be problematic, indeed we can say that by exposing the horrors of war using a cinematic language of helplessness and hopelessness, the film's political leaning is profoundly anti-war. However, from the perspective of cultural politics, we must consider *The Grave of the Fireflies* as part of an interrelated network of domestic cultural media, in which anti-war sensibility is built upon a sense of Japanese victimhood, rather than, for example, Japanese wartime aggression, or other countries' victimhood. By following this trend, *The Grave of the Fireflies* can be seen to have a political leaning towards a problematic cultural status quo, in which its version of pacifism, constituted as it is by victimhood, serves a

nationalistic agenda in the context of East Asian relations. Also of note is another similarity with *I Wish I Was a Shellfish*: commemorative remakes, once as a live-action television drama in 2005 (the 60th anniversary of the end of the war), and then again as a live-action film in 2008. Once again, we are witness to the re-inscribing of these iconographic mythologies in the contemporary cultural sphere.

These retellings do not preclude new narratives of victims' history being produced. Let us consider a more recent Studio Ghibli film which has also designated a space of wartime victimhood to be occupied solely by Japanese citizens, albeit in a different way from *Grave of the Fireflies*. Unlike most victims' history films, Miyazaki Hayao's *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*, 2013) to some extent deals with ideas of the complicity and culpability of its Japanese hero in relation to the war effort. The film is based on the real-life story of Horikoshi Jiro, the designer of one of Japan's most successful warplanes. In his analysis of the film, Matthew Penney mostly understands it within the pacifist context that chimes with director Miyazaki's own stated feelings (2013, n.p.). When describing how Horikoshi reacts to his inventions being used as part of the war effort, Penney argues against any nationalist sentiment being expressed in the film, writing that "Horikoshi's face at this moment strikes me as being partway between confusion and loss but there is certainly no trace of triumph, of justified sacrifice" (2013, n.p.). However, while a "triumphant" brand of nationalism is not represented, it can be argued that a self-victimising nationalism is articulated via the affect of this scene: by means of the narrative as well as cinematic techniques such as close-up, the viewer is encouraged to feel sympathy for this Japanese inventor, for whom the intrusion of war into his engineering aspirations is saddening and confusing. While Horikoshi is not a victim in the same way that the two siblings are in *Grave of the Fireflies*, nonetheless he occupies the space of sympathy that the film offers its viewers. Penney also writes that "[t]he tragedy of engineers who married their design ambitions to military production is at the heart of *Kaze Tachinu*" (2013, n.p.). This is not a criticism, but Penney's descriptive analysis of the film's aesthetic, or "heart". While the film is undoubtedly successful in exploring this tragedy of Japanese engineers, the tragedy of non-Japanese people in the war is once again excluded from the allowed limits of sympathetic response.

Interestingly, Penney does identify a type of nationalism in *The Wind Rises*: what he calls "technological nationalism" (Penney 2013, n.p.). He points not only to the fetishisation of planes in the film, but also to extra-textual materials – for example, a

"triumphantly" nationalist story on Horikoshi's planes in a magazine capitalising on the wave of interest generated by Studio Ghibli's film (Penney 2013, n.p.). This example is instructive because we see how victims' history not only exists across a body of differing texts, but also spreads in unpredictable ways beyond the individual films that promote it. For this reason, we cannot take films such as those discussed above in isolation from the cultural and political climates in which they circulate. It is usually the case that taken outside of their contemporary domestic context, these films seem quite unproblematic, or even progressive. After all, self-victimisation is certainly not unique to Japanese narratives, and victim consciousness in Japan is historically linked to progressive movements (Orr 2001). James Orr goes as far as to say that

> the strongest impetus for victim consciousness can be found in scholar-activist Yasui Kaoru's efforts to expand the anti-nuclear peace movement from a Communist and Socialist project into a bona fide nonpartisan national movement after the Lucky Dragon Incident of 1954. (Orr 2001, 8)

However, it is this very nationalising of victimhood which results in "Japan" and "the Japanese" being enshrined in the space of sympathy that popular films offer, establishing their role in an ideological apparatus that has yet to meaningfully grant other Asian nations access to these filmic spaces.

It is important to emphasise that the individual films discussed here are not necessarily flawed or at fault for their position within the discourse of victims' history, but rather that they are material components in a network of cultural objects that makes up a problematic milieu out of which national identities are formed. The idea that these films could be "fixed" simply by including representations of Asia is not to be assumed as a facile solution to the problematic nature of a widespread cultural narrative. Indeed, even when Asia is represented in Japanese popular cinema, its depiction is often determined in part by the same nationalist framework that excludes "Asia" from a space of sympathy in victims' history films, as we shall see.

New Asianism: Decolonisation and Cosmetic Multiculturalism

Naoki Sakai tells us that while the decolonisation of Japanese territories took place immediately after the War, the decolonisation of Japanese identity – which is to say its working through of its colonial relationship with its neighbouring countries – was postponed, as a result of the US-Japan agreement or "transpacific complicity"

mentioned above, until the start of the 1990s (2010, 252). Various events, such as the comfort women issue, are therefore framed as the re-conceptualisation of Japan's role in the War within the mindsets of ordinary citizens (2010, 252). In popular culture, we can see acknowledgment and questioning of Japan's attitude towards East Asian countries regarding its colonial period. The end of the 80s saw such events as the nationalist craze over the death of the Shōwa Emperor and the enactment of a law demanding public schools make a show of respect towards national symbols (such as the flag and the anthem), and later an increase in vocal historical revisionists that denied the atrocities of the Japanese army committed against Asia in the War (Ko 2010, 18). At the same time as this surge in right-wing nationalism, a multiculturalist discourse began to take hold of popular media. As director Ōshima Nagisa notes, since the early 90s there has been a large increase in the number of Japanese films made about foreigners and minorities in Japan (quoted in Ko 2010, 2). Asia has become present not just through its depiction in Japanese cultural products, but also through new interest in foreign works, for example the rise of Hong Kong cinema's popularity in Japan (Lo 2014, 212). Mika Ko tells us that since the mid-80s, the discourse of internationalisation or *kokusai-ka*

> ...and what [Gavan] McCormack calls the 'New Asianism' have been vigorously promoted, giving the impression that Japan is positioning itself in broader Asian regional or global networks rather than being narrowly caught in the 'national' border. (2010, 20)

To the extent that this multiculturalism is a reaction against or pulling away from rightwing nationalism, it might be considered as part of a wider decolonisation of the Japanese identity as well. Films such as *Swallowtail* (*Suwarōteiru*, 1996), with their focus on immigrants and the various languages they employ (Japanese, English, Mandarin, and Cantonese in the case of *Swallowtail*), can be understood as material artefacts that embody a second phase of decolonisation in Japan (if the first was territorial).

However, it would be wrong to think of the New Asianism as simple proof of decolonisation, when in many ways it shows the opposite. For example, Ko points out that famed conservative Ishihara Shintaro's 1994 book *The Asia That Says 'No'* (*'No' to ieru Ajia*) "praises the racial hybridity of the Japanese" to promote Japanese uniqueness in such a way that it resonates both with the discourse of *nihonjinron* and the pre-war and wartime discourse of a pan-Asian hierarchy led by Japan (2010, 178). For all its

linguistic diversity, Kwai-Cheung Lo argues that *Swallowtail* creates a hierarchy of languages in which English is a civilised Other to Japanese, and Chinese is an Orientalised or eroticised Other to Japanese (2014, 219). Lo also briefly mentions the Japanese-Hong Kong coproduction *Christ of Nanjing* (*Nankin no kurisuto*, 1995), which I will describe in more detail here as it is an under-analysed film that nonetheless powerfully illustrates the tropes and affective force of New Asianism.

The straightforward plot depicts a Japanese writer who suffers from migraines and travels to Nanjing for "relief", meeting and falling in love with a Chinese prostitute, whose life ends in tragedy after he abandons her. Interestingly, the film is an adaptation of a 1920s story by Akutagawa Ryunosuke, classified by Nishihara Daisuke as belonging to the popular "*shinashumi*" genre of the 1920s (2000). Nishihara defines *shinashumi* as "a taste for China and things Chinese" (2000, 19), and, drawing on Said's *Orientalism* (1979), he tells us that the stories in this genre "treated China as Western writers treated the Islamic world. There was always a sexual side to it" (2000, 23). We can see that in this case from the prewar period, the Japanese interest in representing China is linked to a colonialist gaze, and so we should not dismiss lightly that the same narrative is resurrected in a film in 1995. Indeed, the film uses various techniques to evoke China as a lively erotic space to be contrasted with a domestic and static Japan, such as colour filters which tint many of the Japanese scenes in the same hue. In one moment of dialogue, the writer compares himself to the fixed and unmoving cherry blossoms painted on a screen in his Japanese home: in this case, the symbol both for Japan and the transience of nature is appropriated to refer to his fleeting love affair in China, and to add a further irony, now that he is back in Japan the love remains permanently etched on his body, refusing to pass or fade in the natural way that cherry blossoms are expected to. In the same moment that it subverts nationalist imagery, the allusion to cherry blossoms paints China as a space of blossoming, active love, and Japan as a space of paralysed, listless longing.[2] *Christ of Nanjing* had a positive critical reception in Japan, being nominated for three awards at the Tokyo International Film Festival (Tokyo Grand Prix,

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[2] This reading is complicated by the fact that the Japanese writer is played by a Chinese actor, and the Chinese prostitute is played by a Japanese actor. Beyond the narrative, the ways in which audiences may interact with colonialist gazes and so on is far from clear – what is clear is that the line of distinction between a Japanese world and a Chinese one is drawn, even though the othering in this case is unusually opaque in denoting a subject and its object.

Best Actress, and Best Artistic Contribution), and winning two out of those three (Best Actress and Best Artistic Contribution) (Tokyo International Film Festival, n.p.).

Christ of Nanjing is a clear example of the gendered dynamic in onscreen representations between Japan and China identified by various scholars, including Griseldis Kirsch who gives several convincing examples of "Chinese women as saviours to Japanese men" in film and television from the 1990s and early 2000s (2015, 99-106). Discussing "Hong Kong films" primarily financed and coproduced by Japan (i.e. intended first and foremost for a Japanese audience) Kwai-Cheung Lo says that "Chinese-Japanese relations are always represented in terms of a Japanese masculine self in an ambiguous connection with a Hong Kong Chinese feminine other. More Chinese females than males are cast in Japanese films" (Lo 2014, 215). This gendered dynamic in the representation of Asia onscreen is once again evocative of the discourse of Orientalism outlined by Edward Said (1979). Lo echoes Tessa Morris-Suzuki's assertion that Japan has developed a discourse of "cosmetic multiculturalism" (2002, 171) in which cultural and ethnic homogeneity is unchallenged, and other cultures are commodified for their consumption by the host culture. In Lo's words:

> A fetishized but displaced Asian other (in the forms of ethnic and linguistic diversity) has been repackaged into an object of consumption to suit the tourist's exoticism and to reinforce the reemergence of Japanese nationalist discourses that are understood to be reactions to the perceived threat of a rising China. (2014, 217)

Given these examples, it seems that one must ask to what extent re-engagement with Asia can be called a mode of decolonisation, and if the discursive or ideological effects of these films differ greatly from those of the films that exclude Asia categorised as victims' history.

Sinophobia: Distinguishing Old Asia from New Asia

In the financial and artistic coproductions between Hong Kong and Japan, we see another type of ideological complicity taking shape in the portrayal of China, such as the one depicted in *Christ of Nanjing* or *Hong Kong Night Club* (*Hon Kon dai yasokai: Tatchi & Magi*, 1997), a slapstick comedy beset by an atmosphere of foreboding, with a narrative that takes place in Hong Kong months before the handover from British to Chinese rule. Characters seek foreign passports to leave the city, a main character fears she will have to become a prostitute because the nightclub she works at is about to become a karaoke bar, and various other symbols of qualitative change ensue.

Throughout all this, "China goes unmentioned, as if it never existed" (Lo 2014, 209). Paraphrasing Koyasu Nobukini, Lo asserts that modern Japanese identity "is based on its erasure of China from its frame of reference" (Lo 2014, 209), and that the apparently multiculturalist Hong Kong coproductions since the late 80s "attempt to play up ethnic Asian factors in order to play down Chinese ones" (Lo 2014, 221). In other words, a sinophobic censorial ideology still exerts itself within the Japanese filmmaking industry. While it may stem from different sources, it certainly overlaps with and benefits from the kind of "amnesiac" erasure seen in victims' history films.

Nonetheless, going by Lo's analysis, China clearly *is* represented in *Hong Kong Night Club*: as an impending force of change, as the unmentioned source of the characters' fears, and as an off-screen threat. China is othered and objectified just as much as it is "erased". Lo's analysis of an exoticism of "Asia" linked to the "perceived threat of a rising China" speaks to the political climate in both Japan and Hong Kong. What this suggests is not so much that "Asia" is being erased, but that a sinophobic climate plays a significant role in the objectifying or Orientalising of an "old Asia" in contrast to a modern, multicultural (as in *Swallowtail*), subjective (as in *Christ of Nanjing*) Asia, of which Japan is a part.

Marked and Unmarked Asia in Japanese Cinema

When Iwabuchi Koichi describes Japan's Self-Other relationship with the West, he writes that "Japan does not have to mark its position in relation to the non-West, because it is absolutely certain about its superiority", and that in relation to the "West versus the rest" dichotomy, "'The rest' has changed from the 'marked' inferior [as seen in Orientalism] to the 'unmarked' inferior [as seen in the turn away from Asia]" (Iwabuchi 1994, n.p.). This analysis fits the discourse of victims' history and an erased Asia well, but does not account for New Asianist films in which Asian countries are clearly 'marked'. In the same essay, Iwabuchi discusses the film *A Memorial Travel on Graduation: I came from Nihon* (*Sotsugyo Ryoko: Nihon kara Kimashita*, 1993), about

> a male university student who becomes a pop star in a fictional Asian country. He travels to the country where people are immersed in a "*Nihon* boom" and is scouted as a pop singer. The film is described as 'cultural gap comedy' […] However, in this film, the object of exploitation of Japanese otherness is Asia, not the West. It suggests Japanese hegemony over Asia… (Iwabuchi 1994, n.p.)

In this case too, Asia is clearly "marked" in distinction to Japan – but does this contradict or contrast its position as an unmarked (or erased) inferior?

When discussing erasure, it is important not to overlook the signifiers (which Iwabuchi himself describes) associated with Asian representation in Japanese film. Kirsch describes the findings of an extensive content analysis project on representations of Asia in Japanese media, which found that Japanese and non-Japanese Asian characters tended to have distinct roles: while Japanese characters were "individualist and modern", Asian characters were "family-oriented" and "traditional" (2015, 30). Furthermore,

> The Asian characters – who possess the energy to overcome difficulties and achieve success – are constructed as role models for the Japanese. In this context, they often become saviours to the lethargic and unmotivated Japanese. They are thus being appropriated to provide a vital impulse for the development of the Japanese characters. (2015, 30-31)

Kirsch follows Iwabuchi in asserting that "Asia is used as a field of projection for Japan's own needs – the alleged need to reacquire the energy lost after the completion of modernization" (2015, 30).

What seems clear is that whether Asia goes unmarked, as in victims' history films, or marked, as in New Asianist films, in both cases it suffers from a type of exclusion. Even though the New Asianist films discussed all encourage their audiences to sympathise with non-Japanese characters, that they accomplish this through objectification or Orientalism reinforces the dichotomy of Self and Other, establishing a border between the viewer and Asia just as the victims' history films do. Othering and erasure in Japanese popular cinema can therefore be seen as two techniques that are complicit in a general aim of relegating Asia outside of viewer subjectivity, if not always beyond the limits of sympathetic response.

At least on one level, the emergence of a "cosmetic multiculturalism" in Japanese popular film may also be read as a positive development in the history of the country's cinema. Not only does this emergence provide some of the groundwork on which a non-hierarchal multiculturalism may eventually be built, but also, especially when compared to the structuring of victims' history films, it reveals that the enclosed spaces of sympathy that all films offer have malleable borders when it comes to the depiction of Asia and Japan.

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Interrogating self and other:
Mutuality in the visual art of prewar Japan

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ABSTRACT

In pre-war Japan, the visual artist often played a complicit role in the circulation of dominant imperialist and militarist discourses. Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), for example, produced images extolling Yamato military might. This 'might' is evident both in the metonym of Yokoyama's soaring Fuji-san images, often with rising sun ascendant, and in the more realist representation of Fujita's Soviet tanks under assault at Nomonhan by 'triumphant' Japanese troops. Some pre-war and war-time visual art, however, resists being viewed as a conventional 'hagiography of Japan.' This, paradoxically, is especially the case in images depicting sites occupied by Japanese military and capital interests. These images, in fact, often reveal the highly tenuous nature of the discursively constructed border that divided the naichi Japanese self and the gaichi colonised other. Rather they convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting itself. This presentation will provide a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and consider how these uncover the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. The first is a 1937 image entitled 'Kōnan no haru' (Jiangnan Spring) by Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974), a scene from the rural environs of Shanghai featuring two young women in Chinese dress and an Imperial Army soldier mounted on a white horse. The second is a 1942 image entitled 'Shimai heizazō' (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side), painted in Beijing by Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888-1986). The third is a 1944 work by Tsuruta Gorō (1890-1969) entitled 'Shiganhei no wakare o tsugeru Taiwan no hitobito' (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops) which depicts indigenous people of Taiwan saluting as their countrymen depart for war. Each image confirms the precarious nature of Japanese discursive practice, revealing instead a mutual interplay that refuses dominance of one subject over the other.

Introduction: Artistic production and the fiction of self and other

In pre-war Japan, many visual artists were complicit in the circulation of dominant imperialist and militarist discourses. Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), for example, both produced an array of images extolling Yamato military might. This 'might' was evident in Yokoyama's metonymic representations of Imperial Japan, particularly his soaring Fuji-san images, often with rising sun ascendant. It was also apparent in the more realistic representation of Fujita's Soviet tanks under

assault at Nomonhan by 'triumphant' Japanese troops. Produced at the request of the commander of the 1939 Nomonhan battle (McDonald 2015, 145), which took place near the border of Mongolia and puppet state Manchukuo, Fujita's image completely elided the fact that the Japanese Imperial Army had been roundly trounced during its encounter with Soviet forces.

Some pre-war and war-time visual art, however, resists being viewed in conventional hagiography-of-empire mode. This resistance can paradoxically be especially evident in images depicting sites occupied by Japanese military and capital interests. Images set in these colonial or occupied locations, in fact, often reveal the highly tenuous nature of the discursively constructed border that divided the *naichi*, or mainland Japanese self, and the *gaichi*, or outside, colonised 'other.'[1] Rather, such images convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'othered' subject insists on asserting itself and thus exposing, in spite of the extreme violence that characterised the Japanese imperial project, the ultimately precarious nature of that endeavour. This is not in any way, as Leo T.S. Ching discusses with respect to the work of theorist Homi Bhabha, to 'elid[e] the very asymmetrical operation of colonial power relations that constituted the colonizer and colonized in the first place' (Ching 2001, 134). It is to suggest, however, that, in spite of the often-oppressive policies imposed by the colonisers in – as Meiji political heavyweight, Baron Kato Hiroyuki, declared – the name of progress 'as the offspring of power' (Davis 1996, 113), Japan's aspirations for control were persistently undermined by forms of resistance that the imperial authorities were never able successfully to contain.

This discussion provides a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and considers how each work suggests the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. The first is a 1938 work entitled *Kōnan no haru* (Jiangnan Spring), by Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974), depicting two young women in Chinese dress approached by a Japanese Imperial Army soldier seated on a white horse. The setting is the rural environs of China's Jiangnan region, the area south of the lower regions of the Yangtze River near Shanghai. The second is a 1942 image entitled *Shimai heiza-zō* (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side),[2] painted in Beijing, by Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888-1986),

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[1] Endō Masataka notes that the term 'gaichi' derives from those sites of the empire that were governed by other than mainland Japanese law. See Endō, Chapter 4, Section 2 (2013).

[2] In an essay written originally in Japanese by Ikeda Shinobu, translated by Ignacio Adriasola and published in the 2017 edition of the Freer/Sackler Galleries (Smithsonian Institute) publication, *Ars Orientalis*, this work is referred to as '*Chinese Sisters* (Kunyan heiza-zu)' (Ikeda 2017, 250).

featuring a young woman and her younger sister seated together on a sofa.[3] The third is a 1944 work by Tsuruta Gorō (1890-1969) entitled *Shiganhei no wakare o tsugeru Taiwan no hitobito* (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops).[4] This work depicts a group of indigenous people from Taiwan saluting their volunteer soldier countrymen as the latter depart for war. Each image confirms the precarious nature of Japanese discursive practice, revealing instead a mutual interplay that refuses the dominance of one subject over the other.

Art and Empire

The Japanese invasion of the Asian mainland was often justified in terms of 'liberating' Japan's Asian brothers from the yoke of western control and creating a Pan-Asian collective to be commanded, of course, by Japan (see, for example, Mitter 2013, 47-48). Japan's imperial fantasies were also based on a belief in the superiority of Japanese ethnicity derived in part from the Social Darwinist assumptions of European theorists such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Francis Galton (1822-1911). These ideas were embedded in Japanese social thought by, for example, the writings of the conservative, authoritarian thinker and politician, Baron Kato Hiroyuki, referred to above (see, for example, Davis 1996). This is notwithstanding, as Yoshino Kōsaku (2015), among others, argues, the deeply illogical contradictions in notions of ethnic identity. Yet, any putative Japanese grip on a superior sense of national self was always tenuous. In January, 1915, Japan presented its "infamous" (Dull 1950, 151) Twenty-One Demands to China as a means of expanding its political, military and commercial influence in the latter's territory. The extreme nature of these demands, especially the final five, which "revealed quite clearly that Japan was looking to establish a form of protectorate over the whole [of China]" (Amander and Wood 2016, 45), saw Japan insist on conditions of secrecy, a condition that China instantly contravened. This insistence on secrecy was surely the result of anxiety on Japan's part at the repercussions that might ensue should the unreasonable pressure being

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[3] There are at least two other images with the same title and of similar construction, although the size of the images and the clothing worn by the young women featured differ from the work being discussed here. The image discussed in this article was included in a 1944 collection, apparently compiled by Umehara himself, entitled *Umehara Ryūzaburō Pekin Sakuhinshū* (Selected Beijing Works by Umehara Ryūzaburō) (Ryūzaburō 1944, Image 16 – pages in the collection are unnumbered). Kaizuka Tsuyoshi also notes that the sisters who are the model for this work appear in at least three other images by Umehara. Kaizuka gives their names as Yuling, the elder sister, and Meiling, the younger (Kaizuka 2014, 74). The translated Ikeda essay referred to in the previous footnote also references the names of the two girls (Ikeda 2017, 250).

[4] Some sources give 'Taiwanjin' for 'Taiwan no hitobito' in the title of this work.

placed on China become known to the international community. Such anxiety hardly suggests an entity confident of its superior status either in the region or in the world order. With other Great Powers preoccupied by the war that engulfed Europe at the time, no concrete moves were made to prevent Japan gaining the foothold it desired. This is in spite of the fact that Japan's actions did indeed invite the censure of the international community, with Great Britain's representative in China, Sir John Jordan, declaring that "Japan's action towards China is worse than that of Germany in the case of Belgium" (Amander and Wood 2016, 44).

While Japanese expansion occurred steadily for half a century until the late 1930s, the flash-point for all-out war between China and Japan was the July 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident (*Rokōkyō jiken*). Importantly, each image discussed here was produced after that conflict. There is no doubt that, from the time of the 1874 Taiwan Expedition, Japan had conducted what Inoue Yasushi (1907-1991) notes was an ongoing 'war of invasion against China' (1994, 4). Yet, Inoue also notes that, until the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Japan's 'enemy' had been a disparate collection of local and broader forces against whom victory was often 'comparatively easy' (1994, 4). Marco Polo Bridge, however, marked the point at which Japan found itself fighting against a 'unified line of resistance across the whole of China' (Inoue 1994, 4). Inoue's words remind us that in China the eight-year war with its neighbour is referred to as *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng*, or China's War of Resistance Against Japan.

Japan was quick to enlist the assistance of artists and other members of the arts community to the official war-time cause. In terms of visual art, the *Rikugun bijutsu kyokai* (Army Art Association) was the organisation formed to promote strategic war objectives through the creation of images that lauded Japanese military exploits. While this association did not come into being until April, 1939 – that is, until after the production of the first image to be discussed here – it was preceded by the *Dai Nippon rikugun jūgun gakka kyōkai* (The Great Japanese Army Military Painters Association), formed in 1938 (Nara 2007, 86). Furthermore, the *Pen butai* – variously translated at Pen Corps, Pen Brigade or Pen Unit – the members of which were writers and novelists committed to advocating the Japanese imperial cause in literary production, was established in August 1938 (Keene p. 84). In other words, the sense that cultural production could be mobilised in the name of the emperor and the ubiquitous *kokutai*,

the national body, had become part of public discourse during the twelve months that followed the Marco Polo Bridge hostilities.

My purpose in bringing these three ostensibly unrelated images together for analysis is to demonstrate that even images produced by different artists at different times of empire and for markedly different purposes share a common thread of mutuality that defies distinctions between self and other. That is to say, regardless of how the artist might seek to define his own self and the self of the nation that he represents through his work, the power of the 'other' being depicted resists any strategy of marginalisation that might be deployed by the powerful individual or collective. Furthermore, in the chronological sequence of the illustrations discussed there is an incremental accentuation of the 'othered' nature of the subjects depicted. From one perspective, this can be explained in terms of the coincidence of the settings of the works being discussed. The Kōnan, or Jiangnan, area south of the great Yangtze River featured in the 1938 Arishima image is a region of economic prosperity where the trope of the cultured young woman could reasonably be regarded as a norm. The 1942 Umehara image of the 'sitting -sisters' was produced in Beijing, then under Japanese occupation and the capital of the puppet government. The war had been progressing for some time and the young women depicted here demonstrate few of the signs of economic advantage that mark their Jiangnan countrywomen. The *shiganhei* (volunteer soldiers) pictured in the third 1944 image are the indigenous people of Taiwan, who had almost no access to the material social resources that supported the cultured appearance of the young women in the Arishima work or even Umehara's less privileged sisters. In fact, Ching has referred to Taiwanese indigenous people as the 'most impoverished and marginalised population in the Japanese colonial hierarchy' (2001, 135). I would argue that this accentuation of otherness and marginalisation by the artist is also a response to Japan's failing imperial project. In other words, as the war on the continent dragged out and the possibility of the empire's ultimate self-immolation began to present itself, artists became more and more committed, in a desperate attempt to disavow the likelihood of disaster, to emphasising the differences between the Japanese self and colonial other. As I will demonstrate below, however, even with the best efforts of artists schooled in the imperative of promoting Japanese dominance, the images here read against themselves and thus refuse any notion of Japanese entitlement.

Complicity and Seduction: Homosociality and the Imperial Myth

Scrutiny of many conventional art history biographies reveals that these publications omit the war years from the record of the artist concerned. It can therefore be difficult to assess the attitude of an artist towards Japan's imperial project. The exceptions, of course, are those artists who openly produced *sensō-ga* or *sensō-kiroku-ga,* official images recording feats in war. These artists include Miyamoto Saburō, creator of the famed 1942 image, *Yamashita, Paashibaru ryō-shireikan kaiken-zu* (The Meeting of General Yamashita and General Percival), a work that drew from a newspaper photograph to show the British High Command ceding Singapore to the Japanese. They also include Tsuruta himself, whose 1942 *Shinpei Parenban ni kōkasu* (Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang), depicted Japanese Army paratroopers landing in preparation for an attack on Dutch oil refineries located near Palembang on the island of Sumatra. Assessing the position of artists such as Arishima and Umehara, whose corpus does not necessarily include a range of works that openly laud Japan's imperial project, can be more complex.

In a 2017 translated essay that updates and expands her earlier analyses of the male artists of imperial Japan who produced images of women in *shinafuku*, China dress or *qipao*, Ikeda Shinobu effectively argues that the mere absence of *sensō-ga* or *sensō-kiroku-ga* in the corpus of an artist should in no way be interpreted as absence of support for the official position of the time (Ikeda 2017, 246). Referring specifically to Umehara Ryūzaburō, Ikeda notes that even with respect to his depiction of the bodies of women, it would be a mistake to consider the artist's material that 'diverged from' other, more directly propagandistic representations as evidence that 'there was no political meaning or function to Umehara's paintings' (Ikeda 2017, 246). Rather, Ikeda continues, despite their being 'too deeply embarrassed to participate outright in the propaganda machinery serving Japan's total war system' (2017, 246), male intellectuals such as Umehara played an important public role in valorising the empire. Ikeda cites Wakakuwa Midori's analysis of the manner in which male artists in Japan used the nude figure of the woman to 'abandon painting's critique of reality' and to form, recalling the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950-2009) on homosociality, 'an alliance of men' (Wakakuwa cited in Ikeda 2017, 247). This was the very alliance, Wakakuwa had pointed out, on which militarism was based and which then permitted men to 'invade the Asian other' and to 'violently attack and seize control of other peoples' (Ikeda [summarising Wakakuwa] 2017, 247).

Even if it were possible to confirm that certain artists were consciously opposed to the policies of the time, I would argue that they were nevertheless subject to what Saurabh Dube refers to as the 'novel mythologies of nation and empire' (2002, 729). According to Dube, these 'mythologies' comprise but one element of the 'enchantments' of modernity which operate upon the subject and which, regardless of that subject's conscious stance, ensure that she or he falls under the thrall of the fictional discourses of the nation state.[5] In other words, regardless of whether or not Arishima and Umehara actively resisted policies of empire, both were powerless to completely free themselves from the hypnotic power of the imperial spell. In the discussion that follows, it is my assumption that, notwithstanding the extent to which Arishima and Umehara were or were not avid supporters of the militarist regime, they were nonetheless drawn inexorably into the fictional discourses of nation promoted by that regime.

Arishima Ikuma's *Jiangnan Spring*

Arishima Ikuma, with his brother Arishima Takeo (1878-1923) and half-brother Ton Satomi (1888-1983), was a founding and active member of *Shirakaba-ha* (The White Birch Society.). This was an influential literary and artistic group whose members were graduates of the elite Gakushuin Peers School. Operating between 1910 and 1923, the Society emphasised humanist approaches over the naturalism that dominated literary production in Japan at the time.[6] An artist who was also a writer, Arishima studied in Paris as a young man. Inaga Shigemi, in fact, attributes Arishima with being one of the first in the Japanese art world to draw attention to the work of post-Impressionist, Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) (2015, 115). Arishima was a founding member of the *Nikakai* (literally 'The Second Group', now known in English as the Society of Progressive Japanese Artists), a break-away group which, while resisting the official government dominance of the art world, operated within largely conservative parameters. In 1924, for example, the group rejected the inclusion of works by the avant-garde MAVO collective in its 10th anniversary exhibition. Ikuma, himself, however, appears not to have been averse to having his name associated with radical activities and was one of a number of commentators who

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[5] I have previously argued this in relation to the writer, Takeda Taijun (1912-1976) (Hartley 2013, 188).

[6] Arishima is often excluded from popular accounts of *Shirakaba-ha* presumably on grounds of relative marginality in relation to some of the great names who were members of the group. It is significant, however, that the opening section of Senuma Shigeki's account of *Shirakaba-ha* activities begins with Ikuma's return to Japan at the age of 24 by the Japanese count after spending two years in Italy and two years in Paris (Senuma 1997, 25).

contributed to an essay collection commemorating murdered anarchist, Ōsugi Sakae (1885-1923) (Ikuma 2013).

Arishima's war-time activity is difficult to ascertain. He is one of the many artists whose biography, as featured in easily accessible publications, provides almost no detail from the late 1930s to mid- to late 1940s.[7] Reminding us that the painter was also a writer of some note, his name is cited on the current website of The Japan P.E.N. Club as the Club's first vice-president upon its formation in 1936, with Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) as president (The Japan P.E.N. Club 2018). In that capacity, Arishima travelled to Paris in 1937 with popular literature writer, Kume Masao (1891-1952), to attend the 15th International P.E.N. Congress. His name, however, does not appear in any listing of prominent members of the *Pen butai*. In 1942, Arishima published a translation of selected works by the 1926 woman Italian winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Grazia Deledda (1871-1936). In spite of her own relatively privileged background, Deledda's work depicted the struggles of the people of Sardinia. We are unable to say the extent to which undertaking this translation influenced Arishima's own cultural production, literary or visual. Nevertheless, his interest in the Italian woman's work suggests some degree of affinity with those, either inside or outside Japan, who received few benefits from the imperialist policies of the modern era. Certainly, it is difficult to find evidence of Arishima creating the spiritual peons to empire that came from the brush of Yokohama Taikan or the visual displays of imperial military might that were produced with such fervour by Fujita Tsuguharu. However, it is the very fact that Arishima appears to have been less than overt in his support for the imperial cause that makes the *Jiangnan Spring* image particularly worthy of consideration. That is to say, the fact that an artist who did not blatantly sign up to the cause could produce a work so steeped in imperial discourse suggests the profound emotional and psychological reach of that discourse into the hearts and minds of even less enthusiastic subjects of imperial Japan.

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[7] Omission of such material from publications such as *Shirakaba-ha no wakaudo-tachi* (Senuma 1997) or *Shirakaba-ha no ai-shita bijutsu* (2009, The Art Loved by the White Birch Society), published to commemorate the centenary of the Society's formation, is understandable given that these works confine their information to the artist/writer's activities with the *Shirakaba-ha*, which ceased to exist as a group in 1923. The Arishima Ikuma biography provided on the website of the *Tōkyō bunkazai kenkyū jō* (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties) website, however, has detailed entries for most years until 1937 and then nothing until 1945. Available at: http://www.tobunken.go.jp/materials/bukko/9364.html, and accessed on 24 May, 2017.

Jiangnan Spring was produced after the Nanjing Massacre, at which time the determination of the Japanese Empire to impose its brutal will onto the Chinese mainland was indelibly confirmed. Censorship systems, of course, forbade the spread of such information except in terms most glorious to imperial armed forces, as evidenced in the highly sanitised 1940 oil on canvas, *Nankin nyūjō* (Triumphal Entry into Nanjing), by Kanokogi Takeshiro (1874-1941). Nevertheless, the violent nature of the Imperial Army's activities on the continent was impossible to completely suppress and was, in fact, celebrated by some as just treatment of recalcitrant Chinese. In spite of the fact that he must have had some sense of this reality, Arishima attempts in this work to create a melange of Japanese military benevolence and agreeable Chinese response. Arishima's image perhaps represents what the artist hoped what might be, rather than what he must surely to some extent have realised was the case. Regardless of intention, however, intimations of Japan's lust for power and China's refusal to be subject to this lust reverberate throughout this deceptively pleasing and seductively appealing work.
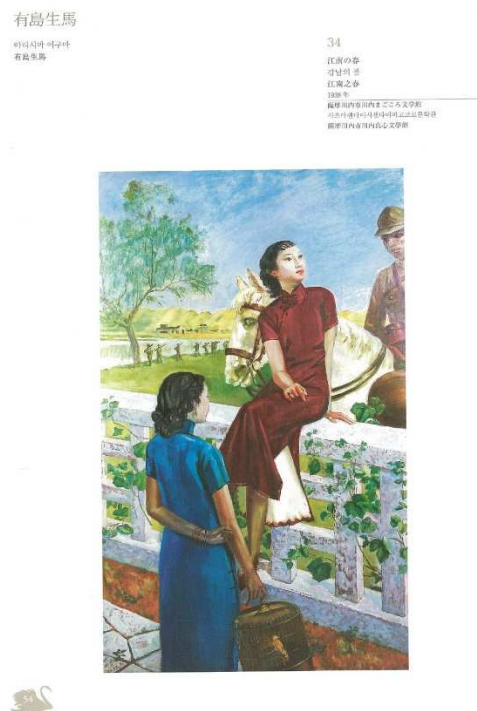

Fig. 1. Arishima, I. (1938) *Kōnan no haru* (Jiangnan Spring) [no medium given]. In: Fukuoka-shi Fukuoka Ajia Bijutsukan (Fukuoka Asian Art Museum). (2014) *Kanten ni miru kindai bijutsu: Tōkyō, So-ru, Taipei, Chōshun* (Titled in English: Toward the Modernity: Images of Self and Other in East Asian Art Competitions). Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 54.

The *Jiangnan Spring* image has a clear military focus. Although two young women are centred in the foreground, the viewing eye is arguably first drawn to the young man on the white horse in the right foreground as a result of the striking intrusion of the animal into the frame. This Japanese Imperial Army figure cannot but remind us of the Shōwa Emperor, whose uniformed image riding astride his white mount was in wide circulation by this time.[8] To the left of the frame, above the girl in the blue *qipao* (China dress) and marching with rifles on their shoulders along a river bank, are a line of what we presume, given the presence of the figure on horseback, are Japanese troops. While the image clearly does not conform to the usual *sensō-ga* that record Imperial Army feats of glory, the military presence gives the work a loose connection to that genre. Furthermore, like those images designed to induce viewer devotion to the Empire, this work is a fantasy that attempts to elide reference to the oppressive nature of the regime that was, at the time, rolling out across the continent. The imperatives of this regime were evident in the self-explanatory 'annihilation policies' that Herbert Bix (2000, 365) notes were instituted to 'pacify' guerrilla activity in China's Hebei Province and which culminated in the notorious 'Sankō sakusen' (Three Alls Policy – kill all, burn all, loot all). This expression neatly sums up much Japanese military activity on the Chinese mainland.[9] That the Nationalists themselves often scorched the earth as they retreated from the invading Japanese does not diminish the brutal nature of Imperial Army policies.[10]

Why do our eyes move to the figure on horseback? Firstly, the fact that the figure is partially concealed paradoxically gives it a level of prominence. Furthermore, the horse on which this figure sits projects into the centre of the image and thereby draws our focus away from the young women in the foreground. The size of the figure is also of interest. Although behind the young women, the body of the male appears to be marginally larger than that of the women. This may be a factor of gender. Yet, we know that Nationalist commander, Jiang Jie-shi (Chiang Kai-shek; 1887-1975), derogatively referred to the Japanese as 'dwarf bandits' (Mitter 2013, 81), a term derived from the historical scorn with which Japan was regarded by both China and Korea (Sun 2012, 88).

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[8] Examples of the sorts of images that were in circulation at the time can be seen in the front photographs featured in monographs by Yamada Akira (Yamada 1990; Yamada and Kōtsuke 1991). The image in the sole-authored Yamada work is from 1928, while the image featured in the Yamada/Kōtsuke publication is from 1940. Suzuki Yoshiko (2014, 258) also notes the resonance of the emperor in this element of Arishima's image.

[9] An account of this policy is given in Himeta and Chen (1989).

[10] See, for example, Mitter (2013, 111-112 and 204) for details of Nationalist troops torching cities in retreat.

There is a sense that the ever so slightly enlarged body size here may be an attempt to neutralise insults of this nature directed towards Imperial Army troops. The facial expression of the figure on horseback, furthermore, is masked. Unlike a number of war-time images in which laughing Japanese soldiers patronisingly indulge small Chinese children,[11] there is little benevolence here. Rather the expression borders on sullen. Why might this be so? The answer is perhaps found in the body language of the young woman positioned in the centre foreground of the image.

Arishima's girls are elegantly cultured, giving no hint of any Social Darwinist notion of China as inferior. In conversation with Haniya Yutaka (1909-1997), post-war novelist and Imperial Army conscript, Takeda Taijun (1912-1976), noted how during his tour of duty between October 1937 and October 1939, well-educated and refined Chinese girls, some of whom could speak French, were recruited as sex slaves to service Japanese troops in local *pii-ya*, Imperial Army slang for brothel (Takeda and Haniya 1973, 363-364). Takeda's words invoke the elegant pair pictured here and we cannot but wonder about the later fate of these sophisticated, porcelain-skinned young women. Each wears a *qipao*, one of deep red and one of light royal blue. While the garment of the seated girl is slit fashionably to above the knees, it is nonetheless modestly lined. The attire and the modern hairstyles of the young women are reminiscent of the attire of a younger Soong Mei-ling (1897-2003), who, at the time of the image's production, was the wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and thus the most powerful woman in China. This resonance of political might and resistance to Japan by powerful Chinese women is balanced by the fact that one figure holds a caged yellow bird, seemingly an oriole. While Wolfram Eberhard notes ambiguity around the bird as a symbol in China (1983, 39), the joyous call of the oriole suggests happiness and friendship. Eberhard further points to auspicious associations with the

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[11] Images of this nature can be viewed in the Chapman University, Frank Mt Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives. See, for example, the following site (Accessed on 22 March 2017): https://calisphere.org/item/8ce81cb251462454e7ebb1c0f6201083/. One particularly intriguing example appears in the Asahi Shimbun collection entitled *Asahi shinbun no hizō shashin ga kataru sensō* (The War as Told by Iconic Asahi News Photographs). This image appears in a photograph showing war-time art world luminaries such as Fujita Tsuguharu judging the second *Seisen bijutsuten*, Sacred War Art Exhibition, held in June, 1941 (Asahi shimbun-sha 'Shashin ga kataru sensō' shuzai han 2009, 106-107). The painting, which can also be viewed on the Hakodate Central City Digital Library archives, at this address: http://archives.c.fun.ac.jp/fronts/tableChild/postcards/pc100035, is by minor artist Futaesaku Tatsuo (1916-1988). Entitled *Shinnichi kyōiku* (Pro-Japan education), the image gives a scene from a primary school classroom in which young children are happily gathering around a figure, presumably their teacher, who nevertheless wears military uniform. Although their attire strongly suggests that that the children are Chinese, the blackboard teaching material is similar, perhaps identical, to that which would have been taught to mainland Japanese children at the time, featuring illustrations with words such as hat, ball and soldier written in the *katakana* script.

colour yellow in terms of the image of the Yellow Dragon and its relationship to the mythical first ruler of China, Huang-di, the Yellow Emperor (1989, 322).[12] From a different perspective, as Suzuki Yoshiko suggests however (2014, 258), there may be significance in the fact that the bird is caged. Does the curtailing of the activity of the bird imply Japan's power over China? And what, moreover, is the attitude of these two women towards the figure on the horse, here the representative of the great Empire of Japan which has set itself the task of liberating Asia through the commission of unspeakable atrocities that included violent rape? Notwithstanding the intimations of amiability that may reside in the yellow oriole, the image has an interesting ambivalence on this point.

The young woman seated could be executing a turn of the head in order to gaze at the magnificence of Japan in the form of the military figure on the horse. On the other hand, her oblique line of sight suggests that she may be deliberately refusing to engage that magnificence.[13] The figure with its back to the viewer is even more ambiguous. We cannot see her gaze but perhaps she looks at the soldier on the horse. On the other hand, a mere millimetre hint of the artist's brush that gives a downward turn to the corner of the figure's right eye – which the viewer can clearly see – creates the impression that she too refuses the invader's gaze to look instead in the vicinity of her companion's hands. This resistance on the part of the two women to engage the rider's line of sight, we might speculate, is the source of his slightly sullen countenance.

In an incisive re-reading of the 1961 novella, 'Sebunchīn' (Seventeen) by Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935), Michele Mason discusses the desire of the masturbation-obsessed, seventeen-year-old right-wing protagonist of that work. Mason notes that at the height of his excitement, this young man – a stereotypical puny weakling – fantasises about his body being transformed into a muscular vision of hegemonic masculinity that draws the envious attention of other young men and the admiring gaze of young women (Mason 2017, n.p.). Mason notes that while the protagonist may appear to desire to be the object of the gaze, this desire is compounded by the fact that his body is 'the subject of the sentence' (Mason 2017, n.p.). In other words, 'it is his imagined manly physique that

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[12] Eberhard nonetheless also notes that 'in recent decades, the term yellow to denote pornographic literature and film has come into use' (1983, 322). Yoshikuni Igarashi discusses the significance of the term yellow in the title of *Kiiroi karasu* (1957, Yellow Crow), the first colour film by director Gosho Heinosuke (1902-1981). Here, Igarashi cites from a 1953 article by Asari Atsushi, entitled 'Shikisai to seikaku' (Colour and personality), which notes that the colour yellow indicates a desire for 'affection and reminiscence,' in addition to 'an inadequate amount of love' (2016, 45).

[13] Suzuki (2014, 258) notes that the gaze of this girl does not intersect with that of the figure on the horse.

works its power over the girls to summon their sexual longing' (Mason 2017, n.p.).[14] The body of the figure on the horse in Arishima's image operates in much the same way to demand the longing of the young Chinese women depicted. We can conclude that the refusal of these young women to comply with this demand, by directing their gazes away from the figure, at best disappoints the male on the horse or at worst incites violence at some point after the instant captured by the artist.

Here we see an early example of an interaction in which Japan's desire to dominate is ultimately thwarted. There is no celebration of or welcome for these troops. In fact, the image invokes Parks Coble's observation that few so-called Japanese collaborators in the occupied 'Lower Yangzi' would have taken that path if 'other alternatives' had presented themselves (2003, 210). These young women do not resist the invaders. Nor, however, do they welcome them. Nicely complimenting the beauty and poise of their figures, their attitude is one of indifference. And while the artist has attempted to conceal this indifference with tropes such as ivy-covered western style lattice fencing, the bucolic image of the background village, the clear blue sky and the distant mountain range, ultimately the ruse unravels. The putatively inferior other refuses the judgment of the dominant self to assert in turn its own individuality and self-value.

In one respect, the image also precisely fits the *shinafuku*, or China dress trope, as discussed by Ikeda Shibobu (2007, 2008; 2017). Noting a penchant among Japanese painters for models in this form of attire, Ikeda argues, in much the same way that Mason does concerning the protagonist of 'Seventeen', that these figures 'functioned as the "Other" that helped male artists to construct their own subjectivity' (2008, 347). Although her 2008 article, from which this quote is taken, refers particularly to the manner in which Japanese artists clothed Japanese women in qibao as 'a possible bulwark against the West' in the construction of a national identity for Imperial Japan, her comments on both China and woman as the 'Other' are particularly relevant here. Ikeda discusses the manner in which 'China, as a rather difficult, colonial "Other", alternated with the image of yet another "Other,", namely "woman,", serving as an object of control for the Japanese male' (2008, 348). In this image, rather than alternating, the two "Others" identified by Ikeda – 'China' and 'woman' – are overlaid, a process that arguably geometrically heightens the impact of both. Ikeda also cites commentary by Daimaru Hiroshi to the effect that, recalling the reference to Soong Mei-ling above, the

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[14] Mason also notes how the protagonist seeks to 'claim the respect' of the boys around him.

qipao was seen as a way for Japanese women to modernise without complying with western norms (2008, 369-372). This was in spite of the negative discourse that circulated about backward and unhygienic China, the so-called "Sick Man of Asia" (Heinrich 2008, xiii). In this sense, the two young women in Arishima's image might be regarded as models for their sisters in Japan.

In commentary to Arishima's image that appears in the publication produced for the *Kanten ni miru kindai bijutsu: Tōkyō, So-ru, Taipei, Chōshun* exhibition, Suzuki explains that *Jiangnan Spring* was exhibited in New York in 1939 (Suzuki 2014, 258). Suzuki notes that those who viewed the image there may possibly have agreed with critic Tanaka Jun's impression of the work as, '[a member of] the occupying military that has occupied the area in peace and who amicably interacts with local people' (Suzuki 2014, 258). She further points to the fact that written – we might say wistfully – on the back of the work was a statement in English that read: 'Peace Amidst War by IKUMA ARISHIMA 1939' (Suzuki 2014, 258).

Umehara Ryūzaburō's *Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side*

The second image to be discussed is by iconic artist Umehara Ryūzaburō who, like Arishima Ikuma, was associated with the White Birch Society. Arishima was certainly recognised for the quality of his visual production. He was, nevertheless, a lightweight when compared with Umehara, once a student of Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and a giant of the twentieth century art world in Japan.

Although an intellectual who may have wished, in terms of the discussion above, to distance himself from the more overt excesses of the militarist authorities, Umehara's activities nonetheless fuelled the operation of the imperial machine. He was often a judge for official art exhibitions and was appointed an Imperial Household Artist in July 1944 (Ikeda 2017, 243). At a time, furthermore, when paper and coloured ink were almost impossible to procure, the artist was able to publish a folio-sized collection of 25 opulently-coloured prints of his Beijing images (Ikeda 2017, 241). He happily, moreover, took advantage of the benefits of Japanese control of key parts of the continent to travel to China, particularly Beijing, in order to combine leisure with artistic pursuits. Umehara first visited China in 1929, when he travelled to Shanghai and its surrounds. In 1939, however, he made a brief detour to the country's past and future capital after travelling to Manchukuo as a judge in a government sponsored art

gathering held that year in Changchung (then Shinkyō, meaning 'new capital'). So enamoured was he with Beijing that, between 1939 and 1943, Umehara undertook six extended visits of several months each to the city, amounting in total to a duration of more than a year and a half (Tomiyama 1988, 38-39). It was during the 1942 visit that he painted the image of the sitting sisters referred to here.

Throughout his various sojourns in Beijing, Umehara created canvases of Beijing landscapes, the majority of which feature orange Chinese-style roofs emerging from the deep green of forest-like surrounds. Particularly well-known is *Shikinjō*, *The Forbidden City*, which Umehara entered into a 1940 exhibition, one of a raft of official events held that year in Japan to commemorate the 2,600th anniversary of what was claimed to be the birth of the mythical emperor, Jimmu. This and similar images are memorable for the fact that, while troops were engaged in a bloody conflict across China, which is estimated eventually to have claimed the lives of between 14 and 20 million (Mitter 2013, 387) or even between 20 and 30 million (Lary 2017, 1) soldiers and civilians, Umehara was able to ensconce himself comfortably in Beijing from whence he went about his work in a way that erased any suggestion of the turmoil that gripped the region. Or, as Ikeda observes, in spite of the fact that Umehara visited the continent during a time of war, like his rival for the title of most popular painter of the era, Yasui Sōtarō (1888-1955), he was successful in 'completely avoiding such subject matter [as] battlegrounds [or] the everyday lives of soldiers' (Ikeda 2018, 246). Instead, the artist preferred 'to charm spectators' – even after 'the Sino-Japanese War had descended in quagmire' – 'with depictions of women in ethnic dress' (Ikeda 2018, 246).

While in Beijing, Umehara noted that he painted landscapes in the morning and images of people after lunch (Tomiyama 1988, commentary to Image 11). The 'people' referred to were almost inevitably women and girls. In order to do this, he would invite models to his room (Ikeda 2017, 241). The two girls, the sitting sisters, who appear in this work were recruited in that way. Umehara recalled in 1973 how enjoyable it was to 'call beautiful young women [the artist uses the Chinese term *guniang*] to my lodgings to paint' (Umehara 1973, prologue: also cited in Tomiyama 1988, 39). Tomiyama Hideo, in fact, cites the observation by Umehara that one of the attractions that drew him to Beijing was the beauty of the city's young woman, in particular their facial features and interesting clothing (Tomiyama 1988, commentary to Image 11).

The 'sitting sisters' image features the distinctive orange and green colour combination that marks many other Umehara works produced in China, such as the Beijing roof series noted above. Influenced initially by his teacher Pierre-Auguste Renoir and then by Paul Cézanne and other post-Impressionist French artists, Umehara's style features distinctively rough *impato* brush strokes – he would create a sensation in the 1950s by squeezing paint directly from the tube onto a canvas (Ogawa 1971, 121) – in addition to modernist visual elements such as the sofa on which the featured pair are seated. While reclining nudes – recalling the Wakakuwa analysis cited above – had been an Umehara speciality in the 1920s, seated women, generally fully clothed, held a particular interest for the artist while in Beijing.

We might analyse this painting, too, from the China dress perspective. This is in spite of the fact that the skirt lengths, long sleeves and sombre colours of the sisters' attire suggest that the work partially resists Ikeda's analysis of the Japanese male penchant for the China dress as a blatant device to orientalise and sexualise the women so featured (Ikeda 2008, 372). Yet, like many Umehara Beijing images, there is a tension in this work that is not necessarily evident in images by other Japanese artists of women in China dress. This is apparent if we compare the representation of the sisters with *Ginpei no mae* (1925, Before a Silver Screen), by Kobayashi Mango (1870-1947), one of the most iconic works in the China dress genre. In that work a Japanese woman with modern permed hair wearing a brilliantly embroidered royal blue two-piece sits side-on with her right side to the back of a wooden chair across which she drapes her right arm. With her hands clasped, her left arm hangs down to her lap. Her style, as Ikeda also notes (2008, 361-363), is relaxed and comfortable, suggesting that she has no objection to being made the object of the gaze of the artist or the viewer of the work. The figure is centred in the image, adding to a sense of calm and order, and thus to the woman's 'viewability'.

Umehara's strategy of seating his girls to one side of the sofa, a trope that repeatedly appears in his images of Beijing women, creates a sense of random imbalance that is absent from Kobayashi's carefully constructed work. This imbalance underscores that fact that, as in Ikuma's *Jiangnan Spring* image, the gaze of young women here refuses to comply with Japanese expectations of the superior self and dominated other. In an article on China dress imagery production in China during the war, Ikeda also notes the determined look on the faces of the sisters under discussion (2007, 115; cited also by Kaizuka 2014, 74),

while the 2017 translated expansion of her 2007 analysis further discusses the manner in which Umehara's Beijing women and girls 'brazenly star[e] back at the viewer' (2017, 240). To Ikeda, this element of the artist's work suggests alternate fear and fascination, in addition to an insistence on sexualising as 'Other' the woman being depicted. In her 2017 discussion, Ikeda in fact refers directly to the image presented here. These sisters, she notes, 'wear striking black outfits and possess powerful gazes; their crossed arms end in large hands. There is nothing meek about them' (2017, 249). While there is no doubt that the pair have links to more eroticised Umehara images of Beijing women and girls, or '*kunyan*' (to borrow Ikeda's term derived from the Chinese, *guniang*), [15] I wish to read this image from a slightly different perspective.

Like the Kobayashi China dress figure referred to above, the girl to the right of this image – the older sister – looks away from the viewer, replicating the indirect gaze that is often featured in depictions of women in visual art. Yet, where the Kobayashi subject looks dreamily with a vapid gaze at some point in space, perhaps as an indirect ploy to diffidently welcome the artist's attention, [16] the figure here appears to deliberately avoid the gaze of the painter (and the contemporaneous viewer) who is a member – regardless of the degree of overt support demonstrated for the regime – of the invading Japanese Empire. The work was produced in 1942, the year that was the high point of imperial grandeur and also of the all-out implementation of the Three Alls policy discussed above. In addition to the damage of the initial strike, this policy was committed as far as possible, as Himeta Mitsuyoshi and Chen Ping (1989, back cover inset map) point out, to creating a *mujinku*, or area in which humans were fundamentally unable to survive, across much of the area north of Beijing. The older girl is of an age to be *au fait* with the details of precisely how Japanese troops have wreaked havoc on her homeland, particularly with respect to the brutality of the treatment of girls and young women. The arm she places around her sister suggests a desire to protect the younger girl from sexual violation.

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[15] The Japanese reading of the Chinese '*guniang*,' meaning girl, is often given as '*ku-nyan*.'
[16] It is not possible within the scope of this article to pursue the possibility that the woman subject turns her gaze away from the male artist and viewer as a strategy to deal with the discomfort or even shame that she feels at being constructed as spectacle.

Fig. 2. Umehara, R. (1942) *Shimai heiza-zō* (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side) [oil and mineral pigment on paper]. In: *Umehara Ryūzaburō Pekin Sakuhinshū* (Selected Beijing Works by Umehara Ryūzaburō). Tokyo: Ishihara kyūryūdō, image 16 (no page numbers provided).

The younger girl, however, is more defiant. Not yet old enough for the modern hairstyle of her sibling, she is perhaps too young to know fear. With a slightly-veiled, yet nonetheless fierce undercurrent to her expression, she stares directly at the viewer, arms folded assertively. Her expression simultaneously invokes the anger, frustration and contempt generated by being peremptorily summoned to act as a model. We have already noted Ikeda's observation, regarding Umehara's Beijing *kunyan*, or young women, works generally, on the attention given by the artist to 'the brazen stare[s]' of his subjects. Here, too, the artist clearly sought to convey the intensity of this as-yet-adolescent girl's irate glare. Her hands, it is obvious, are disproportionately large. Tomiyama notes that the artist found this 'humorous' (1988, commentary to Image 11). Rather than humorous, I view these hands as Umehara's unconscious response to the girl's expression and the power inherent in that determined gaze. With these hands she will challenge and perhaps destroy the invading male – and all that he represents – who seeks to objectify her.

I argued above that, as the war situation intensified, artists attempted to strengthen the boundary between the Japanese self and other. Approaching this possibility from a different angle, Ikeda suggests that Umehara's attachment both to Beijing buildings and

kunyan in exotic Chinese dress deepened as anti-Japanese sentiment spread. Ultimately, she sees endeavours of this nature – and the reception of Umehara's work by literary icons such as Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983) – as 'none other than the aestheticization of war' (Ikeda 2017, 258).

Tsuruta Gorō's *People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops*

The final image for discussion is *Taiwan People Farewelling Volunteer Soldiers*. This work is by Tsuruta Gorō, the artist better known for the 1942 work referred to above, *Shinpei Parunban ni kōkasu* (Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang). The *Palembang* painting is of a squadron of 60 or 70 Japanese parachutists floating to the ground against a pale blue sky dotted with pink and lemon cumulus clouds. Three figures in the foreground are already engaged in combat. Like Umehara's sitting sisters, the Palembang image was painted in 1942 at the apogee of imperial grandeur. The *Taiwanese People* work, however, was a 1944 production. In July of that year, Saipan fell with Japan fighting to the last man. In private, there were those in the military who knew that this left Japan 'vulnerable' (Kingston 2014, n.p.).

Tsuruta's mission at this time of challenge was to buttress the Empire by demonstrating the devotion of these humble imperial subjects – the indigenous people of Taiwan – while nonetheless emphasising their difference from 'authentic' Japanese. Confirming their distance from civilised *naichi* or mainland life, the figures are crudely dressed, with one boy naked. It is this boy, ironically, who waves the Japanese flag. As James Clifford suggests in his discussion of how anthropology 'once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or non-historical' (1988, 23), this diminution of the degree of 'civilised' appearance of a group being observed is a well-known device for confirming the authority of the observing party. Furthermore, as Aaron Gerow argues with respect to the complex images presented in early twenty-first century Japanese cinema dealing with warships, it is precisely because such visions of imperial might have 'only been effected through certain compromises and ideological contortions', that they tell as much about the 'obstacles faced' by Japanese nationalism as of any gains (Gerow 2006, n.p.).[17] It does not need to be said that the lifestyle deprivation experienced by the people depicted

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[17] Gerow's reference is to the new-nationalism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I would argue that the idea is equally applicable to Japan's imperial project.

was undoubtedly exacerbated by exploitative imperial policies which, in the case of indigenous people in Taiwan, required a ratio of 1 to 57.5 police to residents when, in other parts of the island, this ratio was 1 to 963.1 (Ching 2001, 136).

The '*shiganhei*' referred to in the title of Tsuruta's work are likely to be the Takasago *giyūtai*, literally the Takasago 'hero corps'. Takasago was the generic name given by imperial Japan to the indigenous people of Taiwan. Recruited and trained in jungle warfare under conditions of strict secrecy (Huang 2001, 225), these volunteers were superficially regarded as loyal subjects of the Empire. In fact, as Chih-huei Huang notes in his analysis of oral testimony narratives by former members of the group, many were infused with a sense of *yamato-damashi* – Japanese spirit (2001, 223). Huang quotes Walis Piho, a surviving former volunteer, who recalled how he and other young men of his settlement prepared to serve by forming a group to study Japanese under the auspices of the 'Speak the National Language Movement' (Huang 2001, 230). In doing so, they undertook activities that included the recitation of the *Kyōiku chokugo*, the Imperial Edict on Education, and the *Gunjin chokuyu*, the Imperial Edict on Military Personnel. That their acceptance for military service was considered an honour for the community as a whole is evident from Piho's recollection, which startlingly invokes the scene in Tsuruta's work:

> On the day of our departure, all of the tribe came to see us off. They stood along the roadsides waving the *Hinomaru* flag. I felt extremely proud to be a Japanese military man. (Walis Piho, a.k.a. Yonegawa Nobuo, Second Takasago Giyūtai, cited in Huang 2001, 230)

Explaining the difficulty that faced Takasago returnees following the collapse of the empire and Jiang Jie-shi's assumption of power in Taiwan, Huang notes how even forty years after the end of the war, these veterans declared that *yamato-damashi* would never die among the former volunteers (2001, 235). He explains this as a 'battlefield trick' which, by valorising the outstanding bravery of the Takasago soldiers and their ability to assist Japanese troops to survive under the direst conditions, created an illusion of 'reversal and elevation in the hierarchy' between coloniser and colonised (2001, 240). This illusion, of course, was completely without substance.

Leo T.S. Ching incisively probes the complexity of the relationship between the indigenous people of Taiwan and the Japanese Empire, demonstrating the deep and painful tensions inherent in testimonies of the kind discussed by Huang (Ching 2001).

Also noting an emphasis among surviving Takasago volunteers on 'Japanese spirit' (2001, 169), or Huang's *yamato-damashi*, Ching nonetheless refutes the accepted Japanese wisdom that the people of Taiwan, including the indigenous people, were much more receptive to imperial rule than, for example, the people of the Korean peninsula. Critically problematising this assumption through the use of narrative texts, Ching maps the trajectory of the construction of the indigenous people of Taiwan 'in the cultural imagination of the colonisers' from 'savagery to civilised' through processes of '*dōka* and *dōminka*, assimilation and imperialisation' (2001, 4). Noting that this transformation was for no purpose other than 'the convenience of the empire', Ching (2001, 4) cites Ozaki Hotsuki (1928-1999) to point out that any notion of equality and fraternity merely authorised colonised people 'not to live as Japanese, but to die as Japanese'. Ozaki's insight reminds us that the Takasago volunteer death rate was very high (Huang 2001, 248).[18]
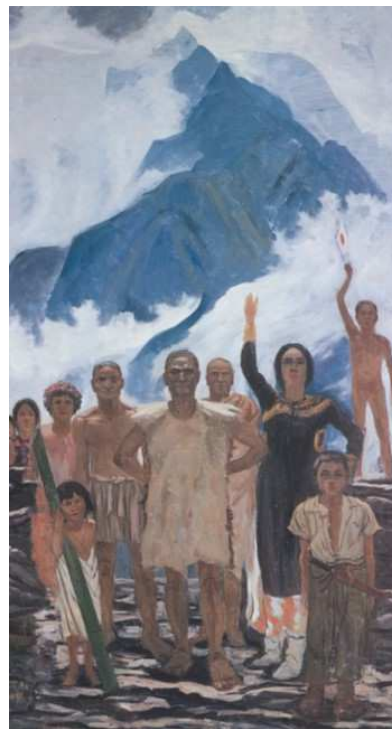

Fig. 3. Tsuruta, G. (1944) *Shiganhei ni wakare o tsugeru hitobito* (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops) [no medium given]. In: Asahi shimbunsha (Asahi News). (1996) *Asahi bijutsukan: sensō to kaiga* (Asahi Art Gallery: War and Visual Art), Vol. 21 (9) [Tsūkan 126], image 44 [images unpaged].

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[18] Acknowledging the difficulty of accuracy, given the secrecy that surrounded Takasago military activities, Huang nonetheless estimates an approximate survival rate of about 15% (2001, 248).

Recalling the devastation of the Three-Alls Policy, while also presaging the scorched earth that Japan would become by war's end, the landscape in this image is in marked contrast to the verdant green of Arishima's *Jiangnan Spring*. Viewers may wonder how the farewelling people of Taiwan have come to gather in such a desolate place, which surely cannot be their home. The rising steam and barren land suggest volcanic surrounds unsuitable for human habitation. From one perspective, the rather wooden poses of a number of the figures match the environment created by the artist, although the central male's glaring expression suggests both his pride and anger at being forced to play the dispossessed in such a setting. It is, however, the energy and clear dignity that emanates from the woman on the right that contests any intent to mark the group as inferior, yet devoted, other.

With a stance that recalls the Statue of Liberty, this figure also brings to mind the woman profiled in the famed image entitled *Liberty Leading the People* by French Romantic School figurehead, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863).[19] In that work, the figure of Marianne, representative of the freedom and reason of France, leads her followers across the barricades. Although Tsuruta travelled to Europe, he did not engage in the lengthy French experience enjoyed by some artists of the time, most famously Fujita Tsuguharu, and he may have been less familiar than the latter with the canons of French art. Nevertheless, given the European flows that circulated throughout the art world of Japan, he would almost certainly have been familiar with Delacroix's corpus. And when we compare the background structure of the two works and the fact that both Marianne and a boy behind her to the right are raising their hands, gestures that are replicated in Tsurata's image, we cannot but consider the possibility that the Japanese artist took inspiration from the French master.

There are, of course, significant differences between Delacroix's work and Tsuruta's image. Any influence is much less striking, for example, than that, often cited, of Delacroix's *Christ Asleep During the Tempest* (1853) on the 1943 work by long-time Paris resident, Fujita, entitled *Soromon kai'iki ni okeru beihei no matsuro* (The Final Hours of American Troops in the Solomon Seas) (Sandler 2001, 204; Earhart 2008, 373). As noted above, Tsuruta's mission was to emphasise the devotion of the indigenous people of Taiwan to the empire while leaving no doubt that a clear

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[19] I am indebted to a participant in a December, 2016, collaborative research meeting held at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, organised by Professor Liu JIanhui, for this suggestion.

boundary existed between the superior Japanese self and this inferior alien other. Yet, in its echo of the revolutionary theme of Delacroix's work, we detect an instability in Tsuruta's image that invokes the analysis by both Ching and Huang concerning the ambivalent status of the aboriginal people of Taiwan during the imperial era. The raised hand of the woman – the Taiwanese Marianne – might suggest victory on the part of the volunteers and the Empire. This was undoubtedly the conscious intent of the artist. Given the manner in which the Japanese suppressed the indigenous people of Taiwan, however, we are strongly motivated to view the woman as advocating for the freedom and reason of her own indigenous Taiwanese 'nation' and as encouraging the others around her to rise to this cause. This ambivalence recalls what Norman Bryson has identified as incongruity in Delacroix's own work. Discussing *The Captivity in Babylon* (1838) by the French artist, Bryson notes how the presence of a harp in the image 'can be claimed equally by two interpretative grids', one being the Psalms and the other the Orphic lyre (Bryson 1984, 199). Bryson then argues that '[e]ach has sufficient inaugural power to claim the harp as off-spring, yet neither can realise the claim, and in that failure of master-discourse to "attach" the harp to itself there emerges the possibility that the rival claimants […] may themselves be mutual transformations, in a flow of constant metamorphosis where no co-ordinate is truly primal or stable' (1984, 199-200). I would argue that this type of instability of 'meaning' of the visual image, which Bryson labels 'contradictory signposting' or 'reversing directions' (1984, 200), applies well to the Tsuruta image being discussed.

In the Delacroix original, Marianne leads her followers across a pile of bodies felled in the battle for liberty. While there are no corpses in Tsuruta's image, the scorched earth arguably suggests, as previously noted, the wasteland created both by Japan's invasion of China, while also being a portent of the Allied attacks on Japan. The landscape can further be read as invoking the toll of the struggle of the indigenous people of Taiwan. Ching and Huang both acknowledge that some indigenous people in Taiwan felt a strong connection to the Empire and mourned Japan's defeat. Nevertheless, the harsh hand of Japanese authority was also a cause for resistance.

Importantly, in terms of this discussion, the woman has a dignity and presence that contests her being viewed as in anyway subservient to her imperial masters. Like the women in the Arishima and Umehara images, with her powerful gesture, this woman, too, insists on the integrity of her identity, refusing to concede the right of the invaders

to dictate the terms of any contact encounter. Strong and resolute, she takes the lead among the figures depicted, and silently and solemnly confirms her human rights. In this way, like those of the young women in the *Jiangnan Spring* and the sitting sisters from Beijing, her figure conveys a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting the legitimacy of its own self.

Conclusion

John Dower reminds us that imperial Japan's mobilisation for war was driven by '[s]elf-styled patriotic renovationists' who drew on 'subterfuge, intimidation and fait accompli to achieve their ends' (Dower 2007, 17) Their ascendency was guaranteed by entering into 'potent alliances of corporate, bureaucratic and political interests while vesting unprecedented power in the military,' and by shoring up domestic support 'through masterful manipulation of the newly emergent mass media' (Dower 2007, 17). Without doubt, imperial Japan was grounded in an inextricable connection between the military, capital and the state, nicely expressed in the Baron Kato Hiroyuki comment cited above on progress 'as the offspring of power'. Japan, of course, had little desire to share that power except in circumstances such as the puppet government model, which guaranteed that the other party would comply unhesitatingly with the empire's demands.

Yet, notwithstanding the efforts of these 'patriotic renovationists', the empire failed spectacularly. This was in spite of the mobilisation of every imperial subject, including those from the worlds of art and culture, to contribute to victory in total war. In spite of the subtle and not-so-subtle pressure being applied, some artists were reluctant to demonstrate overt enthusiasm for the cause. Others were delighted, however, to produce material that extolled Japan's military might.

Cultural products, nonetheless, are slippery items that often defy the intention of the artist involved. Military officials in imperial Japan made Herculean efforts to ensure that all art during the eight years of Japan's war against China, and then the War in the Pacific, complied with stringent guidelines designed to ensure that the public viewed only material that supported and glorified the activities of the country's armed forces. It is ironic that the three images discussed here, each by a recognised member of the art world, reveal the manner in which the notion of empire was often ephemeral. It may be misleading to claim that the efforts of those who sought to impose 'correct thought' came to nought. Nevertheless, in the end, attempts to induce right and proper

attitudes and action often dissipated in the face of quietly subversive, as much as overtly violent, defiance. Across its colonial regime – including the various iterations of colonisation such as puppet government – Japan sought to establish strong boundaries of superior self and inferior other. Yet when we view the images discussed above, we can see the porous nature of these boundaries. This porosity is foregrounded in the disinterested gazes of the young women from Jiangnan, in the suppressed resistance evident in the direct glare of the younger of the two Beijing sisters, and in the grace and dignity of the Taiwanese indigenous woman farewelling her confreres to war. Even as Japan left a trail of devastation across the regions it occupied or invaded, many of the country's leaders continued perversely to extoll the imperial project as bringing peace to and liberating the people of the continent. Perhaps the failure of Japan to grant true liberty and equality to the figures depicted in the works discussed here, and to those in the communities that they represent, was the principal reason for the empire's defeat.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Primitive selves: Koreana in Japanese colonial gaze, 1910 – 1945 – E. Taylor Atkins

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 280 p.
Review by Kara DISCHINGER **|** Nagoya University, Japan

In 2010, E. Taylor Atkins published his book *Primitive Selves: Koreana in Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910-1945*, seeking to make sense of the seemingly recent Japanese enthusiasm for Korean culture. As a historian of modern Japanese and Korean cultural history who focuses mainly on transnational popular culture, Atkins sought to prove that the twenty-first century South Korean, or *hallyu*, wave is not without historical precedent. This book positions itself within historical Japanese Imperial scholarship, focusing on cultural history rather than military or policy. Instead of concentrating on how the Japanese Imperial gaze of Korean culture shaped Korea through the imposition of Japanese culture onto the colonies, Atkins instead emphasises how the Japanese gaze on the Korean peninsula worked to shape the identity of the metropole, highlighting the importance of transnational flows on the creation of Self. The result is an interesting view into the complexities in the current and historical cultural connections between Japan and the Korean peninsula. *Primitive Selves* (2010), offers the reader a comprehensive and well researched look into the historical Japanese fascination with the Korean culture and traditions, something that continues to be relevant in an increasingly globalised world.

In his very detailed introduction, Atkins explains the book's purpose to focus primarily on the dual nature of Japanese Imperial rule in Korea, one that worked to both distance the perceived backward Korean peninsula from the Great Japanese Empire, legitimising the Japanese Imperial presence, while simultaneously highlighting the historical and cultural bonds between the two to better facilitate the Korean presence in the Empire. Atkins states three principle arguments he wishes to

accomplish throughout the book. Firstly, to challenge the prevailing idea in Korean historiography that Imperial Japan sought to destroy Korea's independent national culture and identity through assimilation policies. Secondly, to demonstrate that the Japanese discourse surrounding Korea focused not on notions of destruction, but instead on notions of nostalgia and perceived loss. Lastly, to reiterate the belief that the act of gazing transforms the observer and the observed, insisting that the Japanese gaze upon Korea transformed both societies, reshaping what it means to be both Japanese and Korean. These lofty goals are interwoven throughout each chapter, sometimes getting lost in the myriad of argumentation, but ever present as an overarching theme.

Chapter one positions the book as a critique of the current beliefs surrounding Japanese policy towards Korean culture during Japanese Imperial rule. The author offers the reader context into the long history between Japan and Korea, positioning the Japanese annexation of Korea within a long turbulent history between the two nations. This chapter provides the much-needed historical background for the reader to truly understand the complex relationship between Japan and Korea, culminating in the period of Japanese rule over Colonial Korea. He describes historian tendencies to separate colonial rule in Korea into three distinct periods, military rule (1910-1919), cultural rule (1920-1931), and mobilisation for war (1931-1945). The focus on period distinction, while a helpful tool in separating certain policies, showcases the tendency for historians to separate Japanese allowance of Korean cultural expression as an irregularity, relegated towards the eleven-year period of cultural rule instead of something present continuously. Atkins instead argues that the idea of cultural rule was not limited to solely the years 1920-1931, and governmental policy ebbed and flowed throughout the entire period of colonisation. His analysis is correct in that the Japanese rule of Korea cannot be contained solely in three distinct periods, instead it was contingent on a variety of factors, and by categorizing policy into three distinct periods historians are doing a disservice to the complexities of Imperial Japan's relationship with colonial Korea. This chapter perfectly sets up the rest of the book, giving the reader a detailed foundation upon which to understand the rest of the book.

Chapters two and three both focus on the seemingly contradictory ways in which the cultural relationship between Imperial Japan and Colonial Korea during the period of colonisation both emphasised cultural similarity and difference to promote certain Japanese agendas. In chapter two, Atkins uses the lens of ethnography to illustrate how

the Japanese relationship with Colonial Korea was more complex than the simple notion of total domination. Giving examples of the Japanese active utilising examples of ethnographic photography from the Japanese Empire in comparison with other European empires, Atkins reiterates the way in which the Japanese gaze influenced the creation of what it meant to be Japanese and Korean during colonial rule.

Chapter three expands on chapter two, focusing instead on the colonial cultural policy and governmental efforts to curate Korean culture through the preservation of documents, art, folk traditions, and sites deemed important to both strengthen the Japanese claim over the peninsula and highlight the cultural similarities between Korea and the metropole. Like the ethnographic excursions into Korea in search of premodern Japanese culture, official governmental policy towards Korea not only distanced modern Japan from the premodern Korea, but also curated a presumed shared history that allowed Japan to rediscover itself as a modern nation.

Both chapters work to strengthen Atkins' goals to prove that Japanese policy in Korea did not actively work to destroy Korean culture, but instead focused on curating a shared culture that created a sense of nostalgia within the metropole. He does this by explaining how the field of ethnography created, and governmental policy reinforced, notions of the Japanese/Korean relationship in the early twentieth century. He is correct in arguing that both avenues actively pushed two seemingly contradictory agendas. First, to maximise the difference between Korea and Japan to elevate the greatness of the Japanese empire, while simultaneously justifying Japanese imperial rule over the sovereign nation of Korea, as well as minimise the differences between Japan and Korea to promote empire-building rhetoric in the metropole. His assertion that Japanese colonial policy regarding Korea consisted of seemingly contradictory approaches, and not just uniform policies and actions, solidly places his argumentation within the field of historiography, complicating the ambiguous nature of the relationship between Imperial Japan and Colonial Korea.

Chapter four, titled "The First K-Wave", explains the impact Korean culture had on Japanese popular entertainment during imperial rule. Atkins uses specific examples such as Korean folk songs and images of Korean *kisaeng* (or, as he calls them, courtesan-entertainers) to show how Korean culture was most popular in the metropole when assimilation policies in Colonial Korea were becoming more forceful. This chapter explains how remnants of cultural rule (1920-1931) permeated into the later war

mobilisation era (1931-1945), creating a new type of cultural order within the Japanese Empire and challenging the notions that the cultural flow between Imperial Japan and Colonial Korea was one sided. The author explains that the Japanese fascination with Korean folk traditions wavered between both derogatory representations as well as genuine nostalgia and interest in the familiar yet exotic nature of Korean cultural traditions. This chapter is obviously Atkins' true interest in the relationship between the Japanese metropole and the colony of Korea, and works to explain how the twenty-first century *hallyu* wave has a historical precedent in the early twentieth century. Atkins convincingly explains how the twenty-first century Korean Wave in Japan is not an anomaly, and the cultural connections between the two nations run deeper than just the current fascination with Korean pop music and dramas. His case studies of folk songs and tradition permeating into the Japanese metropole offer just a couple examples of the rich history of transnational cultural flows between Japan and the Korean peninsula.

The book concludes with a survey of the struggle for Korean culture and folk tradition after the end of Japanese rule on the peninsula. More than a simple restating of his thesis, the conclusion works to explain the current state of Korean folk culture and the continuing legacy that Japanese rule has had on South Korean identity. The conclusion primarily works as an addendum, to incorporate how the Japanese policy to document "Koreaness" shaped and had a lasting impact on the South Korean view of what it means to be Korean. His argumentation offers a great conclusion to the seemingly one-sided nature of the rest of the book, which focuses mainly on the Japanese interest in South Korea. The conclusion serves as necessary background into the current state of Japanese-South Korean relations, bridging the gap between the early twentieth and twenty-first century, however refraining from making any real mention of lasting effects of Japanese Colonialism on the shaping of "Koreaness" in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). More research tying the lasting effects of colonial rule in North Korea as opposed to only South Korea would have further enriched the conclusion, allowing for greater consideration of identity building throughout the peninsula.

E. Taylor Atkins provides great insights into the historical precedents for the twenty-first century South Korean wave in Japan, allowing for a greater understanding of the current relationship between mainly the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. The turbulent relationship between the Korean peninsula and Japan continues to be

important in the current state of politics, and the enduring transnational flows of culture only work to complicate that relationship. Atkins attempts to explain the historical precedent behind these transnational flows, showing that the cultural connections between Japan and the Korean peninsula are far from one-sided, defining not only what it meant to be Korean through the study of folk traditions and culture, but also helping to define what it meant to be Japanese in a time of empire. This book advances the study of East Asian cultural history by reframing the discussion not solely on Japanese destruction, but on the creation of modern identity. Overall, this book is an ambitious feat, seeking to change the way scholars understand the lasting impact that colonial rule has had on the geopolitical climate in Asia.

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Kara DISCHINGER *has an MA in Japanese Cultural Studies from Nagoya University, where she researched Japanese Imperial picture postcards and the representations of Colonial Korea and Taiwan. Before moving to Japan, Kara received a BA in history and political science at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY. She is particularly intrigued by early 20th century nation-building and the creation of national identity through early forms of media. She seeks to create a better understanding of the early years of The Japanese Empire and its colonies, and the creation of early forms of Japanese international media.*

Rewriting History in manga: Stories for the nation – Nissim Otmazgin & Rebecca Suter (Eds)

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 191 p.
Review by Christopher P. HOOD | Cardiff University, UK

Workshops work. Many edited collections start life as papers and ideas presented at workshops. *Rewriting History in Manga*'s origins, according to text in the Acknowledgements, were in a workshop held at the University of Sydney in August 2012. One can imagine, from both the discussion in the book and from my own experience at workshops, that the project may have started from some ideas about testing new ground without necessarily knowing if it would, or could, lead to anything more significant. Not all research does go onto chapters in books, articles in journals or other outputs. That is the nature of research. The workshops are necessary as a mechanism for people to come together and test the water. And sometimes, the water is well and truly tested and from that it is possible to develop a coherent and interesting study. *Rewriting History in Manga* does this and reveals why workshops are so valuable.

Edited collections can work too. Whilst monographs arguably remain the gold standard, there has been a pressure, in many countries, for academics to write articles for refereed journals. This has seemingly undermined the role of edited collections, despite that these, as books, may be the very source that academics and the public alike would turn to when looking to discover more about a subject. One of the problems of edited collections is that the quality can vary so greatly — often stemming from issues such as a lack of sufficient theoretical work underpinning each chapter or the collection as a whole, or inconsistencies in writing style or length of chapters. Another issue, which has been particularly problematic with collections related to media studies (in the broadest sense of the field) is that chapters are sometimes meaningless unless you have experience and knowledge (to the extent of deep interest) of that particular movie/book/author/band yourself and some chapters may

be an attempt to package a personal hobby/interest/fandom as an academic study. However, *Rewriting History in Manga* does not fall into these problems and highlights why edited collections remain valuable.

Rewriting History in Manga covers a wide range of Japanese history, and is not merely concerned with manga that deals with the Pacific War. The book is separated into three parts; Part One is entitled 'Historicizing Political Manga' and the two chapters in it deal with manga from the Tokugawa and Meiji periods; Part Two contains three chapters that are primarily concerned with how manga play a role in covering history; Part Three also contains three chapters which provide case studies relating to the decoding and recoding of history. The three parts of the books come together well to cover the subject matter in a comprehensive and largely easy-to-read manner. But I was left wondering who is this book really for? Books are often what people turn to when starting to research a subject. They are also often recommended to students taking courses. It would have been helpful if the editor had provided more clarity in the introduction about their intended audience for this book and then, perhaps, thought more about how to ensure that all of the chapters come together to address that audience.

In the introduction of *Rewriting History in Manga*, the author states that 'An important distinction should be made between manga as a historical material that historians should use to learn about the past and manga as an historical genre that depicts and reconstructs scenes from the past' (p. 10). This is undoubtedly true, but it was not always clear exactly what this book was doing and whether all of the contributors were approaching the subject the same way. The impression that many chapters left me with was that manga are — seemingly due to their widespread consumption — treated as though they have influence over the way people understand historical events. If this is the case, it would have been instructive to have more discussion on the relevant theories (and theory only appears briefly in most chapters as there is a preference, as often happens in edited collections, to focus upon case studies) and also to consider in what way manga are different to documentaries, dramas, novels or movies. Although this book is obviously about manga, it is perhaps situated a little too much in isolation from studies that consider other genres in relation to historical events.

Whilst overall *Rewriting History in Manga* is an excellent introduction to the subject, there were a number of aspects of the book which could have been strengthened. As with too many edited collections, the individual chapters were seemingly just glued together

into the whole. The end result is that we have separate bibliographies and a list of references for each chapter. Perhaps only a minor issue, but it does mean that the book lacks some of the cohesion found in some edited collections. We can also find formatting differences between chapters — with the prime example being a switching between macrons and circumflexes to denote long vowel sounds. We also find inconsistencies between chapters (and sometimes within an individual chapter) in the name order of Japanese names. In fact, these are not the only formatting issues. In the footer of each chapter there is a small envelope emoji after the name of the author. Presumably in an eBook version this would allow us to click on it and email the author; but in the printed version is looks out of place. It is also a great shame that a book which is dealing with such a graphic topic as manga did not find a mechanism to ensure that the manga prints that appear in the book (of which there are only fifteen, nine of which come in one chapter) were of a much higher quality. There were quite a few instances when particular images were discussed, but they were not presented. Naturally there can be copyright issues which make including images difficult, but there were also times when I found that the discussion appeared to assume that the reader could see the image — it was almost as though the author was presenting text as it had been delivered at the original workshop, when presumably participants could see the image on display, rather than having considered how to update the text to take account of the reader of the book not being able to see the image. Indeed, in far too many chapters, the authors did not provide detailed references about which manga they were referring to or which page of which edition of a particular manga they were discussing. The lack of attention to such details could seriously undermine the overall effectiveness of *Rewriting History in Manga* as a whole. There is no doubting that the chapters make a series of interesting points and the conclusions of each appeared valid, but the way in which the conclusions were reached could have been strengthened in a number of the chapters.

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The disasters of peace: Social discontent in the manga of Tsuge Tadao and Katsumata Susumu – Exhibited at the Honolulu Museum of Art

Art cannot exist in a vacuum, and certainly cannot be fully appreciated without the proper context; this is especially true of the Honolulu Museum of Art exhibit *The Disasters of Peace: Social Discontent in the Manga of Tsuge Tadao and Katsumata Susumu*, where the sketches of socially-minded manga artists Tsuge Tadao and Katsumata Susumu were on display for the first time in the United States from 30 November 2017 through 15 April 2018. Both artists use manga as a medium to explore the daily struggles faced by marginalised communities in Japan, based on their own personal experiences. Tsuge, born and raised in the slums of postwar Tokyo, offers insight into the plight of veterans and the homeless and draws on his experience working in a blood bank in the decades after the war. Katsumata was an anti-nuclear activist whose work exposed the inhumane conditions of nuclear power plant workers in Japan decades before the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. Stephen Salel, the museum's Robert F. Lange Curator of Japanese Art, constructed for visitors a number of wonderfully in-depth and interactive supplementary audiovisual aids to facilitate a richer understanding of the sociological underpinnings of the exhibit. According to Salel, the curatorial intent of the exhibit was to allow visitors to relate to the difficulties and realities depicted in the featured work, and to examine how art can speak to past events around the world that might echo what other communities currently face. *The Disasters of Peace* presented the viewing public with an unusual opportunity to learn about the struggles of Japan's postwar society.

Two walls of text were placed at both entrances to the exhibit, to preface the artists and topic to visitors. The first summarised the exhibit itself, which draws parallels with Francisco Goya's 19th-century prints *The Disasters of War*, and also briefly introduced the manga anthology *Garo*, which was also featured in the exhibit. Interestingly, this first text closed with a remark about how this exhibit might resonate with Americans, in the current volatile social and political climate. This had the effect of constructing a somewhat American-centric lens that was slightly jarring, as it seemed to circumscribe the scope of the applicability of the exhibit's underlying message. The second blurb spoke more broadly to Japanese art enthusiasts by highlighting the exhibit's placement within the museum's mission to "expand and significantly enhance its renowned collection of Japanese works on paper". *The Disasters of Peace* is the second instalment of an ongoing series that focuses on a different, distinct genre within the manga medium. Its predecessor, the 2016 exhibit *Visions of Gothic Angels: Japanese Manga by Takaya Miou*, featured gothic art, technical skill and the influence of the Renaissance on the artistic style of Takaya Miou. Salel explained that, given the emphasis of the inaugural instalment on form, his intentions for this exhibit was to feature artists who consciously avoid craftsmanship, instead electing to use the approach of *heta-uma* (beautifully interpreted by Salel as "brilliantly clumsy", and which literally translates as "bad-good") to focus on the content of the art over its style.

Echoing this philosophy, the exhibit's only adornment for the framed black-and-white pages was the subtle backdrop of blown-up cutouts from the artists' dystopian urban landscapes, seemingly to draw the viewer's eyes immediately to the featured manga sketches. The scenes depicted in these selected pages were disconcerting and troubling; the *heta-uma* style, so decidedly un-*kawaii*, of the drawings exacerbates this effect. This aesthetic in manga is an intriguing contrast to the *kawaii* (literally "cute") style, which relies heavily on big-eyed, childlike cuteness, that is often found in 'mainstream' manga genres. The *heta-uma* style is especially apparent in Tsuge's work, which was influenced by post-war photographers Domon Ken and Tomatsu Shohei, famous for his black-and-white images of *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors). Tsuge and Katsumata use their work as vehicles for social commentary on a number of issues that have long been a source of Japan's post-war malaise. Tsuge's *Kuzu no ichi* ('Trash Market') and *Yoru yo yuruyaka ni* ('Gently Goes the Night'), and Katsumata's *Shinkaigyo* ('Deep Sea Fish') were the featured stories, but the exhibit has also included selections from Tsuge's *Oka no ue de Vincent van*

Gogh wa ('Up on a Hilltop, Vincent van Gogh') and *Showa no eika* ('Song of Showa'), and Katsumata's *Hanbei* ('Hanbei') and *Kapparō* ('Mister Kappa').

Kuzu no ichi, published in 1972, was based off of Tsuge's experiences growing up in the slums of Katsushika Ward, one of Tokyo's more economically hard-hit wards which took longer to recover than other parts of the country. Blood banks were introduced to Japan by the Americans during the Occupation, but as the concept of a philanthropic, donation-based blood bank was incompatible with Japan's post-war society, these blood banks known as places where the impoverished would exchange 'ooze for booze'. These blood banks attracted the homeless, war veterans and other socially marginalised people who would exchange their blood for cash, which created the stigma of blood banks as a market for "human trash", hence the title of Tsuge's graphic novel. Tsuge's experience working in a blood bank, face-to-face with members of these marginalised populations, drove him to create art that would show the public what socially marginalised people's daily lives were like. Similarly, selected pages from *Yoru yo yuruyaka ni*, published in 1970, emphasise how psychological stress in post-war Japan festered and led to further social problems such as sexual harassment. The selected pages from both *Kuzu no ichi* in the exhibit depict such scenes almost wordlessly, with minimal or no speech bubbles, and the effect is powerful.

Katsumata's *Shinkaigyo* was the most heavily featured display, perhaps due to the particular socio-political relevance of its theme: the dangers of nuclear energy. Katsumata Susumu, who passed away in 2007, was a nuclear physicist who was a political activist who protested the rash development of nuclear energy in the 1970s and 1980s. *Shinkaigyo* was published in 1984, almost three decades before the Fukushima nuclear disaster; but in the aftermath of 3/11, it has gained more attention due the prophetic nature of its content. Though more aesthetically palatable than Tsuge's distinctly *heta-uma* style, the clearly anti-nuclear message of *Shinkaigyo* lends a menacing tone to its material. The sketches selected for the exhibit focus on the lives of employees who work at a Japanese nuclear plant, and what Dr Ryan Holmberg, the first American art history scholar on *Garo* and who was a key consultant during Salel's development of the exhibit, calls the "inhumanity of nuclear power".[1] Katsumata deliberately depicts the violence of this inhumanity at the very mundane level of the

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[1] Available from: https://youtu.be/fHkeCHNfCqU [Accessed 3 April 2018]

daily lives of the workers. One excerpt depicts workers mopping and scrubbing the floor in a section of the reactor, only to realise that they are being blasted with radiation. Another highlights the psychological and physical stress caused by lack of proper ventilation for workers, as one employee has a panic attack and struggles to remove his gas mask. The abysmal working conditions of nuclear reactor employees and the blatant managerial neglect of proper regulations portrayed by Katsumata in *Shinkaigyo* is deeply concerning, especially in the light of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. According to the World Nuclear Association, there are currently 394,137 operable nuclear reactors globally, not including the over half-a-million that are either planned, proposed, or currently under construction.[2] This of course begs the question of how many of these hundreds of thousands of nuclear reactors subject their workers to similar conditions, and leads the viewer to speculate what the quality of regulations and management must be like in reality. The immediacy and the ubiquity of this concern suggests that Salel's hopes that the exhibit would allow visitors to relate to the difficulties and realities depicted in these manga are well-placed; Katsumata's work in particular illustrate how manga is can be used as an educational tool as well as a medium for social commentary that could help drive policies to prevent future nuclear catastrophes.

In addition to these featured manga, the exhibit also presented visitors with an inside look at the production-end of manga during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The sketches from Katsumata's *Hanbei* (1969), which depict interactions between a family of *kappa* (Japanese mythical water imps) and humans in what can be construed as environmental commentary, which were on display are of particular interest due to the large swathes of blue and green colour pencil that shaded some of the panels in a seemingly haphazard fashion. Salel explained that Katsumata used those shadings to indicate to the publisher which screen tone to use for that particular panel. The sketches from *Hanbei* were placed adjacent to a glass case in the middle of the exhibit floor, which displayed the final product after the screentones have been added, to give the viewer a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the full production cycle. The same case also showcased several other graphic novels by both artists.

[2] Available from: http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/facts-and-figures/world-nuclear-power-reactors-and-uranium-requireme.aspx [Accessed 28 April 2018]

Another case displayed issues of *Garo* whose covers were illustrated by Tsuge and Katsumata. This was accompanied by one of four iPads in total that were used in this exhibit. On the device was a stunning grid of *Garo* covers, each of which, when touched, expanded into a larger image of the selected cover along with the issue number, publication month and year, and the name of the artist. The other iPads in the exhibit featured videos offering brief biographies of Tsuge and Katsumata as well as a series of short clips outlining a "History of Nuclear Incidents in Japan". Part of the exhibit was also partitioned off to allow for a screen projection that displayed English translations of the selected pages featured in the exhibit.

This marvellous array of audiovisual resources provided viewers with supplementary, contextualising information about the wider socio-political, environmental contexts in which these works are situated. Moreover, this exhibit extends beyond the limits of its physicality as a temporary display in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Salel expressed his commitment to harnessing the power of technology to elevate the Honolulu Museum of Art's exposure on the global stage, as well as to allow visitors to read more about the show than what can be written in the limited physical space of the exhibit. His curatorial philosophy that supplementary text blurbs printed next to each work can only provide so much contextual information to a limited audience has also prompted the museum to keep the exhibit's supplementary materials available online in digital form. These include two hour-long lectures given by Dr Ryan Holmberg on the history of *Garo* magazine and Katsumata Susumu's anti-nuclear manga are available on the Salel's YouTube account. The Honolulu Museum of Art is also developing a manga website, which will serve as a digital platform for the museum's manga series exhibits.

Given the diverse range of manga subgenres, it may not seem surprising that the medium has also been used historically as a means for social commentary on Japan's nuclear woes and for raising awareness about the plight of Japan's socially marginalised communities. But the Honolulu Museum of Art's exhibit brings to the forefront an awareness that peace is not always what it seems, and forces viewers to bear witness to the violence of daily life, made all the more disconcerting by the use of manga, so closely associated with entertainment and Japan's signature *kawaii* stylistic approach, for its depiction. The decision to focus on manga artists who have employed their work towards social activism in this instalment has further demonstrated to art audiences the complexity and versatility of manga as a medium.

The next exhibit in the museum's manga series will be in 2021, and will be featured in the museum's main exhibit hall. The focus of the upcoming exhibit will be on *shōjo* manga, its historical development, the artwork of women during the early 20th century leading up to the work of a selection of current *shōjo* manga artists.
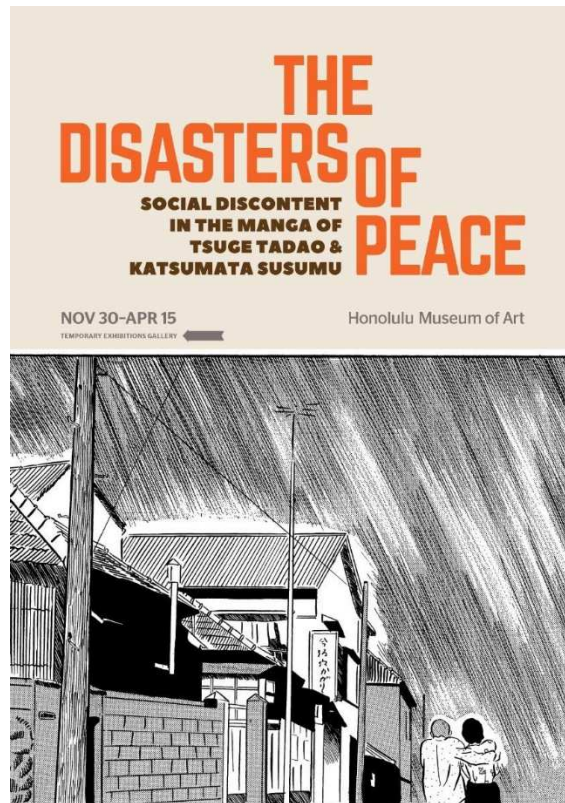

Fig. 1. Flyer from the Exhibit *The Disasters of Peace: Social Discontent in the manga of Tsuge Tadao and Katsumata Susumu* (30 November 2017 – 15 April 2018). **© Courtesy of the Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawai'i (2013)**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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