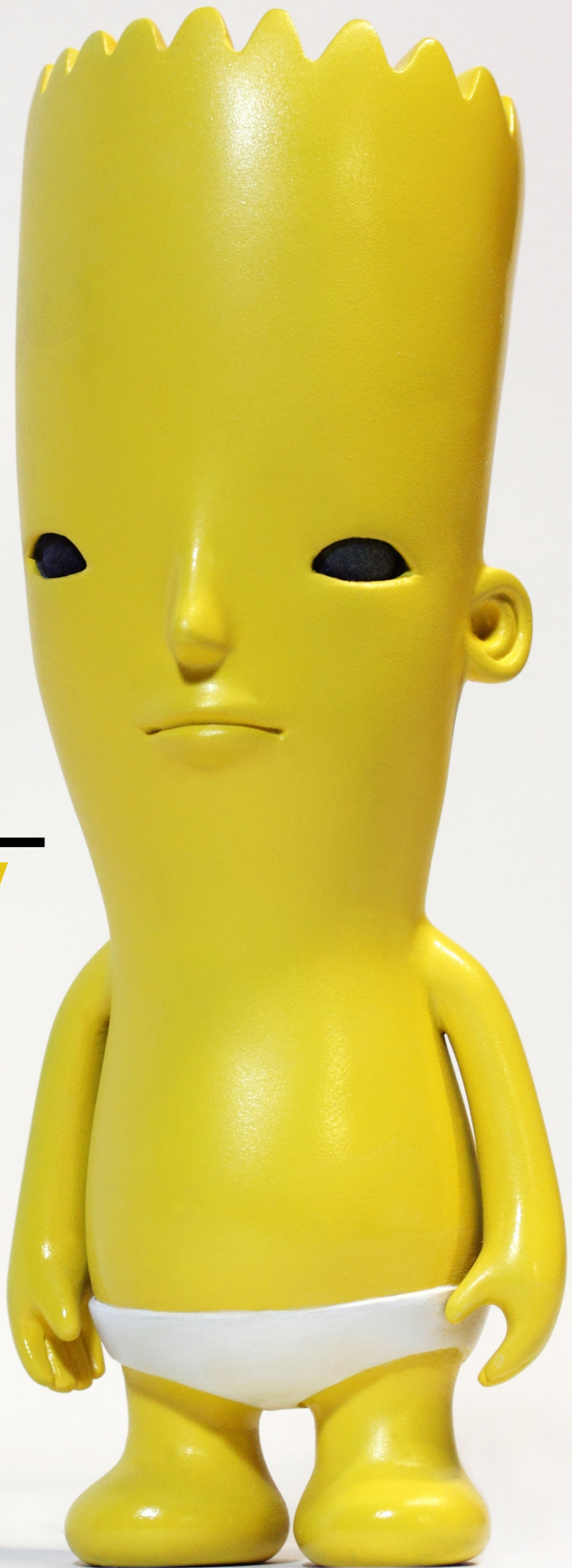




# COOL NEW ASIA

ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE  
IN A LOCAL CONTEXT



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Professor Paul Clark, the University of Auckland, New Zealand

Professor Henry Johnson, Otago University, New Zealand

Dr. Ryota Nishino, University of South Pacific, Fiji

Dr. Rumi Sakamoto, the University of Auckland, New Zealand

Dr. Paola Voci, Otago University, New Zealand

Dr. Amy West, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Dr. Brian Yecies, University of Wollongong, Australia

Cover design by Roger Kilmartin

Cover image created by Yoskay Yamamoto

yoskay@yoskay.com

## Acknowledgements

The international Symposium ***Cool New Asia: Asian Popular Culture in a Local Context*** took place in November 25-26, 2011. In addition to two key note speakers, twenty four presenters shared their ideas with the audience of hundred and twenty people. The preparation of this Symposium spread over a year and it is important to mention some of key people – without their assistance this Symposium and publication simply would not have happened.

First of all, our sincere thank you to Matthew Allen, Koichi Iwabuchi and Rumi Sakamoto as the theme of the Symposium was crystallised in our conversations with them. We were delighted that Professor Allen and Professor Iwabuchi both accepted invitations to be key note speakers at the Symposium, and their excellent and provocative presentations set up the agenda for the Symposium.

Our special 'thank you' to all twenty four presenters, some of whom came as far away as the USA, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia and certainly from universities all around New Zealand. You made our Symposium a success story! Thank you also for sending your papers for this publication.

There was a team of very dedicated people who worked behind the scenes for nearly a year to prepare the Symposium whom we owe an enormous debt of thanks. Jonathan Waugh, a Unitec Masters student, organised the entertainment including traditional Korean dance and music, Chinese dance and Japanese Marshal Arts. Yahui Tan, our wonderful intern and also a Unitec student, was involved with all the publicity for the Symposium including work on the programme and Symposium photos. Catherine Davis was always available to assist with all tasks. Lisa Ingledew, whose list of jobs was probably the longest, as she took over all the administration of running the Symposium, - our deepest appreciation for your always stress free support and encouragement on a daily basis. Munawar Naqvi thank you for providing the technical support during the Symposium. The positive outcome of the endeavour was due in large measure to their team effort.

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Elena Kolesova and Scott Wilson  
Symposium Convenors



## Editor's Introduction

As popular culture flows and consumption opportunities become increasingly ubiquitous, what is often overlooked is the local specificity of the popular culture texts themselves. In multicultural societies there is growing interest expressed by different agencies to utilise popular culture for their own purposes. The authors contained within this publication, and who presented their ideas at the *Cool New Asia* symposium, explore the emerging conflict between different agencies performing popular culture, especially as popular culture texts are used, misused or abused in the pursuit of singularly local objectives and stable cultural identities. Questions of ownership, authenticity and the production and negotiation of identity are central when considering the role that diasporic and immigrant communities play in any local environment.

The idea that Asia, and first of all North East Asia (Japan, South Korea and China), might constitute a possible hub of either 'coolness' or 'newness', in relation to the Western experience of their various cultural productions, is an idea of increasing commercial and popular valence and strength. Yet what is also clear is that the use of these ideas in relation to Western ideas of North East Asia is both as old as the contact between the hemispheres, and also a notion that is, itself, as problematically mobile as the popular culture objects themselves. *Cool New Asia* offers new and exciting methods of exploring and understanding the reception of East Asian popular cultures outside of the contexts of production. The authors of this volume are all contributing towards a discussion of the ways in which international popular culture and particularly East Asian popular culture is produced and consumed in a local context.

The authors of this publication interrogate the concepts of popular culture, soft power, cultural identity, ethnic identity through the prism of 'coolness'. The concept of "Cool" is contested and challenged with a particular aim to broaden our understanding of ethnic and cultural divides. Is Japan really cool? Is Asia really cool? Or, is the West cool? Or, are the consumers of East Asian popular culture cool? Did consumers of Asian popular culture invent this coolness to create an image of self-coolness? In 1995 Miyoshi Masao named his essay "Japan is not interesting" where he argued that the only interesting groups in Japan are those who rebel against Japanese society, e.g. the homeless or day laborers. In this context is 'cool' still about rebellion, as it was a few centuries ago when the concept "Cool" was first constructed? Or, is it about being new, desirable and fashionable? Finally, does 'Cool' popular culture help to maintain cultural and ethnic divides or to destroy them? Is there any usefulness in academics studying the 'Cool'? Some of these questions are interrogated by Matthew Allen following his key note address. Allen problematises how we read 'Asian' cool in the context of the engagement of global popular culture in the local context. He asks some fundamental questions not just about the meaning of 'cool' and the Asian 'cool', but also about our own critical engagement with Asian popular culture in the context of globalisation.

Koichi Iwabuchi follows his key note presentation by suggesting that researchers rethink a fundamental question of why and how we study trans-Asian media culture connections. He discusses whether and how the development of trans-Asian media culture connections challenges transnational unevenness of cultural production, promotes cross-border dialogue and serves wider public interests. Iwabuchi introduces the concept trans-Asia as a method to justify the study of media cultural connection in Asia and beyond. Both of these authors ask some hard questions about the meaning of our engagement with Asia and generally about the meaning of our research.

The publication is divided into eight parts. This division is very loose as some papers would clearly find a home in more than one part. However, to bring some structure we identified the following themes. Generating national identity is addressed by Rumi Sakamoto, Ken McNeil Keichi Kumagai and Changzoo Song. Papers by Matthew Allen, Koichi Iwabuchi, Ted Bonnah and Scott Wilson discuss globalised popular cultures. Discourses of locality are addressed by Graeme MacRae, Phoebe H. Li and Elena Kolesova. Marie Kim's paper explores the representation of a (fictional) identity, while Elizabeth "Bird" Jensen investigates pop-cultural intersections by looking at social media trends in the promotion of anime and animated music videos across cultures in Australia. Manib Rezaie offers a marketing case study of Jet Li's *Unleashed/Danny the Dog* (2005) that can be described as marketing the East. Silvia Fok and Yongchun Fu consider in their papers discourses of technology and representation. The theme of Jonathan Dil's paper belongs to representation and the subject.

The editorial committee reviewed and considered for selection the seventeen submissions. The present publication comprises the selected papers that were subjected to a standard process of peer review.

We are aware that there are still more questions and discussions that can be raised in this area of popular culture. We offer this publication as the first "summary" started by the symposium and we hope to expand this discussion further in a future publication.

## References

Miyoshi, M. (2010) Japan Is Not Interesting. In Miyoshi, M. *Trespasses*. Duke University Press, 189-204

Elena Kolesova and Scott Wilson



## Keynote Papers

### **‘Cool’ Asia-really? Cultural relativism and the cool/uncool divide in studying Asia**

Matthew Allen

In the area studies literature, there has been much work in the past decade on Asian popular culture-its influence, its expansion, its intra-Asian flows, its 'recentring' moments, its mutual engagements within Asia, and its increasing popularity outside of Asia. There has been even more interest evinced among scholars in textually deconstructing Asian pop culture, and seeing it in the context of media and communication studies, literary theory, and cultural studies. Underwriting these engagements is a sub-text: Asia is 'cool'.

While the theme of this symposium is the engagement of the global within the local, and in particular the place of Asian 'cool' in this engagement, I think it is important first to consider what is meant by the term 'cool', and to see whether an understanding of this concept can problematise how we read 'Asian' cool in the proposed context. Recognising that the concept of 'cool', while broadly understood as a 'western' trait, is culturally, and even subjectively contingent helps us to locate the idea of 'Asian cool' within a context that emphasises specific locations and interactions. Once the concept is broadly defined, we can then ask how it can be applied to 'Asians', and where it can be applied, or indeed whether it can be. In emphasising the local engagements, we can unpack some of the culturally specific factors that influence the production and consumption of 'cool', and ask questions that can inform our critical engagement with Asian popular culture in the context of globalisation.

Using some of my own and others' rather banal writings on popular culture as examples of how to turn something that may once have been 'cool' into an item for academic discourse will hopefully illustrate that once we academics get hold of something 'cool' we render it 'uncool'. This is illustrative of the nature of discussing popular culture within a meaningful context-in this case the contemporaneous context.

I would like to begin this presentation by introducing an obscure, and not very popular website. This website is designed and built by a small team of Asian-American teenagers, and is published under the 'WikiHow' label. Its focus is on providing a guide in 'how to' be cool *and* Asian for a teenaged Asian female audience, apparently something that is inherently contradictory. A number of questions arise as we read through the site: who are these 'Asians' being 'helped'? What do the authors mean by 'cool'? Why do they think that Asians are naturally 'uncool'? Why do they believe that they can provide 'Asians' with the means to reverse their 'natural' uncoolness? What values of 'coolness' are unconsciously associated with culture? To what extent are the authors of the site culturally self-reflexive?



Find the link here: <http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Cool-and-Asian>

The underlying narrative is that it is critically important to conform to the norms of mainstream society-in this case the US-and that the aesthetic of the mainstream society needs to be accommodated. The opening page starts:

You probably have heard about the stereotype that blondes are the only ones who are cool or popular. Well, this article is here to help make Asian girls to be just as awesome just the way they are (This is not supposed to be racist). (wikihow.com)

Locating themselves firmly within Anglo society (in this case, the United States), and applying a self-help approach to competing with the popular girls, who happen to be blonde, the website prepares Asian girls to go to war in the fashion stakes. Comfortable with stereotypes of themselves (Asians), others (blondes) and popularity, the website provides philosophy and helpful advice to the popularity and fashion challenged Asian math whiz:

**Steps** [Edit](#)

- 1 Cool Asians interact with a lot of people and they are good at many things, not just computers or math.** Play to your strengths, no matter what they are. Are you a good runner? Cross country team maybe. A quick thinker? Mathletes. Be mature, but not controlling--be smart, but not a know-it-all, and be cool, but do not overdo it or else people will say that you are desperate.

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[Make Your Own Photobook](#) Stunning DIY Hardcover Photobooks! Download Free Photobook Creator now  
[www.Albumworks.com.au/Photobooks](http://www.Albumworks.com.au/Photobooks)
- 2 Look the part.** Most Asians have either straight black or dark brown hair. Some people do not curl/straighten their hair because it makes them 'fake'. It is not about being fake, it is about feeling good about yourself. Some find that curly or wavy hair suits them.
- 3 DO NOT go overboard with the eyeliner.** If you have creaseless eyes then know that loads of eyeliner does not make eyes look bigger. Properly-applied mascara and eyeshadow (look for WikiHow's on 'how to apply eyeshadow on a creaseless eyelid') compliments Asian eyes nicely. Be careful with eyeliner as it can make small eyes look even smaller. A bit of blush will also highlight high cheekbones. If you are a more tan Asian, peach or ruby lip gloss looks good.

'Cool Asians interact with a lot of people and they are good at many things, not just computers or math...Be mature, but not controlling-be

smart, but not a know-it-all, and be cool, but do not overdo it or else people will say that you are 'desperate' (ibid).

In the section titled 'DO NOT go overboard with the eyeliner' the authors offer some practical tips to 'compliment' (sic) Asian eyes; for example, don't use too much eyeliner if you have 'creaseless eyes' because it does not make your eyes look bigger. In fact, the reader is encouraged to 'be careful with eyeliner as it can make small eyes look even smaller.' Some blush may be used for a bit of contrast to 'highlight high cheekbones,' and for the darker (more 'tan') Asian girls out there, 'peach or ruby gloss looks good' (ibid).

In one short paragraph, the authors were able to express a number of stereotypical tropes, and provide solutions to the innate cultural problem of *looking* Asian (and by implication, geeky or nerdy-certainly not 'cool' it appears). The perspective of the authors is not one of an insider, but rather one of an outsider, a concerned onlooker, hoping to help the misguided and eternally unpopular Asian girl, who *could* be almost as popular as a blonde girl if she only tried. Following further home counselling advice about mixing with different groups, looking pretty, being 'confident', being nice to people, the authors have developed some 'tips', one of which is particularly germane to our discussion: 'if you do not think you are cool, no one else will.'

- 4 Earrings, bracelets, and necklaces would be great accessories. Brightly colored headbands (ex. red, yellow, white, pink) looks amazing on black hair.
- 5 Confidence is key: if you are not self-conscious about your Asian heritage, then people will hardly notice it.
- 6 Don't be shy: speak up! Get involved!
- 7 Get involved, try sports or Student Council or something else that you can get involved in.
- 8 Be nice. If you are a jerk, people may think that you're just a jock or whatever. If you're too nice some people may feel you're "uncool" or strange.

But it is point 5 that is arguably the most sinister:

'Confidence is key: If you are not self-conscious about your Asian heritage, then people will hardly notice it.'

And the final Warnings section clearly identifies the priorities of the authors: coolness, Asian-ness, and small eyes:

'Do not let being cool get to you. Do not be ashamed of your culture. Remember to have Asian Pride, be proud of who you are! Do not line your eyes all the way around if you have small eyes. It is just going to make your eyes look smaller.'

**Tips** [Edit](#)

- Having different types of friends will help you discover what kind of person you are.
- If you do not think that you are cool, no one else will.
- Always curl your eyelashes with an eyelash curler before you apply mascara. It will make your eyes pop.
- There is really no such thing as being 'too Asian' or 'not Asian enough', so don't worry.


**Warnings** [Edit](#)

- Do not let being cool get to you.
- Do not be ashamed of your culture. Remember to have Asian Pride, be proud of who you are!
- Do not line your eyes all the way around if you have small eyes. It is just going to make your eyes look smaller.

Through internalising the aesthetics of the mainstream community, the authors have filtered messages about stereotypes and Asians into a perception that 'being cool' is 'being popular', and that 'being popular' is 'being pretty', and that 'being pretty' is having big eyes. This does appear a little idiosyncratic and a little reductionist. However, not only aspiring 'cool' Asian girls in the US read this, so too do others, and as a publicly accessible website it attempts to spread the idea that 'cool' is a learnable commodity and that 'even' Asians can learn.


We can read this website in many ways- and most of these readings will be ironic, cynical, and critical. It can be seen to have multiple embedded meanings that can stretch from a sense of delusional false consciousness, through to perceptions of cultural cringe, gender-specific stereotyping, and racial typecasting. It can also be read as an innocent attempt to 'help' others 'like us' who are fashion-challenged to conform to socially acceptable norms in order to be accepted, and thence 'cool'. Regardless of how it is read, it certainly problematises the idea of 'cool'. Can 'cool' be manufactured so readily? Can it be simply a matter of consciousness-raising that leads us to think that we are 'cool'? And can 'even' Asians be rendered 'cool' by following the prescribed steps?

The desire to be 'cool' clearly identifies the authors' perceptions that Asians (like themselves) simply aren't cool. They need *help* in achieving coolness, and once they have achieved this coolness, they can make

 ITITIT said: On 22:10, 3 June 2008


Cool article, but I think this article needs future editing. The term "Asian" doesn't only mean East (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc) and Southeast (Vietnamese, Khmer, etc) Asian. What about people from India, Pakistan, and all those South Asian countries? They're considered Asian as well. And this article is a little bit stereotypical. Math and computer? Phew, another "Asian nerd" stereotype... And well, yeah! We do hang out with a lot of people and many of us are outgoing like that! I'm not saying that you're racist, but...

[Reply to ITITIT](#)

 91.178.164.15 said: On 16:15, 14 August 2008


Hi ^^ aim asian well indian to be exactly :p i think this is a great article. Yes i was the basic asian geek but this helped me becoming a slightly cooler person :p first i had no life and no friends now i have no life but friends ^^ ty for the help :D

[Reply to 91.178.164.15](#)

 122.105.71.196 said: On 08:07, 14 September 2008

Asians usually suck in everything specially when it comes to sport and socializing with other cultures. get off the hook and try to be friends with us english.


[Reply to 122.105.71.196](#)

 71.58.87.35 said: On 23:48, 2 October 2008

um 122.105.71, you know you have to work on english yourself. Are you really of Caucasian background... sport, more like sports and specially should be especially... please don't make mean comments like that.


I bet you there are more asians that are awesome than you think.

[Reply to 71.58.87.35](#)

 118.101.83.228 said: On 10:22, 12 December 2008


The thing is you cant make yourself asian, your BORN it.

[Reply to 118.101.83.228](#)

 122.105.71.196 said: On 08:07, 14 September 2008

Asians usually suck in everything specially when it comes to sport and socializing with other cultures. get off the hook and try to be friends with us english.


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[Reply to 118.101.83.228](#)



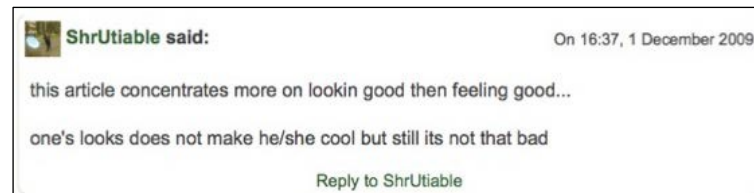
friends, and indeed 'get a life'.

Equally important is the notion that by fixing a girl's appearance to conform to socially constructed norms she can be 'cool'. However, in attempting to be 'cool' the authors have produced a website that could arguably be seen as lame, or totally uncool.

Why is it uncool?

The superficiality of the advice, the responses, and the general tone of the website all speak to a

particular type of reader. And if one was to follow the advice slavishly, the reader would be able to assimilate into US society, and thence be 'cool.' What's wrong with this formulation? The inference drawn here is that conformity with the mainstream equals cool? Although limited amounts of self-reflexivity exist on the site, the stereotypes of Asians are acknowledged by this particular group of Asian Americans, it appears. Rather than embracing difference, though, following from *Star Trek's* the Borg, 'we will be assimilated-resistance is futile'.



However, what happens when a genuinely self-reflexive presenter discusses similar issues? Kevin talks about why Asians are not cool in the context of the Dragonball Z movie that was released in 2009.

Find the link to the YouTube clip here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAbJgXUM4o4>

How is this self-reflexivity useful in understanding coolness in contemporary US from the perspective of an Asian-American sensitivity? It is quite revealing in that it portrays a highly self-reflexive YouTuber, with a strong sense of irony, who is able to locate himself within the wider narrative of an Asian-American minority discourse. In stark contrast to the examples from the website above, there is no apologetic tone. While there is a strong self-parodic tone that underscores his narrative, there is also present a subversive critique of mainstream society, and the way the US views Asians.

Indeed, Kevin has spoken out often about stereotypes in his YouTube life. And there is little doubt that Kevin has a captive audience; his various YouTube clips are watched by millions. The particular clip we have seen received over five million hits. His opinions interest a particular demographic, and while he may deny his coolness publicly, the thousands of comments on his clips indicate that the vast majority of those moved to comment on what Kevin decides to talk about think he is an internet god-he is cool.

So we, so far, have two kinds of perceptions of 'cool', though we couldn't call them 'definitions'. And it appears that it is a futile enterprise trying to be 'cool'—certainly in the US—if you are Asian. But what does being cool actually mean? From where did the concept of 'cool' originate? *Who* was and is 'cool'?

## Defining cool

At this point, then, let us turn to the etymological foundations of 'cool':

**cool** O.E. *col*, from P.Gmc. *\*koluz* (cf. M.Du. *coel*, Du. *koel*, O.H.G. *kuoli*, Ger. *kühl* "cool," O.N. *kala* "be cold"), from PIE base *\*gel-* "cold, to freeze". The verb form *kele* (from O.E. *colian*) was used by Shakespeare, but has been assimilated with the adj. into the modern word. Applied since 1728 to large sums of money to give emphasis to amount. Meaning "calmly audacious" is from 1825. Slang use for "fashionable" is 1933, originally Black English, said to have been popularised in jazz circles by tenor saxophonist Lester Young. (from the Online Etymological Dictionary, available at: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=cool>)

However, its popular usage is arguably somewhat more obscure, and perhaps a little more exotic than the Online Etymological Dictionary would have us believe. In *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (Reaktion Books, 2000), Pountain and Robins trace the concept of cool back to West Africa in the fifteenth century. They argue that in a drought-ravaged environment the capacity to be cool-literally-was essential for survival. This is referred to as *itutu* and was a significant virtue in religious life in the 15th century. It emphasised gentleness of character, peacefulness, and generosity of spirit. When slaves were brought to the United States in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they brought with them these values, which became a form of passive resistance to White plantation owners. That is, they would put on a 'cool' face to hide their anger; and they would walk slowly and upright, eyes ahead, in a show of defiance. In this context, then 'cool' can be read as a form of culturally-specific resistance.

During the early part of the twentieth century cool as a concept was culturally and ethnically bounded, limited almost exclusively to black musicians and actors. Cool through the 40s and 50s in the US was driven by the premise of anti-social rebellion, and by masculinity. Following on the heels of Charlie Parker and Miles Davis (1949 album 'Birth of the Cool'), rock and roll in the US became the new rebellion. It was the voice of youth. And Whites now attempted to imitate Black Americans' edgy relations with the mainstream. Alcohol and drugs became the foci of the Beat generation; and the conscience of this US urban generation was represented by Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs amongst others. The notions of dissociation, rebelliousness, image-making, and posturing were beautifully articulated in a poem by Thom Gunn on Elvis Presley:

Whether he poses or is real, no cat  
Bothers to say: the pose held is a stance,  
Which, generation of the very chance  
It wars on, may be posture for combat

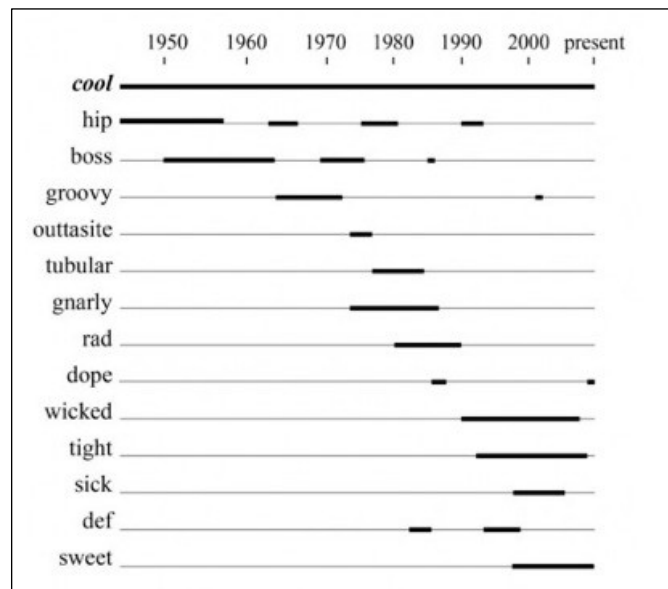
Implicit in this poem is the menace represented by Elvis to 'the establishment'. He is the voice of a generation, and at the head of a potential war between the generations.

Through the remainder of the twentieth century, and indeed up to the present, the concept of 'cool' has remained in common usage, but its meaning has certainly been subject to contestation and challenge. In contrast to other contemporary concepts and tags, 'cool' remains the most ubiquitous term in common verbal usage in English to describe things and people that are 'fashionable, contemporary, different, brilliant, awesome' etc. And its use, in many linguistic forms, exists across most cultures today, although now somewhat watered down from its earlier incarnations. 'Cool' remains in vogue (a tautology? 'Cool' is cool?).

'Cool is still in love with cigarettes, booze and drugs. It now admits women but it loves violence far more than it used to' (Pountain and Robins, p.12). The authors continue, saying they see:

Cool as a *permanent* state of *private* rebellion. *Permanent* because Cool is not just some 'phase that you go through', something you 'grow out of', but rather something that if

once attained remains for life; *private* because Cool is not a collective political response but a stance of individual defiance, which does not announce itself in strident slogans but conceals its rebellion behind a mask of ironic impassivity. (p.19)



The above can be read to suggest that cool is not an easily assimilated 'value' or behaviour, or zeitgeist. Indeed it suggests that it is largely about rebelliousness and chronologically-bounded specific engagements with contemporaneous political-economic circumstances. Examples such as James Dean's classic role in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), or Marlon Brando's iconic part in *On the Waterfront* (1954) were seen to characterize youth in America in the 1950s, and these characters in particular personified cool. However, in terms of the meanings associated with coolness there is an apparent conflict in representation, an unevenness here that brings into relief the issue of time. While the definitions of 'cool' associated with its emergence in the United States in the years since World War II are associated with enduring characteristics of individuals who have come to personify 'cool', the applications of the concept of cool in popular media, in the internet material we viewed earlier, in advertising, in fashion, and in writings about the phenomenon of 'Asian cool' are invariably bound up in the superficial values associated with the production of ephemeral goods, concepts, and even characters for popular consumption. In other words, 'cool' can be conceived of as a commodity that has value.



## Applying 'cool'

Let us return to the issue of the applicability of 'cool'. Pountain and Robins maintain there are three basic personality traits necessary to make up 'coolness': narcissism, ironic detachment, and hedonism (p.26). Can these then be applied to all cultures? Arguably, yes, they can. Certainly *within* all cultures, people who evince such characteristics categorically exist. However, whether such people are perceived as 'cool' or not both within their cultures and outside their cultures is relevant here. The question though is not so much can these traits apply to cultures across the board, but are these traits aspirational for certain cultures? And are these traits transferrable across cultures? That is, if the subjectivity of 'cool' is determined, then how do we draw the line between one person's 'cool' and another's 'uncool'? How do we differentiate between 'nerdy' and 'cool'?

The next three sets of images are illustrations of potential subjective clashes that engage the idea of the subjective readings of cool. There are many other icons who can be celebrated as 'cool' or 'uncool'. Driving most of these readings is the assumption of ephemerality; that is, it is unusual for a celebrity, actor, musician, model, etc to retain their 'coolness' over a substantial length of time, no matter in which culture they are located.<sup>1</sup> Popularity can be retained, but can 'coolness'? I think that the depth of 'coolness' engaged strongly influences perceptions; that is whether it is a *permanent* type of 'cool' or an ephemeral, superficial type of cool.

Where does 'Asia' fit within the 'cool' spectrum

Boy Bands: which is cool(er)? If either...



NEWS



Backstreet Boys

Grace Jones(es): which is cooler??



Who is cooler?



we have just outlined? This brings us back to the theme of this talk. Is Asia 'cool'? Do 'cool' kids think Asia is 'cool'? Where do the 'cool' kids think Asia is 'cool'? As we've seen, the concept of 'cool' is a thorny one; in the website we saw it was aspirational; in the clip we saw it was ironically rejected (and in rejecting the notion of Asian cool, in a detached and iconic way, the production of the video itself was 'cool'). But ultimately it is a subjective term, and one that can be used indiscriminately. The positionality of the observer determines the 'coolness' of the artifact/person. It may certainly be possible to make a case to argue that within Asia, Asia is cool (Iwabuchi 2001). I'm not so sure that the image of 'cool Asia' that is projected outside of Asia (such as Japan's push to promote 'soft power')<sup>2</sup> is either convincing, or having much effect in the world at large in transforming perceptions of 'Asia' though. Let's explore this concept of the image of Asia a little more in the context of Australia.

### **Being cool and Asian in Australia?**

There are many problems associated with being cool and Asian in Australia today. Not least of these is the ingrained racial prejudice that many white Australians have concerning Asians, and the reciprocal race prejudice of both Asians and other migrants towards each other and towards white Australians. The concept of a 'White Australia' has not long been banished from the political lexicon in Australia:

We've only been multi-racial in a process which started in the 1960's and was cemented in the 1980's. We changed our definition then of what it was to be an Australian. Up to that point of time, the starting point of the definition of Australian had been the word 'white'. Kim Beazley: Former Leader, Australian Labor Party  
([abc.net.au/interviews/kim\\_beazley\\_12\\_nov\\_2010](http://abc.net.au/interviews/kim_beazley_12_nov_2010))

White Australians' perception of otherness was rather simplistic until the 1960s. While being a major destination for immigrants from Europe, the White Australia policy that operated until 1973 determined that migrants were not of coloured or Asian ethnic origins. Race therefore was a major determinant in how the world was viewed by Australian governments and the people. In denial about conditions for Aboriginals, and claiming Whiteness as the civilizing mission of the nation, others were demonised and discriminated against formally and informally. Through the postwar years of the 1950s and 60s World War 2, and the Pacific War in particular, was still in people's minds. Japan, the former enemy, had been transformed into an ally, and the wars in Korea, and in Vietnam, combined with Australia's support of the US-led postwar alliances which effectively demonised both China and Russia in the Cold War reinforced Asia as an impenetrable and uncomfortable neighbour. A succession of new Asian others then entered the public imaginary, linked initially to foreign wars of imperialism, and subsequently to the large-scale migration of people from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian nations displaced by the prosecution of the Vietnam War.

While Australia still carries the legacy of the White Australia policy, it is important to acknowledge that the racial intolerance practised by the state through the first 73 years of the twentieth century seems to have been

transmitted to the new immigrant populations. Indeed research carried out in Sydney and Melbourne reinforces the notion that both Northeast Asians and white Australians are culturally exclusive on the whole (Forrest and Dunn, 2007). This perception of the other is significant for the issue of how 'coolness' is constructed, mimicked, consumed, and recreated. That is, it is almost impossible to be cool if one of the markers of one's 'coolness' is in fact culture or ethnicity (though this doesn't explain the early twentieth century location of coolness within Black American communities, and its wholesale transference to elements of the White, Latino, Amerindian, and Asian communities). However, as we saw in both the website and video earlier, 'coolness' is identifiable as being something that is within the realm of the mainstream community, and assimilation or accommodation of these values is essential in demonstrating one's 'cool'.

So, how does Australia locate immigrants, and where does coolness fit in a socio-political context that is clearly still assimilationist?

While national identities are thinned down to make them more acceptable to minority groups, these groups themselves must abandon values and ways of behaving that are in stark conflict with those of the community as a whole (Miller: 2000, 36).

Racial discrimination remains endemic in Australia today (Forrest and Dunn, 2007, Ho and Alcorso, 2004), and is informed and reinforced by the multicultural environment that the large cities have become. Sydney, Australia's largest 'EthniCity' is home to more than 690,000 people of Asian descent (ABS Cat. No. 2068.0 - 2006 Census Tables 2006 Census of Population and Housing). According to numerous surveys, the ethnic groups likely to display the most racist attitudes towards others are, in descending order: Northeast Asians, Southern Europeans, 'native' Australians, New Zealanders, Middle Eastern Islamic people (Forrest and Dunn, 2007). While not outright racism, people living in Australia's major cities demonstrate ethnic discrimination in that their social, political, economic, religious, and communal lives are contained, often within specific ethnic communities.

This environment, then, is a little more complex than that which emphasises simply the 'flows' of popular culture across borders. When people themselves move, and when they become enmeshed in the societies they have adopted, the relationship between people's core cultural values, and the values of the adopted society become increasingly blurry as new generations arise, and as tensions of 'fit' become problematic. Given that there are concerns expressed by both Asians and Australians about Asians' fit within Australian society, the idea of Asian cool seems somewhat removed from what appears to be more a contest over identity and assimilation.

In Sydney today while certain Asian restaurants, Asian consumer products, electronics, video games and popular cultural products are popular with many sectors of the population, the concept of Asian 'chic' is not really on the minds of recent migrants, many refugees and family members from desperately poor communities in Southeast Asia. Indeed the idea of 'cool' is really not relevant

to those who are struggling to make new lives in an alien environment with limited tolerance for 'others'.

But clearly it *is* relevant to those who see themselves as integrated/entangled within primarily Anglo societies in many developed Western nations, as we saw in the excerpts above.

### **What does it all mean?**

As we have seen, 'cool' is a subjective term that can be applied to many different people, artifacts, and even ideas. Coolness as an attitude has a history, and a culturally bounded set of origins.

But it is also clear that the importance of studying 'cool' in respect to Asia could be reconsidered. Perhaps as academics we need to address what it is that is 'cool' before we take for granted the idea that Asian popular culture is implicitly 'cool'. While we academics in far flung places teach the exotic, the bizarre, the culturally esoteric, the ridiculous, the emotive, the enthralling, and the challenging to students who are a captive audience-they have chosen us because we teach the things they're interested in-it's important to recognise that this group is a minority. They may be hooked, they may be keen, but those students who are interested in Asian popular culture make up only a small percentage of the student body. A question for us academics who dabble in the popular cultural milieu is: because we think some parts of Asian pop culture are cool, does it make either the subject itself cool, or ourselves cool? Can we be charged with making something of nothing: producing entropy generating self-aggrandising statements about empty signs and artifacts that are consumed by a tiny minority of people globally? Or should we read these marginal engagements with more seriousness?

And in the context of significant movements of people across borders, both intra-Asian and externally, is not the obsession with 'cool' a little frivolous? It's not as though I would ever discuss such banal representations- not! (see for example, my writing on *South Park* (Allen, 2006), and a number of articles on sushi! (Allen and Sakamoto, 2011, for example)).

So, where does this leave us with respect to the theme of the symposium? Let's consider the implications of what I've talked about so far: first, cool is increasingly being seen as a learnable commodity, a sense of fashionability. A sense of cool pervades the marketing of Asian popular culture outside of Asia, and perhaps, as implied by so many writers, within Asia. But I suspect that the reception of 'cool' and the interpretation of 'cool' is culturally idiosyncratic, at the very least.

In the Asian context, increasingly it is seen as a marketable commodity, the cultural capital of advertising agencies, TV talent scouts, popular culture producers and consumers. But as we established earlier, it is the *rebelliousness* of the Cool People which makes them cool; not the sycophantic and mind-numbing adherence to fashion and superficiality. Indeed in popular usage the concept of Cool is massively overdetermined. It

represents so many values that it is difficult to refine it into a usable concept; yet it is used indiscriminately by many commentators.

Coming back to Australia, we see it is more about the struggle for identity of Asians that is of significance- White Australia/Yellow Australia/Brown Australia? In contradistinction to perceptions of 'cool' as a global commodity, the Australian case should help to problematise the concept of cultural relativism.

As we saw earlier, one person's cool is another's uncool. And in Australia where race is still a significant determinant in producing identity, preconditions of uncoolness associated with particular ethnicities and classes remove large elements of the population from access to the currency of coolness, certainly as experienced by the mainstream.

But in terms of coolness as a construct, I think we need to read against the grain of the superficial representations with which I started this talk. That is, cool is probably much more than simply a slavish adherence to others' perceptions of fashionability. It's probably also more than Kevin's self-reflexive anti-'Dragonball starring a White guy' rave too. And it's probably more complex than the schema I've outlined concerning the US origins of its form and function. Indeed, there are many contrary and internally contradictory values associated with Cool.

We have many contrary readings of Cool then. Cool can be seen to be popular, marginal or unpopular; it can be non-Asian, Asian, Black or White; it can signify rebellion or conformity; it can be fashionable or unfashionable; it can be current, ephemeral, permanent and enduring; it can be a commodity produced by industry for popular consumption.

The bottom line, however, is that when *everyone* likes something, when *parents, old people, uncool others* start to like or appreciate any popular cultural artefact – that is, when a particular pop culture product goes 'global' (for example, *Pokemon* or *Dragonball*)-it is no longer cool. Indeed I think we can argue that the *currency* of 'cool' is ephemerality. It is not simply the culturally bounded definitions we have discussed above. Cool is literally a product of its times. It is also a product of its culture. And it is evasive, precisely because of its anachronistic nature.

Cool has to be current-and being current is about commercialism too. So as scholars of Asian studies, we owe it to ourselves to at least be self-aware when it comes to choosing topics on which to write, and reading significance into what we write ourselves. Our own positionality-our cultural backgrounds, our education, our ethnicities, our politics, etc-all influence how we ourselves see 'our' subjects. That is, they are always seen in relation to ourselves. We cannot write our agency out of our focus. In choosing to proselytise our craft we also support tacitly the production and consumption of 'cool' by dint of our reinforcing it in the public sphere. And in doing so, we become ourselves rather 'uncool'.

Can we argue that the uncool are like the undead? That is, they never really go away; they're always hanging around the living, but can never become real; they mimic the living, but can't experience it; they bastardise and essentialise humanity, but can never become human. Perhaps the same analogies can be applied to the uncool? And those of us, like me, who study things that were once cool (and therefore are no longer cool) are two stages removed from being cool. We are so uncool. And while we essentialise and bastardise coolness, mimic its qualities, and even celebrate them, we are destined to remain forever uncool. Are we the people who should even begin to discuss what cool Asia is all about? Or are we *precisely* the people who *should* discuss it?

This is not to suggest that studying popular culture is a waste of time, or indeed studying popular culture and Asia far from it. But we do need to think about *what* forms of popular culture we look at, and why we look at them, and arguably the facile notion that we should examine things that are 'cool' *because* we think they are cool is probably worth reconsidering, especially considering our own subjective positionality. And we need to be careful of terms like 'Asian' and 'transnationalism' as uncontested terms of engagement, just as we need to be careful of 'cool'. These terms should be contested, and in doing so perhaps we-the perennially uncool academics-can complicate and engage the cultural plurality of the movements of people, ideas, and goods around the planet.

In this context, then-that of a heavily contingent notion of coolness, and of a double perception that 'Asians' are not 'cool' reinforced through the website and the YouTube video-is 'Asian cool' really what we should be focussing on? I'll leave that up to you to decide for yourselves.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>There are, of course, exceptions to such general statements: David Bowie, The Rolling Stones, Frank Sinatra (!), Bo Diddley, for example, all spring to mind.

<sup>2</sup>Douglas McCray's often cited article, 'Japan's Gross National Cool' is an example of how the medium can become the message; but there is little doubt that manipulating the message to become 'cool' does in fact lead to the concept of 'cool' being applied to a nation at large.

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## **Why take trans-Asian media culture connections seriously?**

### **Toward East Asia as a dialogic communicative space**

**Koichi Iwabuchi**

Since the middles of the 1990s, the production capacity of media cultures such as TV, films and popular music has been considerably developed in East Asia. Media culture markets have become synchronized and producers, directors, actors as well as capital from around the region have been working across national borders. Trans-Asian promotion and co-production of media cultures have become commonplace with collaboration and partnerships among media and cultural industries. These developments are suggestive of a trend that media globalization eventually enhances regional connections in a way to bypass the command of Euro-American media cultures, leading to the flourishing of various production activities and the formation of new connections among audiences in East Asia.<sup>1</sup>

In studies of cultural globalization, the West and the Rest tend to be equated with the global and the local respectively. Even in the discussion of cultural hybridization, the Rest is supposed only to receive, imitate, appropriate and/or hybridize the West, no matter how actively producing local media cultures are in the process. It is true that East Asian media cultures have long hybridized American cultural influences in local contexts, but cultural mixing is also actively generated among East Asian media cultures. Remaking of successful TV dramas and films of other parts of East Asia are frequently done and Japanese comic series are often adapted for TV dramas and films outside Japan.<sup>2</sup> Dynamic processes of trans-Asian cultural fusion and inter-textual reworking cannot be fully comprehended by a simplifying notion of Westernization or Americanization.

Media cultures from other parts of East Asia are also finding unprecedented trans-Asian acceptance. Although it is questionable whether media culture consumption engenders an East Asian identity, it undoubtedly promotes mutual understanding and self-reflexive dialogue among people of East Asia. Mutual consumption of media cultures such as TV dramas, films and popular music has offered people more transnational repertoires for reflecting on their own lives and socio-political issues. It deepens people's understanding of other societies and cultures and encourages them critically review the state of their society and even historical relationship with other parts of East Asia. Sympathetic watching of Japanese or Korean TV dramas has, for example, encouraged audiences in various countries in East Asia to have a fresh view of gender relations, lives of the youth and justice of their own societies through the perception of spatial-temporal distance and closeness of other East Asian modernities.<sup>3</sup> The mediated encounter with other Asian modernities makes many people in East Asia mutually appreciate how common

experiences of modernization, urbanization, Westernization, and globalization are similarly and differently represented in other East Asian contexts and realize that they now inhabit the same developmental time zone with other parts of East Asia. While consumption of media culture from other Asian countries might evoke a perception of nostalgia of Orientalist kind, nostalgia also productively induces self-reflexive thinking as is clearly shown by the consumption of Hong Kong or Korean media cultures in Japan having undermined a historically constituted idea of Japan's superiority over the rest of Asia.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, everyday practice of media consumption engenders actual cross-border contact. No small number of people eventually visits other Asian cities, meet people there, starts learning local languages, joins transnational inter-net fan communities,<sup>5</sup> and even re-learns the history of Japan's colonialism in the case of Japanese audiences. It can be argued that East Asian media culture connections have engendered a cultural public sphere, which McGuigan defines as "the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication" and which "provides vehicles for thought and feeling, for imagination and disputatious argument".<sup>6</sup> Media cultures have thus connected East Asia in a dialogic manner; dialogic in the sense of critically and self-reflexively rethinking one's own life, society and culture as well as socio-historically constructed relations and perceptions with others through sympathetic consumption of East Asian media cultures.

These developments put new perspectives into the studies of media and cultural globalization, which have long been dominantly derived from Euro-American experiences, especially in terms of the progression of dialogic transnational connectivity. However, this does not mean that East Asian media culture connection has entirely an autonomous operation and escapes uneven power relations. Western cultural influences are always and already deeply inscribed in the formation of media cultures in East Asia and the globalization process unevenly interconnects the world in ways to surpasses a West-Asia binary and permeate Western and non-Western regions. This paper critically reconsiders with some emphasis on the Japanese context how the power configuration of media culture globalization intervenes transnational connections shaped through East Asian media culture circulation. Its main concern is how the interplay of the governance of global media culture connectivity and diversity—the alliance of media and cultural industries, the upswing of cultural inter-nationalism and the states' growing interest in branding the nation via media cultures—puts critical limits on the way in which media culture connections enhance cross-border dialogue. What sort of cross-border dialogues are promoted, how is "Asia" newly connected and who is not included, and whether and how do they encourage socio-culturally marginalized voices to be heard and shared in a mediated public space?

Critical interrogation of these questions is indispensable to further advances in media culture connectivity by envisioning East Asia as a dialogic communicative space.

### **Transnational industry alliances and East Asian media culture flows**

A constructive way of analyzing the issues of media and cultural globalization would need to locate transnationally shared structural forces and their interactions that often operate contradictorily but inter-constitutively in terms of homogenization-heterogenization, decentering-recentering and transnationalization and nationalization. These pairs of seemingly opposing vectors have made global media culture circulation and connection more complex and inconsistent, yet not in a way to radically transform the unevenness underlying them, since a deep-seated marketization logic makes them operate for the purpose of commercialization.

The rise of East Asian media culture needs to be considered in this context, in which the global advancement of a highly market-oriented production of media culture has made uneven power configurations decentralized, dispersed and interpenetrated in the world. They have been shaped chiefly by cross-border partnerships and collaborations among local and transnational media culture industries of various advanced countries including non-Western regions, which has advanced the integration of markets and capital on a global scale. The inroads East Asian media and cultural industries have made into Hollywood and the global diffusion of East Asian films, animations and video games actually illustrate the advancement of transnational industrial collaboration. It is American distribution networks that help Pokémon (distributed by Warner Brothers) and the anime films of Hayao Miyazaki (distributed by Disney) to be released worldwide, and the Pokémon anime series and movies seen by audiences around the world – with the exception of those seen in some parts of Asia – have been “Americanized”, a process that involves removing some of their “Japaneseness” to make them more acceptable to American and European audiences.<sup>7</sup> To penetrate East Asian markets, Hollywood has become keen to employ directors and actors, the remaking of Japanese, Korean and Hong Kong films and (co)produces Asia-related films. It could be argued that Hollywood’s incorporation of East Asian films shows the uneven power relations between the US and East Asia, since “Asian” contents need to be modified to the taste and style of Hollywood whose main target audiences are those in Euro-American countries.<sup>8</sup> More recently, the Hollywood studios began actively producing “Asian” media cultures by setting up local branches in prosperous cities. However, while Euro-America still occupies a central position, the corporate governance of global cultural economy facilitates the rise of East Asian media cultures through the strengthening of mutually constitutive disposition of Western and East Asian media cultures.

It should also be noted that the activation of regional media flows has also been organized in ways to produce a new international hierarchy with the rise of regional sub-centers such as Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai and Bangkok, among which transnational corporate partnerships, co-production and mutual promotion are put forward. Imperative issues regarding the political economy of media and cultural globalization such as intellectual property rights and international division of cultural labor<sup>9</sup> are also brought to light within the region. Japanese animation companies' outsourcing of the basic labor of animation production to Korea and China highlights the exploitation of cultural labor in a transnational scale<sup>10</sup> and the policing over copyright infringement in East Asian cities is increasingly tightened in a way to favor the corporate interests of major media and culture industries at the expense of the interests of cultural workers and audiences.<sup>11</sup>

Transnational alliances of media and cultural industries facilitated the process of global localization or glocalization, which the logic of flexible capital, as suggested above, accommodates itself to seemingly opposing forces promotes. Globalization does not promote a straightforward homogenization but rather gives rise to the diversification of media cultural repertoires in many parts of the world. This is evidently shown by the marketing strategy of media and cultural industries that subtly combines seemingly opposing forces of globalization-localization and homogenization-heterogenization. As "glocalization" has become a business buzzword, the new configuration of global cultural power exploits the locally specific meaning construction process in a tailored manner.<sup>12</sup> The world is becoming more diverse through standardization and more standardized through diversification. With the advancement of globalization, a series of cultural formats such as genre, narrative style, visual representation, digitalized special effects, marketing technique, idea of coolness through which various differences can be adjusted have been disseminated, shared and deployed by media industries. In this respect, it is incongruous to deny the enormity of American cultural influences, as demonstrated by the prevalence of the television format business and film remaking, many of which are of American origin.<sup>13</sup> However, it is again through the advancement of transnational alliance of media culture industries of many parts of the world that has deeply promoted the glocalizing enterprise of manufacturing tailored diversity.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the glocalization process has engendered a further institutionalization of the national as cultural form, for the national market functions as the most profitable local market as the unit of commercialized cultural diversity. Accordingly, cultural specificity of the national as the major local unit is more and more constituted by globally shared cultural formats. As Urry argues, "nationality gets more constituted through specific local places, symbols and landscapes, icons of the nation central to that culture's location within the contours of global business, travel, branding".<sup>15</sup>

This has accompanied the development of what Urry calls a “global screen”, through which national culture is mutually appreciated and global cultural diversity is enjoyably consumed. Since the 1990s, we have witnessed a substantial increase in global media spaces through satellite and cable broadcasting and the internet audiovisual sites as well as global media events and gathering opportunities of sport events, film festivals, TV format trades, food showcases and tourism, in which cultures from many parts of the world are exhibited, introduced, competed with each other and mutually recognized as national brands in the international arena. While globalization processes displace the significance of national borders in some cases and contexts, they also brought about re-nationalization in others. The rise of international branding showcases are one of the significant such instances. Globally shared culture formats do not just provide the basis for the expression of national cultural specificity but also generate an “inter-nationalism” that urges people to conceive the nation as the unit of global cultural encounters and highlights national cultures in an essentialist manner. This dynamism is clearly shown in the development of East Asian media flows and has a significant bearing on regional cross-border dialogues, as we will see shortly.

### **Inter-national governance of media culture encounters**

A pertinent question for the purpose of this paper is how the market-driven structuring forces of media culture globalization have an impact on whose voices and concerns are not included in East Asian media culture connections. East Asian media culture connection has brought about not just cross-boundary dialogues but also cross-boundary disparity, divisions, antagonism and marginalization in various overlapping ways. The disparity in the material accessibility to media culture is still serious. A tremendous number of places and people cannot afford to enjoy the advancement of digital communication technologies such as the Internet and cheap (pirated) DVDs due to economic restraints.<sup>16</sup> Another important question is what kind of media culture is encouraged to circulate for regional consumption. Although digital communication technologies have blurred the boundaries of producer and consumer, diversified cultural expressions and facilitated cross-border connections including those among marginalized people and activists working for them, the question remains regarding what kinds of connections are promoted and through which media texts, and whose voices and what kind of issues are not well attended to in an emerging East Asian cultural public sphere. As market-oriented and corporate-driven East Asian media culture connections have been advanced, a trans-Asian mass culture channel has been loosely institutionalized, in which nationally dominant media cultures are mutually promoted and consumed. Most media texts that media and cultural industries promote to circulate in the region are commercially and ideologically hegemonic ones in each country and socio-culturally marginalized differences and voices within the nation tend to not well

represented. This is indicative of the fact that the studies of East Asian media culture connection tend to focus on self-reflexive audience consumption of other Asian media texts at the expense of critical examinations of the representations of media cultures that are circulating and shared within East Asia.<sup>17</sup> While many critical studies of queer cultures, ethnic minorities, and migrants in the media representation have been conducted in the national context, the same is not true with those on the East Asian media culture connection. Scholars need to examine political economy and representation of East Asian media culture connection seriously concerning the issues of inequality and marginalization in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, region, class, migration/diasporas.

This point is related to how East Asian media culture connections prop up the resilience of the national framework by the penetration of inter-nationalism as discussed above. It has been argued that transnational cultural flows and connections do not displace the significance of the nation but rather highlight its reworking.<sup>18</sup> What has become conspicuous is the rise of inter-nationalized governance of media culture diversity, in which the national is considered as the unit of global cultural encounter and national cultures are mutually consumed in various inter-nationalized cultural occurrences. Nationalism that is provoked by the rise of inter-nationalism also takes a banal form. Billig argues that the permeation of national feeling is more often than not facilitated and performed by a mundane practice such as casually showing the national flag in the city<sup>19</sup>. An increase in inter-nationalized encounters with people, cultures and images from many parts of the world, in which people enjoy participating in the event by displaying a particular national emblem, has operated as mundane occasions in which cross-cultural encounters are comprehended as those among mutually exclusive national cultures and thus the banal sense of national belonging is further promoted. Banal inter-nationalism pushes a propensity that when one discusses international mobility, encounter and connection, one is apt to implicitly assume the cardinal existence of the delimited national cultural boundaries to come across. Such conception of the nation as organic cultural entity not just endorses essential ownership of national cultures with the indication of cultural DNA,<sup>20</sup> but also fails to bear in mind that national boundaries are discursively drawn in a way to suppress various socio-cultural differences within the nation and disavow their existence as constitutive of the nation.<sup>21</sup> A pertinent issue in relation to East Asian media culture connection is the ambivalence regarding the empowerment of diasporas and migrants by the rise of economy and culture of “home” country. A researcher in Asian-Australian studies stated about the persistent stereotypical images of Chinese diasporas in Australia: “As we become more dependent on the dollars from the economies of Asia, I would hope that the vestige of 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalism will fade away”.<sup>22</sup> It might be the case that the rise of Chinese economy would not just improve international images of China but also enhance social recognition of those

diasporas/migrants who identify themselves and are identified as “Chinese” in the host society. However, there is a thin line between the empowerment of diasporas by their association with the images of the home country and the confusion of their identities and differences with those living in the home country. This is evident when we consider how an inter-nationalized media culture connection overwhelms and suppresses local multicultural politics. In this regard, the examination of how the Korean Wave has impacted on the social positioning and recognition of resident Koreans in Japan, most of whom are the descendants of expatriates under Japanese colonial rule and who have long been discriminated against as second-rate citizens, would be a crucial touchstone in the consideration of transnational cultural dialogue.<sup>23</sup>

Sympathetic reception of Korean media cultures in Japan has greatly facilitated self-reflexive views of self-other relations among audiences. Many came to have much better images of Korea, realized how their previous images of Korea were biased, and became more willing to know about Korean society and culture and history of Japanese colonialism. Furthermore, the improvement of the images of Korea induced by the popularity of Korean media cultures has eventually improved the images of resident Koreans in Japan too, even though it does not seriously tackle the lingering social discrimination. And while their issues had been much neglected in the mediated public sphere, Japanese mass media, including TV drama series, began dealing with their voices and identity issues more often than before. However, there is an awkward muddling up of Korea and resident Koreans in Japan in an approving consumption of the Korean Wave. The enhancement of the images of resident Koreans in the public space has been achieved in an inter-national framework, at the expense of recognizing them not as citizens constitutive of Japanese society. While the advance of media culture connections between two countries draws attention to the demarcation of Japan-Korea national cultural borders to be traversed in an affirmative manner, the stress on inter-national cultural exchange between the two countries both in the social discourse and in the perception of audiences tends to facilitate an ahistorical recognition of resident Koreans, one that understands their existence in relation to the contemporary culture and society of the nation-state called South Korea. Little light is cast on the historically embedded experiences of resident Koreans. Their historical trajectory, suffering and identity formation are instead effortlessly conflated with and understood through culture and people of the present Korea, making them perceived and represented as “Korean nationals living in Japan”. The recognition of Korean residents as fellow citizens living together “here” is subsumed by the recognition of them as those belonging to another nation “over there”. Inter-nationalized governance of media culture connections is substantially implicated in the local, multicultural and postcolonial questions in a way to hamper the dialogic potential of East Asian media culture connection.



## States desperately seeking national branding

The inter-nationalized connectivity of East Asian media culture is further strengthened by the state policy of national branding for the purpose of promoting the international circulation of nationally produced media cultures. As George Yúdice argues, culture has become an expedient “resource” that allows various social actors to pursue their own political, economic, communal and activist interests<sup>24</sup>. Various social actors, including marginalized persons and NGOs, have engaged in identity politics and become involved in new social movements by resorting to the expediency of culture. While the media and culture industries have been most effectively attuned to the instrumental value of culture for commercial purposes, states have also shown a strong interest in using such media and popular cultures for the promotion of national interests, politically to enhance national brand images and economically for developing service sectors in which creative/content industries play a significant role. While the national policy of using culture in the pursuit of national interests is not new, the recent development signifies a new collaborative relationship between the state and media cultural industries, and between culture, economy and politics for the promotion of what can be called “brand nationalism”, which aims to opportunistically administer media culture for the enhancement of national interests in the international arena. For the states, media culture has come to be regarded as important politically for boosting “soft power” and “cultural diplomacy”, and economically for attracting capital and tourists and developing creative industries. “Cool Britannia” might be the best-known policy and practice of this kind, but in East Asia too, Korea, Singapore, China, Taiwan and Japan are keen to promote their own cultural products and industries to enhance political and economic national interests. Most famously, the Korean government has actively promoted Korean media cultures overseas since the 1990s, thereby contributing to the sweeping popularity of Korean media cultures, known as the Korean Wave<sup>25</sup>. Motivated by Korea’s success, the Japanese and other East Asian governments have also become active in developing the policy of promoting Japanese media cultures internationally in the twenty first century.

Some would question the idea that brand nationalism is effective in enhancing certain national images, as policy makers contend, and this not merely because the Japanese government’s way of dealing with historical issues is obviously contradictory and unconvincing. Furthermore, any close research on how Japanese media culture is received and consumed in the world would easily reveal the intricate ways of an inter-cultural image politics that betrays the naïve expectations of those who advocate cultural diplomacy. After all, as brand nationalism, and soft power as well, disregard the complexity of uneven cultural globalization in terms of production, representation and consumption, the suspicion is very valid. Nevertheless, precisely because of this

disregard for the relevant complexity, we cannot easily dismiss the rise of brand nationalism as an unsubstantial and fallacious policy discourse. As a dominant social discourse, it has a wide public impact as it has accompanied material institutionalization and funding for the promotion of cultural export and, more importantly, it has facilitated a pragmatic discourse on the usefulness of (national) culture. What matters then is its ideological closure, for it effectively suppresses all serious discussions about the uses of culture in the service of wider public interests such as the encouragement of critical cross-border dialogue.

We should note that brand nationalism is basically prompted by the logic of capital. Capital is not confined by national borders but benefits well from state regulation and control in order to make profits through a neo-liberal mode of cultural globalization as the national market has become the most profitable local unit.<sup>26</sup> States, for their part, are complicit in this process, for they work with it rather than regulating and controlling it for the public good, embracing two exclusive forces simultaneously – the one linked to the dynamics of the market, the other to the policing of national boundaries. Brand nationalism is, then, not just an opportunistic nationalist policy discourse on the uses of media culture but it legitimizes and is facilitated by the neoliberalism mode of media and cultural globalization. The states' active backing of market-oriented globalization hinders rather than promotes the public discussion about the crucial issues of media cultural globalization and East Asian media culture connectivity as discussed earlier. While the development of creativity in the production of internationally appealing culture is emphasized in the Japanese discussion of national branding policy, it tends to lose sight of critical assessments of how transnational media and cultural industries dominate the production and distribution of culture, which has exacerbated the issues of the concentration of ownership on a handful global media conglomerates, their monopoly of copyright, and international division of new cultural labor.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, brand nationalism does not promote or even discourage cross-border dialogue. For example, historical perception and representation has been one of the most contentious matters in East Asian media culture connection as a growing mediated interconnectedness often evokes the sense of national pride in a reactionary manner. Recent Chinese criticism of the distortion of historical representation in the Korean drama series, *Jumong* shows the growing significance of media culture in the disputing over the ownership of national culture and historical narrative. More serious is the issue of Japanese imperialism and colonialism in Asia. In China and Korea, for example, no small number of people still think of Japan negatively due to unresolved historical issues. While it may be a sensible engagement with the present and the past, East Asian media culture circulation is occasionally taken in by the vicious circle of nationalism between anti-Japanese sentiments in China and Korea and by a reactive discourse against

China and Korea in Japan.<sup>28</sup> To go beyond infertile nationalistic antagonisms and foster historical reconciliation, we need to continuously take sincere efforts to promote cross-border dialogues to enhance historical truthfulness.<sup>29</sup> However, brand nationalism effortlessly aspires to use media culture to overcome historical issues.

In Japan, there has been an expectation for the potential of media culture facilitating cultural diplomacy, particularly in terms of its capacity to improve Japan's reputation and to transcend the historically constituted Japan's problematic relations with other East and Southeast Asian countries. It is anticipated that media culture would improve Japanese images in the region and enhancing the understanding of "open-minded" and "humane" faces of postwar Japan, so much so that historical memory of Japanese colonialism and the negative image of economic exploitation can be overcome in the region<sup>30</sup>. As East Asian media culture circulation intensifies and Japanese media cultures are well received in the region, the significance of exporting Japanese "cool/cute" culture has been even more eagerly discussed for the purpose of advancing cultural diplomacy. This was especially the case with the recent rise of anti-Japanese demonstration in China and Korea over the issues of history textbook, official visits to controversial Yasukuni Shrine and long-standing territorial disputes. As was clearly stated in the 2005 White Paper of Economic and Trade Ministry that "without the spread of Japanese pop culture, anti-Japanese sentiment would be much stronger in Korea", the increase in the export of media culture to Asian markets is naively believed to serve Japan's cultural diplomacy as it would make Korean (and Chinese) youth who consume Japanese media culture more sympathetic with Japan and thus tolerant for the history of Japanese imperialism and colonialism.

However, this belief neglects the bare fact that many of those who favorably consume Japanese media culture in China and Korea consider historical issues separately and critically.<sup>31</sup> The co-existence of "I love Japanese cute culture" and "I am concerned with what Japan did to our grandparents" within the same person's mind is no contradiction at all.<sup>32</sup> Even if favorable consumption of Japanese media culture might change the images of contemporary Japan, this neither erase historical memory nor diminish the importance of constant endeavors to facilitate historical reconciliation on its own term.<sup>33</sup> The discourse of cultural diplomacy does not promote but rather thwarts a sincere engagement with "historical truthfulness", which can only be fostered through transnational dialogues involving various citizens' views of the past.<sup>34</sup> While emphasizing the importance of disseminating Japanese media cultures for establishing harmonious relations with other countries, crucially missing is the serious consideration of how the consumption of media culture might be used as the impetus for citizens' further and possibly conflict-laden dialogues.

Far from assuming that media culture has the magical power to overcome historical issues, it should be a matter of thinking carefully about how it might contribute to such a project.

At the same time, brand nationalism interacts well with banal inter-nationalism. With the penetration of inter-national media cultural spectacles and the rise of associated policy discourse on the pragmatic uses of media culture for national interests, the exclusive notion of national belonging and nation as the unit of global cultural encounter has become even more pervasive and internalized. While it is claimed in a cultural policy statement of the Japanese government that the advancement of international cultural exchange, rather than the uses of hard military power will be key to the creation of a peaceful world where cultural diversity is mutually respected and celebrated and multilateral understanding and dialogue is promoted,<sup>35</sup> brand nationalism actually aims to promote a particular kind of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, which does not attend well to diversity within the nation-state. In early 2006, for example, the expansion of international broadcasting service had begun being seriously discussed in Japan and the services commenced in February 2009 with the purpose of enhancing Japan's national image in the world for the promotion of political and economic interests. However discussion of the service first started when foreign nationals residing in Japan complained to then Prime Minister Koizumi about the lack of broadcasting in Japan in languages other than Japanese. So, what was at stake in the beginning was the failure of the Japanese broadcasting system to provide due public service to people of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds who were residing in Japan itself. The question of the broadcasting system's publicness, in the sense of doing justice to the diversity of citizens whose voices and concerns are not well reflected in the mass media, is indeed an urgent one inasmuch as Japanese society is becoming more multicultural. In connection with my own research, I have also often heard similar complaints from foreign nationals resident in Japan. However, in the cabinet meeting a few days later, the concerns were translated into a strategy aimed at the enhancement of national images in the world by developing an English language-international broadcasting service, which can be comparable with BBC World, CNN and CCTV International.

Brand nationalism clearly suppresses a vital cultural policy engagement with the task of bringing the hitherto marginalized voices and concerns of various citizens into the public sphere, and ensuring that they are heard.

## **Toward Trans-Asia as method**

Re-engaging the notion of “Asia as method”, which was advocated by a Japanese thinker, Takeuchi Yoshimi in 1960, Chen Luan-Hsing suggests that “using Asia as an imaginary anchoring points can allow societies in Asia to become one another’s reference points, so that the understanding of the self can be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt” and that “historical experiences and practices in Asia can be developed as an alternative horizon or perspective, and seen as method to advance a different understanding of world history”.<sup>36</sup> The development of trans-Asian media culture connections also displays great possibilities of constructing new knowledge from East Asian experiences about self-other relationships and alternative views of the world through self-reflexive inter-referencing and cross-border dialogue.

Transnational circulation and intersection of various flows of capital, media culture and people interconnect East Asia both spatially and temporally, materially and imaginatively, and dialogically and antagonistically to highlight historically constituted relationships and regionally and globally shared emergent issues. If we are to further advance the new-fangled, trans-Asian media culture connectivity constructively, we need to transcend inter-nationalism forged through the interaction of neoliberalism, marketisation and state’s cultural policy that discourages cross-border dialogue. In the world of intense interconnection and enormous uncertainty, where so many issues and diverse voices are “sharable but not necessarily or inevitably shared”,<sup>37</sup> dialogue has indeed become key. To tackle the violence of global capital, the widening economic gap, serious environmental problems, rise of various kinds of fundamentalism, intensifying transnational ethno-cultural flows, and the growing cultural diversity in society, the practice of mutually learning from the experience of other cultures and societies and of conversing over transnationally shared issues is required more than ever. Media cultures can play a significant public role—affectively, communicatively and participatorily—in the promotion of cross-border dialogue over those issues.

If we are to advance the project of trans-Asia as method that conceives and materializes East Asia as a dialogic, communicative space, we should strive to connect diverse voices, concerns and problems in various, unevenly overlapping public sites, in which the national is still a major site but does not exclusively reflect public interests. As power configurations of cultural globalization are constantly shifting, ceaseless critical examination of how uneven globalization processes interfere media culture connections in East Asia is essential. In addition, we should think seriously about how to de-academicise intellectual endeavors to open up more spaces and opportunities in which cross-border dialogues across various divides are facilitated. The public role of researchers should not be confined to critically offering a denationalized interpretation

and analysis of the complexity of what is happening in the world in an intangible manner. Researchers are also required to pursue the active role of coordinating the dialogues of and mutual learning among various social subjects such as governments, the mass media, activists, NGO/NPOs and all citizens concerned with a determined will to engage with the project of trans-Asia as method.

<sup>1</sup> Just to mention some, in the English language academy, on regional cultural flows and connectivities: Chris Berry, Jonathan D. Mackintosh and Nicola Liscutin (eds), *Cultural Industries And Cultural Studies In Northeast Asia: What a difference a region makes*, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2009; Youna Kim (ed.) *Media consumption and everyday life in Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2008; on Korean Wave: Chua Beng Huat and Koichi Iwabuchi (eds) *East Asian pop culture: Approaching the Korean Wave*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008; on the popularity of Japanese media cultures: Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2002; Koichi Iwabuchi (ed.) *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational consumption of Japanese TV dramas*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> A prominent example is *Meteor Garden* (Liuxing Huayuan), a Taiwanese TV drama series that is an adaptation of Japanese comic series. It became very popular in East and South East Asia and Japanese and Korean versions were later produced. Regarding the media co-production in East Asia, see Jin Dal Yong and Lee Dong-hoo, 'The Birth of East Asia: Cultural Regionalization Through Coproduction Strategies', Paper presented at *the annual meeting of the International Communication Association*, San Francisco, CA, 23 May 2007; Albert Moran and Michael Keane (eds), *Television Across Asia: Television Industries, Programme Formats and Globalisation*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 2002; Iwabuchi, *Feeling Asian Modernities*, 2004; Kim, *Media consumption and everyday life in Asia*, 2008; Chua and Iwabuchi, *East Asian pop culture*, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> See Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 2002; Koichi Iwabuchi, 'When Korean Wave meets resident Koreans in Japan', in Chua B.H and K. Iwabuchi (eds), *East Asian pop culture: Approaching the Korean Wave*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008, pp. 243-264.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly Hu, 'The power of circulation: digital technologies and the online Chinese fans of Japanese TV drama', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 6, Number 2, 2005, pp.171-186.

<sup>6</sup> Jim McGuigan, The cultural public sphere, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8 (4), 2005, pp.427-443.

<sup>7</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, 'How "Japanese" is Pokemon?', in J. Tobin (ed.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 53-79; see also Anne Alison 2006.

<sup>8</sup> It can also be argued that those who are most offended by the continuing Orientalist representations in Japan-related Hollywood films such as *Memoir of Geisha* and *Lost in Translation* are less people in Japan than ethnic minorities of Japanese/Asian descent in the Western countries such as Asian Americans. See Koichi Iwabuchi, 'Lost in TransNation: Tokyo and the urban imaginary in the era of globalization', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9 (4), 2008, pp.543-556.

<sup>9</sup> David Hesmondhalgh, 'Neoliberalism, imperialism, and the media' in David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee (eds) *The Media and Social Theory*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 95-111; Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell and Ting Wang, *Global Hollywood 2*, London, British Film Institute, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Yoon, Ae-ri, 'In between the Values of the Global and the National: The Korean Animation Industry', in C. Berry, J. D. Mackintosh and N. Liscutin (eds) *Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia: What a Difference a Region Makes*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong

University Press, 2009, pp. 103-115.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Laikwan Pang, *Cultural Control and Globalization in Asia : Copyright, Piracy and Cinema*, London: Routledge, 2006; Otsuka Eiji and Osawa Nobuaki, *Japanimation wa naze yabureruka* (Why Japanimation should be defeated), Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity', in M. Featherstone, R. Robertson and S. Lash (ed.) *Global Modernities*, London: Sage, 1995, pp. 25-44.

<sup>13</sup> David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identities: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Richard Wilk 'Learning to be local in Belize: Global systems of common difference', in D. Miller, ed., *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the prism of the local*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp.110-133.

<sup>15</sup> John Urry, *Global Complexity*, London: Polity, 2003, p.87.

<sup>16</sup> *Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2009*, which was issued by the Asian Development Bank, shows the fact that just ten Asian countries have an internet usage rate of more than 20%.

<sup>17</sup> In my own research on the regional consumption of Hong Kong and Hong Kong media cultures, I also tend to look at how audiences became more critical of their own lives and society as well as the perception of other cultures without closely analyzing how gender or ethnicity is represented in the original texts. See Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization, 2002; Feeling Asian Modernities*, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> See Koichi Iwabuchi, *Bunka no taiwaryoku* (Culture's dialogic capacity), Tokyo: Nihonkeizaishinbun Shuppansha, 2007, ch 2, pp31-74.

<sup>21</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, 'Multinationalizing the multicultural: the commodification of "ordinary foreigners" in a Japanese TV talk show', *Japanese Studies* 25 (2), 2005, pp. 103-118.

<sup>22</sup> Jen Tsen Kwok, Tseen Khoo and Chek Ling, 'Chinese voices: Tseen Khoo, Jen Tsen Kwok and Chek Ling reflect on the political culture of the Asian-Australian community', *Meanjin*, 63.2, 2004, pp.149-160.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed analysis of the following, see Koichi Iwabuchi 'When Korean Wave meets resident Koreans in Japan', in Chua B.H and K. Iwabuchi (eds), *East Asian pop culture: Approaching the Korean Wave*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> George Yúdice, *The Expedience of Culture: Uses of culture in the global era* (Durham; Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Shim Doobo, 'Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia', *Media, Culture & Society*, 28 (1), 2006, pp. 25-44; Chua Beng-Huat and Koichi Iwabuchi, eds., *East Asian pop culture: Approaching the Korean Wave* (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> David Hesmondhalgh, 'Neoliberalism, imperialism, and the media', 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, *Bunka no taiwaryoku*, 2007, ch.2, pp.75-119.

<sup>28</sup> A prominent example is the popularity of anti-Korea books in Japan. A most popular book is titled 'anti-Korean Wave' but its actual content is actually not much about the critique of Korean media cultures but more about a strong renunciation of Korean nationalism against Japan and those resident Koreans in Japan who allegedly support it. See Nicola Liscutin, 'Surfing the Neo-Nationalist Wave: A Case Study of Manga Kenkanryu', in C. Berry, J. D. Mackintosh and N. Liscutin (eds) *Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia: What a Difference a Region Makes*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009, pp.171-193.

<sup>29</sup> Tessa Morris Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, memory, history*, London: Verso, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, 'Uses of Japanese Popular Culture; Media Globalization and Postcolonial Desire for 'Asia'', *Emergences: Journal of Media and Composite Cultures*, 11(2), 2001, pp. 197-220.

<sup>31</sup> Even Joseph Nye, who is the advocator of soft power, points out that unresolved historical issues with other Asian countries is one of the crucial weakness of Japanese soft power and



publicly criticized Koizumi's persistent visit to Yasukuni Shrine for its negative impact on Japan's soft power. See 'An interview with Joseph Nye on Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine', *Tokyo Newspaper*, 22 October 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Koichi Iwabuchi, *Bunka no taiwaryoku*, 2007, ch.3.

<sup>33</sup> Referring to the 2006 BBC survey of national images, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Taro Aso actually boasted of Japan being perceived as a most favorable nation in the world and proposed to further promote national brand power by exporting more attractive Japanese media cultures (especially manga and anime in his mind). However, he completely neglected the fact that in the survey two countries showed quite negative responses about the images of Japan, which were China and Korea.

<sup>34</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, memory, history* (London: Verso, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> *A Report by the Discussion Group on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy* (Bunka gaiko no suishin nikasuru kondankai houkokusho), July 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Chen Kuan-Hsing, *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, xv.

<sup>37</sup> Roger Silverstone, 'Media and communication in a globalized world', in Barnette, C., Robinson, J. and Rose, G. (eds), *A Demanding World*, Milton Keynes, The Open University, 2006, pp.55-103, p.91.

# Part One: Generating National Identity

## The tyranny of context, or how to read Japan's (not-so-cool) *manga* comics

Rumi Sakamoto

### Introduction

This paper examines how two Japanese *manga*, Yamano Sharin's *Kenkanryū* (Hate-Korea Wave, 2005) and Motomiya Hiroshi's *Kuni ga moeru* (The Country is Burning, 2002-2005), were represented in South Korean<sup>1</sup> and Chinese media in the mid-2000s. The mid-2000s were a time of economic recession and saw the rise of neo-nationalism in Japan. As neo-nationalists and revisionists attempted to construct Japanese national identity around the re-reading of Japan's modern history, Japan's Asian neighbours expressed their concern about Japan's 'jumping to the right'. The interpretations of contentious issues such as the Yasukuni Shrine, the 'comfort women' and the Nanjing Massacre became hot topics in public discourse both domestically and internationally, and provided a strong context for the production, circulation and consumption of these *manga*. In this paper I argue that Korean and Chinese media engagement with these texts was heavily influenced by the pre-existing politico-historical context of East Asia. By examining how media read these texts (including two Korean comics that were derivative of Japanese *Kenkanryū*) as simply signs of mutual hostility and unresolved historical tension between Japan-Korea and Japan-China, and by offering an alternative reading of Motomiya's text, I point out that context rather than content determined the nature of transnational cultural consumption in these particular instances.

In taking this position, I intend to reinsert the relevance and importance of supra-national historical contexts into the contemporary study of transnational movements and consumption of cultural artefacts, and caution against too optimistic a reading of cultural globalisation that focuses exclusively on cross-cultural fertilisation and increasing cultural creativity and diversity (e.g. Cowen, 2004). Despite our world increasingly turning into a 'global cultural supermarket' (Matthews, 2000), from which one picks and mixes elements to suit our individual sense of identity, we need to be aware that such 'pick 'n' mix' does not take place in a historical, political, or ideological void. In fact, these contexts can severely limit the availability of, access to, or capacity to appreciate global and transnational cultural commodities at any specific location.

One of the key issues in recent scholarly examination of transnational cultural flows has been the complex process of the localisation of culture. Now that the cultural homogenisation (*aka* Americanisation) thesis has been largely discredited within academia, a new consensus has emerged that when cultural products travel beyond national borders, they are consumed in various 'local' contexts, by various international consumers, and that this often

involves a creative process of local interpretation and transformation, resulting in new practices and new meanings. Whether one calls such a process 'hybridisation' (Canclini, 2005; Tomlinson, 1999; Pieterse, 2003), 'creolisation' (Hannerz, 1992; Hannerz, 1996; Howes, 1996), or simply 'localisation', the examination of specific local-global nexuses has become one of the most productive endeavours within the study of transnational cultural flows. In this context, how popular culture in a new, adopted home might be 'used, misused and abused' by different local agencies ('Cool New Asia: Asian Popular Culture in a Local Context', 2011), to use the words of the symposium organisers, and what kinds of new cultural practices or identities such a process might produce, have certainly opened a fascinating and productive line of inquiry.

In this paper, however, I approach this topic from a slightly different perspective. Instead of asking what happens when one culture is inserted into a 'foreign' context to produce new meanings, I ask how a shared (though obviously not identical) context of East Asia affects, determines and perhaps limits the mode of cultural consumption, both domestically and internationally. In other words, my focus here is not on the creative processes of cultural translations that make our globalising world a richer, more interesting place, but rather on the limitations imposed on such potential by a regional context in which culture travels beyond national borders. This perspective reflects my recent research interests, namely, Japanese war memory and popular media – the Internet in particular. With online discourses on, for example, the Nanjing Massacre or 'comfort women', I have observed time and again that transnational cultural flows resulted in the impoverishment of meaning, rather than enrichment or diversification of meaning.

Despite the prevalence of the 'Cool Asia' message within contemporary Asian cultural studies, as well as in state initiatives on national branding and soft power, it is important to remember that in the age of global electronic communication transnational consumers are accessing not only Korean TV drama or Lolita fashion (which typically falls under the rubric of 'Cool New Asia'), but also things like Japanese revisionist *manga*, Korean TV advertisements on Dokdo, or a YouTube video of an anti-Japanese rally in Taiwan. On the one hand, the advocates of Japanese soft power and 'Gross National Cool' may hope to whitewash the memory of Japan's war-time aggression with the glitz and glamour of 'Cool Japan'. This is seen, for example, in the Japanese government's report that among Korean students who listened to J-pop (rather than 'Western pop') the proportion of those who believed that Japan has apologised sufficiently for its colonial past was higher, and that this showed popular culture's ability to 'transform consciousness' (METI, 2003). But on the other hand, popular cultural products with not-so-cool, obviously problematic and uncomfortable contents that invoke Japan's imperial past and unresolved war responsibility also circulate as elements of contemporary transnational cultural flows. It is this latter aspect that this paper addresses.

When popular culture that thematises or even just reminds us of these sensitive issues travels across borders, what emerges is not just

'consumption opportunities' ('Cool New Asia: Asian Popular Culture in a Local Context', 2011) but also opportunities for stimulating some raw emotions and compulsive repetition or acting out of past historical trauma, which could potentially promote further antagonisms and discord, deepening rifts among peoples and nations. One of the major 'local contexts' in East Asia that we cannot ignore, is the legacy of Japan's war and imperialism, and various frictions – diplomatic or otherwise-that have arisen out of this unresolved past. In the following I offer two case studies of *manga* comics to examine the intersection between Japanese popular culture and Japan's 'not-so-cool' past in the context of increasingly connected East Asia.

### **Yamano Sharin's *Kenkanryū***

First, let us look at Yamano Sharin's *Kenkanryū* ('hate Korea wave'), a 2005 bestseller that expressed some extreme anti-Korean sentiments.<sup>2</sup> 2005 was an eventful year for Japan-Korea relations. It was designated the Japan-Korea Friendship Year to mark the 40th year of diplomatic relations between the two nations, with both governments looking towards further reconciliation and to a future of positive mutual engagement; the *hanryū* boom that had started in Japan with the 2004 TV drama, *Fuyu no sonata*, was still going strong, bringing with it some optimism about future Japan-Korea relations. But 2005 was also the year in which Shimane prefecture announced Takeshima Day, reigniting the territorial dispute over those now well-known rocky islets in the Japan Sea/East Sea (the naming of which, incidentally, became another source of dispute between Japan and Korea around this time). *Kenkanryū*'s anti-Korean discourse emerged in this context of growing interest in Korea among Japanese people, some positive and some negative.

*Kenkanryū* tells a story of a young university student, who joins a history study group and, through his own research and education from senior students, discovers the 'truth' about the Japanese colonisation of Korea, post war compensation, territorial disputes, the status of Korean residents in Japan and so on. The 'truth' he finds out is invariably of a pro-Japan nature, and his perspectives and arguments are put forward in several extended scenes of his spectacular wins in history debates against his opponents. The *manga*'s main message is crudely summed up on the cover of volume two: 'fabrication of history, theft of culture, anti-Japanese policies, discriminatory thinking, invasion of territory, plundering natural resources, suppression of freedom of speech, brain-washing education... An unbelievably rotten country, that is Korea!!' (Yamano, 2006).

Predictably, this *manga* met with a negative reception in Korea. Mainstream media such as *Chosun Ilbo*, *Dong-a Ilbo* and Seoul Broadcast, Korean-language online news such as Yonhap News, as well as blog sites that focused on Korea-Japan relations, all criticised *Kenkanryū*. It was also taken up by a popular KBS variety show called *Sponge* early on, in its usual format where celebrity contestants have to guess trivia questions, indicating that at this point *Kenkanryū* was seen as wacky trivia; by August 2006, however, even president Roh was expressing his concern over this *manga* (MBC News, 2006). The Korean news media's critique centred on its distortion of history and its anti-Korean stance, stating for instance that it 'reproduced the

unexamined views of Japanese extreme right-wingers and justified the aggression of Japanese imperialism' (Yonhap News, 2006) or that its content was 'full of disdain towards Korea' and its author with a 'narrow-minded attitude towards Korea' (*Sports Today* 2006). Blog sites tended to use stronger language such as 'absurd', 'rubbish', 'immature anti-Korean propaganda' and 'Japanese expression of deep-rooted anti-Korea sentiments'.<sup>3</sup> Many online commentators (both bloggers and readers who posted comments on blogged contents) seemed angry, an overwhelming majority expressing strong and uniform anti-Japan and anti-*Kenkanryū* sentiments, almost always essentialising the entire Japanese population as 'the Japanese'. Some bloggers translated parts of the *manga* into Korean, annotated them and made them available to Korean-language audiences.

Online voices of Korean-language websites were overwhelmingly uniform.<sup>4</sup> When, exceptionally, a lone poster made a comment on a blog site that this kind of online 'war' between anti-Japan and anti-Korea stances was started by Koreans several years ago and that Koreans were 'hot-tempered' and they should look at themselves before judging others,<sup>5</sup> it attracted angry and critical responses that labelled the poster of the comment as 'Japanese' or a 'descendant of Japanophiles'. A similar thing occurred on a couple of other blog sites, too. But none of these angry comments were reported or removed for being abusive or inappropriate, implying a tacit understanding that pro-Japan comments warranted such attacks. Overall, Korean language websites did not stimulate much online discussion on the content of *Kenkanryū*. Most online commentaries simply reiterated the perspectives of the news or blog entries themselves, and often descended into racist comments or nationalistic arguments that were not directly relevant to *Kenkanryū* itself. Judging from the general nature of most of the comments, it seems that few actually had read the comics.

In 2006, two Korean spin-off 'hate-Japan' comics appeared (Yang, 2006; Kim 2006), countering *Kenkanryū* in a mirrored format, covering a wide range of issues from Dokdo to Yasukuni through to cosmetic surgery and sexual morality in Japan. Japanese bloggers quickly offered their amateur and partial translations of these Korean texts, annotations and 'counter-evidence'. Full Japanese translations of both comics were published within a year and sold more copies in Japan than in Korea.

Seong Mo Kim's version, in particular, was published by the same company that published the original *Kenkanryū*, and sold out the first edition. The promotional material on the book-cover declared: 'Finally landed in Japan, this is the anti-Japanese *manga* that's stirred up a sensation in Korea. With this *manga*, you will understand every reason Koreans hate Japan' (Kim, 2007). This marketing blurb was far from the truth; in reality it did not do well in Korea. According to one source, only 380 copies were sold in Korea as opposed to 20,000 in Japan, and the author Kim himself expressed his disappointment with its low sales number in Korea, suggesting that Koreans may be passionate but only with their 'mouths,' and that they make no effort to understand or investigate the anti-Korea wave in Japan or anti-Japanese issues in Korea.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Shinyūsha, the same publisher of the original

*Kenkanryū*, picked up the Korean ‘hate Japan’ comics and had it translated for publication in Japan suggests that it was a marketing ploy. Predictably, more Japanese online discussions of *Kennichiryū* popped up here and there, filled with racist disparagement and vilification of Korea and its anti-Japan attitude. Judging from these online comments and reviews left on Amazon Japan, for example, the readers of *Kenkanryū* and *Kennichiryū* overlapped significantly. Customers of *Kennichiryū* commonly also purchased *Kenkanryū*, and reader reviews of *Kennichiryū* often referred to *Kenkanryū*.

While the above chain of events can certainly be seen as a case of transnational flows and consumption of popular cultural products that originated elsewhere, *Kenkanryū* in Korea and *Kennichiryū* in Japan do not fit the model of localisation or hybridisation in the sense of two cultures mixing. This is because the context in which these cultural products were ‘transnationally’ consumed was the shared framework, or assumption, of ‘we hate them and they hate us’, which reflects both the historical tension and the current connection between the two nations. In the case above, both *Kenkanryū* and *Kennichiryū* were consumed essentially as a symbol or icon, evidence of mutual animosity, providing another instance that reinforced the framework of hostility and distrust, with everyone locked in either an anti-Korea or anti-Japan stance.

### **Motomiya Hiroshi’s *Kuni ga moeru***

Something similar and yet very different happened with our second example, Motomiya Hiroshi’s *Kuni ga moeru*. This *manga* was serialised between 2002 and 2005 in *Young Jump Weekly*, a popular *manga* magazine targeted at young male readers, with a circulation of over a million copies weekly. Its author Motomiya Hiroshi, a 57-year-old veteran *manga* writer and a former dropout from the Self-Defence Force, said that he wrote it because ‘as Japanese, [he] felt compelled to write on why that war started’ (Motomiya, 2004).

What is similar to our first example, in terms of its transnational reception, is that this *manga*, which depicted the Nanjing Massacre, and the 1937 mass rapes and killings of Chinese by Japanese soldiers, led to the Chinese media writing critical commentaries about Japanese rightists and revisionists’ views of history. The media were particularly contemptuous of what they argued were Japanese right-wingers’ attempts to ‘distort the truth in history’ (Chinanews, 2004). A number of mainland Chinese online newspapers reported on the comic, relying on news items from a limited number of sources, the most cited being Chinanews.com and CRI Online. Headlines typically drew attention to Japan’s denial of history by stating, for example, ‘Once again in Japan there are people who deny the Nanjing Massacre’ (Chinabroadcast 2004). Online forums and blog sites reiterated the same point, using stronger and more emotional tones. Like the case of *Kankanryū* in Korea, these tended to quickly redirect their attention from the *manga* itself to larger issues of political tension between Japan and China, Yasukuni Shrine, history textbooks and racial prejudice, suggesting that this *manga* was placed within the larger context of the Sino-Japanese animosity based on historical issues. Just like *Kenkanryū* in Korea, *Kuni ga moeru* in China was ‘consumed’

as a symbol, or icon; that is it represented evidence of Japanese revisionism and unwillingness to face historical truth and war responsibility. What sets this case apart from our earlier example of *Kenkanryū*, however, is that the content of the *manga* itself was far from revisionist or xenophobic. On the contrary, its September 2004 installments (16th and 22nd September, 2004) included some graphic scenes of mass killings, rapes and other atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing, describing the Nanjing Massacre as 'an incident that the Japanese should never forget'. It even contained a rape scene that was accompanied with a recollection of a Japanese soldier: 'those who suffered most were the women... From old women to 12 or 13 years old kids, we just raped them all...' (Motomiya, 2004). The *manga* thus clearly condemned the acts of the Japanese army in Nanjing.

In fact, the reason for this comic finding its way into the international news was that its depiction of the Nanjing Massacre had provoked a series of rightist protests *in Japan*. This was because the manga was perceived to be anti-Japanese, a distortion of historical truths, as perceived by the rightists in Japan. With those two installments, Motomiya consciously chose to intervene into the contemporary controversy over the Nanjing Massacre. Challenging the increasingly vociferous right-wingers who minimised or even deny the Nanjing Massacre, Motomiya sided with the so-called 'progressive intellectuals,' who emphasised Japanese atrocities in Nanjing, calling for facing up to the truth of history, using his trade, the popular media of comics.

Right-wing activists reacted quickly. They formed a protest group and turned up at the head office of the publishing company with loudspeakers. A nationalist satellite TV station, *Channeru Sakura*, ran a critical report. A Tokyo ward assembly member organised an online campaign, collected signatures from conservative politicians, and personally delivered them to the publishing company. In the end, the series was suspended and the author and the editor issued an 'apology', promising deletion and adjustment of the 'inappropriate scenes', including the above mentioned rape scene from the book version.

It was that the publisher caved in under the weight of right-wing pressure and what many saw as 'Nanjing Massacre denial' that became the centre of Chinese media reports. They typically stated that even though what happened in Nanjing in 1937 was indisputable, Japanese right-wing politicians have in the past made several attempts to 'distort history', and that this incident was yet another one of their strategic attempts to distort history. Some news even took this a step further, questioning the honesty of Japan as a nation, stating that they believed Japan was unable to correctly confront their own history (Chinanews, 2004). All in all, the gist of information that was circulated and consumed around the signifier of *Kuni ga moeru*, was a simple message of 'Japan's history denial'. The focus was neither on Motomiya's damning condemnation of Japanese action in Nanjing nor on his use of photographic 'evidence' in relation to the *manga's* truth-claim, a point which right-wing complaints were in fact centered on. Rather, it seems that Chinese media 'read' *Kuni ga moeru* predominantly as an opportunity to highlight Japan's contemporary right-wing influences, and Japan's failure to face history, in particular, in the form of 'Nanjing Massacre denial'.

On the one hand, this seems entirely justifiable. The controversy and the deletion of the massacre scene really did take place, and the decision of the publisher to simply remove any reference to the Nanjing Massacre under revisionist pressure was truly appalling. Therefore, to see this *manga* exclusively in relation to its Nanjing Massacre depiction and the 'censorship' it suffered certainly comes across as natural and transparent. On the other hand, it is also true that such a reading is naturalised and privileged because of the context of the pre-constructed discursive space organised around 'Japan's history problem' and the framing of China as victim and Japan as victimiser. After all, it was the period when the Nanjing Massacre, along with history textbooks and Yasukuni Shrine, became a foundation stone of the Chinese national identity built upon the notion of victimhood, emerging as a major diplomatic controversy between China and Japan. The assigned 'meaning' of this *manga* and the controversy as a symptom of 'Japanese Nanjing denial' was produced against this backdrop. Of course, there is nothing 'wrong' about this, since cultural texts are always read in contexts; we cannot ever face a text free of contexts. But with examples like this, where the context is so overbearing that no other 'reading' seems available inside that pre-constructed discursive space, I do worry that it may foreclose possibilities of engaging with texts differently. With the almost exclusive focus on the 'right-wing attack' and 'censorship', the question of just what kind of story was being told in this *manga* went missing. To sum, Motomiya's *manga* first became controversial in Japan because of its Nanjing Massacre depiction, which generated Japanese rightwingers' responses. Chinese media became interested in such responses. Though there were some 'liberal' or 'left-wing' protests against right-wing protests, too, these did not make it to the Chinese media. Assumptions were then drawn on the comic's content.

I hope to show below that *Kuni ga moeru* is a polysemic text that allows multiple readings. Instead of reading it in the context of '(yet another) Japanese failure to face history', we could read it as an example of 'Japanese' willingness to address war responsibility, or as Motomiya's attempt to incorporate what Susan Sontag has called the 'pain of others' (Sontag, 2004) into the national narrative of 'us' as perpetrators. While this does not mean that the *manga* simply endorses the view of Japan as the victimiser, what makes *Kuni ga moeru* interesting and worth reading is that it contains a perspective that goes beyond the established framework of revisionists versus their critics, or denial versus guilt, that dominates much of the discourse on Japan's war-time atrocities. To put it very simply, the revisionists deny atrocity and argue that Japan fought against Western imperialism in Asia, whereas their critics emphasise Japan's role as the victimisers, insisting that it has to own up to the responsibility and guilt of war-time actions. In Japan, both tended to speak from the position of 'the Japanese' as a unified subject. Even though the collectivity of the nation is no longer taken for granted, when it comes to traumatic war memory, the simplistic framework of 'we'-the victimiser vs 'them'-the victim tends to serve as a major framework.

Despite its iconisation as a 'Nanjing *manga*' both in Japan and China, *Kuni ga moeru* was not a comic book about the Nanjing Massacre. It is a nine-volume



history *manga* that covers the period of Japan's imperial expansion into Asia, portraying the lives of fictional characters caught up in the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. It has a polyphonic structure, where different characters with different perspectives speak for themselves; there is no unified 'Japanese' perspective that is put forward. For instance, both of the main characters exhibit considerable ambivalence, tension and discord with the 'Japanese' identity. The first character Yusuke, a young and idealistic high-level bureaucrat, is critical of Japanese expansion, as he is influenced by a liberal politician, Ishibashi Tanzan, and his idea of Small Japan-ism (*shō-nihon shugi*; a policy to limit Japanese expansion, including withdrawal from Manchuria). And yet, as a bureaucrat, he works to implement Japan's colonial policies. He eventually comes to believe in the ideology of 'Five Races Harmony' (*gozoku-kyōwa*. 'Five races' here refers to Koreans, Manchurians, Mongolians, Chinese and Japanese). The other main character, Yohei, is a son of a wealthy family, but joins the KMT (Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party) and works as the right hand man of KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, embracing Sun Yat-sen's ideal of Pan-Asianism. He initially hopes to create China-Japan solidarity, but ends up joining an anti-Japanese movement and aspires to become a leader of bandits in Manchuria.

Other characters include military figures, politicians, migrant farmers and their wives and children, many of whom are structurally victimisers in relation to the Chinese and Manchurians, but also appear as individuals with their own circumstances, beliefs, and struggles. On the whole, this *manga* neither justifies Japanese expansion in Asia, nor condemns it. Some characters endorse and promote it; others question and challenge it. Many seem to be just living their lives as best they can, while being caught up in history. Each with their own voice, they remind us that individuals and national collectivity do not merge with each other, and that not all Japanese were responsible for the war and its violence in the same way. Chinese characters are also given their own voices, from the top Chinese politicians all the way down to the poverty-stricken Manchu farmers.

This polyphonic structure, in combination with the visual and narrative capacity of *manga* as a medium to encourage virtual experience, sympathy and affect, has the potential to reorganise the imaginary practice of collective memory by setting up an alternative affective economy around the 'pain of others'. In other words, these types of texts have the potential to affect us, to pull us out of our complacency, to emotionally and personally connect with others, and to begin empathic and responsive understanding of past pain suffered by 'them'. This may also allow us to think outside the fixed position of 'us'-the Japanese-the-victimiser versus 'them'-the Chinese-the victims.

I am not saying that such a potential of empathic history and non-nation-centric memory of conflict and trauma is fully realised in this *manga*. There are some limitations. Though the Japanese 'us' in this *manga* appears to be multiple and speak in multiple, often contradicting voices, the victims of the Nanjing Massacre themselves remain voiceless. The visual depiction of the massacre scene is accompanied with the soliloquy of a Japanese soldier, who reflects over the atrocity, and one of the protagonists who arrives after the

massacre condemns and laments the violence in front of the piled up dead bodies. In both cases, the actual speaking is done by the 'Japanese' character. This suggests that the victims are seen and narrated from the perspective of the perpetrators, albeit with a deep sense of regret and self-condemnation. Though other Chinese characters in this *manga* do have voices and interact with Japanese characters regularly, the victims of the massacre scenes do not utter a word. It seems that this limits the *manga*'s potential to promote the readers' identification with the 'pain of others'. It also essentialises the Chinese characters as voiceless victims, or even as a backdrop against which to place Japanese guilt and remorse. In other words, in these specific scenes, unlike in other scenes, both the perpetrators and the victims seem to be eternally fixed in their positions as perpetrators and victims. It remains a story told from the Japanese perspective.

But yet another reading may also be possible. Although this voicelessness can be seen to signify the limitations of Motomiya's *manga*, we can also see it as an ethical choice in not speaking on behalf of the victim. One could argue that giving the victim voices, or making them speak, could be an ultimate form of arrogance and domination. Adorno talked about the limit of representation in the context of the Holocaust. In this vein perhaps it is only ethical to hold on to the position of the perpetrator, and not to assume or pretend that the perpetrator could ever speak on behalf of the victims. Perhaps it is even more problematic to think that 'we' can ever understand, let alone 'represent' the pain of others. Perhaps the only remembering that we can ever do is remembering as the perpetrator, and choose to stay with that position consciously.

While the above is just some possible readings, there is no doubt that *Kuni ga moeru* is a complex text, which has the potential of setting up an alternative affective economy and renegotiating the fixed relationship between the 'us'-the Japanese-the victimisers versus 'them'-the Chinese-the victims. Reducing it to *the* 'Nanjing *manga*' and remembering it merely as a cue to provoke the well-worn tale of 'right-wing pressure' and 'Japanese denial of history' does not do justice to its textual richness. But that was exactly what happened. What became the centre of attention for Chinese media was not its content but the news of its suppression by the right-wingers and revisionists. It was *this* issue, not the content of the *manga* itself, that was relevant and meaningful (in the sense of being instantly recognisable) to the larger context of Japan's 'history problem' and Sino-Japanese tension. It is quite conceivable that if this *manga* were translated into Chinese and became available to Chinese readers, some of them would find in it more complex ideas than 'Japan's failure to face history'. In reality, however, because of the context in which this *manga* was placed, engaging with the content itself would have seemed unnecessary and redundant. In the story of the 'Nanjing *manga* suppression', the events of Nanjing themselves become uncontestable, unquestionable and naturalised, making the reading of the text practically and literally redundant.

### **Conclusion: The tyranny of context**

By using examples of two Japanese *manga* published in the mid-2000s, a time when history and memory were firmly on the political agenda of East Asian nations, I hope to have offered some insights into how the broad, shared context of the unresolved past shape, determine, limit and even prevent reading and consumption of such cultural texts. Cultural commodities that circulate in the increasingly globalised and borderless East Asian mediascape include those with some uncomfortable references to Japan's not-so-cool past. And here, context is crucial. I have suggested that *Kenkanryū* in Korea, *Kennichiryū* in Japan and *Kuni ga moeru* in China were all consumed as symbols within the pre-existing context of Korea-Japan and Sino-Japan tension and conflict. Strictly speaking, they were not even 'read' but merely consumed and appropriated as a sign of mutual hostility, distrust and continuing problems. Their 'newsworthiness' and their 'meanings' were determined by the context rather than the texts themselves.

This was particularly evident in how *Kenkanryū* and *Kuni ga moeru*, despite the opposite vectors of their content, ultimately came to connote the same thing-i.e. Japan's nationalism; Japan's revisionism; Japan's inability to accept historical truth. I am not suggesting that these readings are untrue or irrelevant. But things that are true and relevant can conceal other things that lie behind their 'truths'. I am therefore suggesting that a dominant, pre-existing context (irrespective of its 'truth' status) of this kind may foreclose other possibilities, other texts, other readings and other sensitivities with which the Japan-Korea or Japan-China engagement could be read, located or developed. Overbearing context, even if it is true, important and relevant, may be detrimental to cross-border dialogues, healing and 'moving on' if it traps us in unhealthy dynamics of compulsive repetition or acting out of past trauma, when what we really need might be opportunities for working through the trauma.

As contemporary cultural theory tells us, there are always multiple subjects and multiple meanings; to put it in the terms of this symposium, cultural texts from 'outside' can be used by different 'local' agencies for their own purposes. But few 'cultures' are completely up for grabs; some are more heavily articulated within a context than others are, limiting their free 'use' and open interpretation. While a further study would certainly find some different readings and interpretations of these *manga* in Korea and China from those I have presented here, on the whole, the scope for an 'open' reading with these particular cases seemed fairly limited. What dominated the interpretative framework for these particular *manga* comics seems to have been a desire to produce easily understood ideas about complex issues, the circular logic of 'we hate them because they hate us', and the simplistic but seductive dichotomies of 'us and them', 'right and wrong', and 'good and evil'.

Finally, to get back to the earlier point on the significance of local context and adaptation in contemporary cultural globalisation, let me reiterate that the 'context' that determined and limited the media representations of these *manga* was the historical, geographical, and cultural connections that

characterise East Asia; in particular, the experience and memory of Japan's aggression. In other words, the 'context' of the above cases was not the distance between Japan and Korea or between Japan and China as two separate 'cultures', with clear divisions between the 'origins' and 'destinations', or 'domestic' and 'foreign' environments, but the shared context that connects them. By thus paying attention to connection rather than difference, I hope to have avoided the essentialist understanding of 'origin' and 'adopted home' as two distinctive locations and entities, each with its own 'culture'.

Let us then remember the wisdom of Douglas Adams in *The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy* when he wrote of his seminal creation, the 'Babel fish'. A 'Babel fish' is a little yellow fish that people put in their ears, where it functions as an instant universal translator. That point here is that universal communication, made possible by the Babel fish, did not produce universal harmony. As Adams says, 'The poor Babel fish, by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different cultures and races, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation.' (Adams 1979: 50) I think that today's increasing global connectivity resembles the 'Babel fish' conundrum. If the thoughts that are being communicated themselves are simplistic, closed, or hostile-or if those who 'receive' ideas can only hear hostility and ill-will because of their pre-determined mindsets, then more communication may result in more antagonism, not more understanding. In this regard, we must remember that context determines the message; and that the shared context in East Asia of the legacy of Japan's 'uncool' past is still relevant to today's cultural exchanges, despite the state-sponsored slogan of 'Cool Japan' or an overly optimistic reading of cultural globalisation as a creative and open-ended process of increasing diversity.

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Hereafter, South Korea will be referred to as 'Korea'.

<sup>2</sup>See Sakamoto and Allen (2007) for more detailed discussion of this *manga* and how it became popular in Japan.

<sup>3</sup>'Between *Kanryu* and *Kenkanryu*' <http://kr.blog.yahoo.com/pks13693094/2816>

<sup>4</sup>Some of the blog sites that referred to *Kenkanryu* includes: 'Between *Kanryu* and *Kenkanryu*' <http://www.kr.blog.yahoo.com/pks13693094/2816>; 'Maestro'; 'The Batcave'; 'Hanryubox' <http://www.cafe.daum.net/hanryubox>; Myeong2005's blog

<sup>5</sup><http://www.match.kr.msn.com/channel/index.aspx?trackingid=1002127>

<sup>6</sup>[http://article.joinmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total\\_id=4043716&ctg=17](http://article.joinmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total_id=4043716&ctg=17)

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## Taiko: Tradition and touchstone-Performing a translocated musical form

Ken McNeil

*Kumi-daiko*, the often thunderous spectacular Japanese musical form involving group (*kumi*) performance centering around large traditional Japanese drums (*taiko*), has shown remarkable development in the half century since it was first created. This development is not just in musical scope; following the forming of high profile professional groups there has been a taiko boom in Japan, and there are thousands of performing groups in Japan. More than this, however, taiko has proved to be Japanese cultural form that can survive vigorously outside Japan, and it is now a globalised phenomenon, with groups in virtually every developed country performing to receptive audiences. In this sense, while seemingly a long way off the '*kyūto* (cute)'/*anime* axis, it is undeniably part of cool new Asia. There are now many print and Internet sources of histories of *kumi-daiko* in Japan, North America and elsewhere. De Ferranti (2006) and Johnson (2008), for example, give concise histories (Johnson also gives descriptions of the main instruments used).

There is a growing body of research on the taiko phenomenon. One of the earliest strands of this research looked at ethnic Japanese taiko groups which formed in North America in the late 1960s as a result of contacts between West Coast Japanese immigrant communities and pioneer Japanese *kumi-daiko* players. The role of taiko in creation of immigrant identity is the main focus of these studies (eg: Konagaya 2001, Yoon 2001). More recent work in this strand has widened the focus to include the increasing number of other Asian Americans who have joined taiko groups (eg: Powell 2008). Very recently, Johnson (2012) has addressed this aspect in a New Zealand setting.

The boom inside Japan itself has also received attention. Fujie (2001) contrasts stage performance-oriented groups with more traditional groups; Bender (2005) looks at the aesthetics of taiko and Japanese identity; Creighton (2008) addresses the more general question of how taiko is used to display 'Japaneseness'; and Bender (2010) analyses the modern creation of a now iconic aspect of taiko performance.

There is less research, however, on one significant aspect of the globalised taiko phenomenon, the large number of groups outside Japan with players who are (mostly) not of Japanese ethnicity. Such groups first appeared in the United States at almost the same time as the Japanese-American groups, and there are now hundreds of such groups in North America, their growth fuelled by the boom in Japan. The boom has also fuelled the growth of *kumi-daiko* in Europe and Australasia. Pioneering works on this aspect include those of de Ferranti, who examines the making and marketing of the

professional Australian taiko group TaikOz, and Johnson (2008, 2010), who looks at various aspects of taiko playing in New Zealand.

One of Johnson's (2008) observations is of the negotiation between innovation and authenticity, and one of the aims of the present article is to go in to this a little more. As part of this, the article will look at the question of 'Japaneseness', both as it is displayed publicly by New Zealand taiko groups and as it informs the internal practices of these groups.

The work here is largely from a participant-observer viewpoint, focusing on the group of which the author is a member. This group is Wai Taiko, based at the University of Waikato, Hamilton. It is an open community group that has had more than eighty members pass through its ranks since its formation in 2000, which is an indication of public interest in performing taiko. At any one time it has between ten and fifteen performing members. It performs on average once every two weeks, which indicates the demand for taiko performance, and it also offers public workshops.

The author has been an active member of this group continuously since its formation. At the time of joining he had some musical knowledge, including a basic knowledge of West African drumming, and he joined because of his desire to learn a different, impressive percussion form. His interest in the search for authenticity, a central theme in this article, developed as a result of realising that this seemed to be a far more central issue in translocated taiko than in translocated African drumming. In this sense, it might be better to regard him as an 'observing participant' (Kaminski 2004). As a complete participant, and participating for basically the same reasons as the other members of the group, the author believes that the observer effect in this study is small. Issues arising in participant-observer field work are discussed more generally in DeWalt et al (1998).

For comparison and contrast, the production by another group, Tamashii, will also be noted. This group, based in Auckland, is also very active: it too performs on average once every two weeks and offers public workshops, and it has a strong public relations presence.

### **A brief history of Taiko in New Zealand**

Organised immigrant communities with strong links to Japan brought an early introduction of taiko playing to the North American West Coast and Hawaii. The introduction to Europe, Australasia and elsewhere followed the rise of people-to-people interaction between Japan and the rest of the world, particularly in the 1990s. Facilitated by official and semi-official initiatives such as the JET Programme and educational exchange programmes, this interaction put potential taiko players from other countries in the middle of the rising popularity of taiko in Japan. Many of those who joined community taiko groups in Japan became the core of groups on returning to their own countries. And Japanese taiko players who found themselves in foreign countries through marriage, education or job could become the core of taiko groups in their new country.



This is the situation in New Zealand, which now has at least ten active groups, all amateur (New Zealand has no counterparts of Ian Cleworth and Riley Lee, the co-founders of Australia's TaikOz). Johnson (2008, 2012) gives an outline of the history of these groups. The earliest groups date back to the early 1990s (Kodama, based at the Japanese-owned International Pacific College in Palmerton North; Wellington's Taikoza, founded by a New Zealander who learned taiko in a Japanese traditional rhythm preservation society; and Mukume, founded by a taiko-playing Japanese resident and originally based at a primary school near Wellington). Into the 2000s groups were formed by New Zealanders who learned taiko as exchange students (Wai Taiko, based at the University of Waikato) and other Japanese taiko players who moved to New Zealand (Racco in Rotorua, Raijin in Nelson and Takumi in Christchurch). The increased presence of taiko in New Zealand from the early 2000s has also led to the formation of 'second and third generation' groups (Haere Mai Taiko and Tamashii, both in Auckland, and O-Taiko, based at the University of Otago).

The variety of group names parallels that in other countries (and in fact some of these names are used by groups in other countries). Haere Mai (*mai* 舞 is 'dancing'), O-Taiko and Wai Taiko cleverly refer to the places in which those groups are based (TaikOz is another example). Kodama (木霊 'Tree/Wood Spirit'), Raijin (雷神 'Thunder God') Tamashii (魂 'Spirit') and Takumi (巧 'skill (of a master craftsman)') conjure up primal images and the mystique of 'Japanese spirit', while Taikoza (太鼓座 'Drum Troupe') draws on Japanese theatrical tradition and Racco (an Anglicised spelling of Rakko 楽鼓 'Happy Drum') alludes to the use of taiko in folk festivals.

### **Displaying Japan—but which Japan?**

Taiko performance is firmly historically grounded in Japan, and some taiko players as individuals attach meaning to the importance of displaying Japan (Johnson 2010). However it is soon clear from their publicity and performances that for many taiko groups outside Japan it is not just an individual matter; the display of Japan is part of the fabric of their group existence. In fact, some performances are at Japan-themed events, where the audience expects Japan to be displayed. The question of how to display Japan is intimately tied to the larger question of authenticity, but because it is such an important question, it is addressed with its own section in this article.

The work of Bender and Creighton looks at how Japan is displayed in Japanese taiko performance and publicity, for Japanese audiences. However non-Japanese performing to other non-Japanese are driven by a somewhat different impulse. And while it is agreed that Japan is to be displayed, the question is *which* Japan to display.

How this question is answered is determined to a large degree by the impulses of the influential members of each group. One answer is suggested by the sheer physical size of the drums, the volume of noise they can produce, and the physicality required to play them, which all combine to lend themselves to a powerful 'Japanese mystique' image. One observer has described a performance by TaikOz as having "power, force and the fanaticism of obsessive self-discipline. . . purified by the spiritual demeanor

which gives this a selfless quality” (McCallum 2002, as cited in de Ferrenti). In this, Taikoz is in the company of their kin, the internationally-known Japanese touring groups such as Kodō, Ondekoza and the Tao Drummers, with ruthlessly synchronised energetic high-tempo team work and marathon individual work outs on *ō-daiko* (‘large drum’, actually very large, at 2-3 meters in diameter; played transversely). The mystique is only enhanced by the received lore concerning the training regimes of the Japanese groups.

One New Zealand group that has tended to display the Japan of martial spirit is Tamashii. This is an accomplished group with a repertoire that includes original compositions. It has a strong public relations presence, and a glance at its website ([www.tamashii.co.nz](http://www.tamashii.co.nz)) shows images that fit well with a martial Japan mystique: instrumentation dominated by large *nagadō* (‘long body’) drums, including the first *ō-daiko* in a New Zealand group; performers wearing *hakama*, the long split black ‘skirt’ typically seen in the western kendō practitioners; performers caught in dramatic synchronised poses; a lone woman drummer captured in an iconic pose with two large drums against an ocean backdrop. The group’s performance set is currently entitled ‘Enter the Dragon’ (alluding to 2012 being the Chinese year of the dragon, but nevertheless conjuring up martial images).



Figure 1: Tamashii Concert 2010 programme cover

However, there is another candidate for a Japan to be displayed, found in those western images of that have had the yin of a softer feminine aesthetic to balance the yang of the martial. In a taiko setting, this aesthetic is exemplified in the lilting 6/8 rhythms accompanying festival dancers clad in *yukata*, the lightweight summer kimono.

Wai Taiko is a New Zealand group that has increasingly displayed this feminine Japan. Its initial repertoire was exclusively *nagadō* pieces, and it experimented with costumes that emphasised the disciplined movements of such pieces, at one stage using *hakama* with white jūdō style tops. However, as it became clear that pieces with a festival flavour were not simply endorsed by some iconic Japanese taikog groups, they were positively celebrated by them, there was a shift towards a new image, summarised on the group’s website ([www.waitaiko.com](http://www.waitaiko.com)) as “fun, smiley and dynamic”, rather than simply “dynamic”. The repertoire was expanded to include songs with a strong



*Figure 2: Wai Taiko in performance, using nagadō drums and chappa. Jackets are modelled on happi*

festival, or at least non-martial dynamic, and in order to perform these, instrumentation was expanded to include the more portable instruments described later in this article. And rather than hakama, with its martial associations, the garb for the display of this Japan is modelled on the colourful happi jacket, now virtually synonymous with the fun of a Japanese festival (Figure 2).

Whichever Japan is being displayed, there is a strong urge to educate the audience, noticeably in the groups founded by non-Japanese. That is, groups such as Tamashii and Wai Taiko regard explanation of their performance art as a big part of their role. Their websites have careful explanations of the different instruments, and the history of the drums and their use in *kumi-daiko*. These are also given, in briefer form, in MC announcements at performances and in concert programmes, along with the backgrounds of performance pieces, especially those based on rhythms traditionally associated with particular locations in Japan.

In deciding how to display Japan, groups are already grappling with the question of whether or not what is being displayed is authentic. Similarly, in their role as educators, groups will be looking for authentic explanations for their audiences.

Demands for authenticity in a musical genre arise from the notion that there is some unchanging core of the genre that regulates what is acceptable. This leads to authenticities that, while having some overlap, are in tension: the authenticity sought by historical purists and the authenticity sought by romantics through interpretation of the core. Probably every genre has at some stage been subject to this tension, in which repertoire, instruments, ethnic and class background of performers, costume, and so on come under question (eg: Lindholm 2008).

Often demands for authenticity come from the audience side, but in the world of taiko outside Japan the demands come from the practitioners themselves; while audiences appreciate well-performed taiko as a spectacle, there are few aficionados (hence the impulse to educate the audience). This self-imposed demand can be regarded as originating partly in a kind of insecurity that exists when performing a translocated culture, particularly in the early stages when performers have limited experience: there is security in the knowledge that what one is doing is authentic. The fact that it is the groups founded by non-Japanese which feel most strongly the need to explain their performance art to their audience is one result of this.

*Kumi-daiko* itself has a relatively short history. Nevertheless that history is as long as that of rock music, for example, and it has its antecedents, in the rhythms of local festivals, just as rock has its in African-American and other music of the first half of 20th century and earlier. There is repertoire, and there is lore, the things that inform authenticity. The question is which authenticity is sought by performers of translocated taiko. The author believes that the dominant one is one akin to historical authenticity, but where the performers are separated by spatial, rather than temporal distance from the core of the genre. Essentially, non-Japanese players outside Japan interact with taiko as they perceive it in Japan and decide on what is authentic to them. The following sections will take up this question in more detail.

### **The search for authenticity one: Repertoire**

Repertoire is one of the first things a performance group has to grapple with. The initial repertoire seems to be pieces the group founders learned in their initial experiences of taiko (and the original compositions of the founder in the case of Kodama). In the case of Wai Taiko, these came from the repertoire of the taiko club at the Japanese high school attended by the founders as exchange students; the pieces were essentially traditional rhythms arranged and choreographed to maximise their effect in team performance. When this repertoire needed to be augmented, contact with the International Pacific College group Kodama brought new pieces; some were arranged traditional rhythms and others were original Kodama compositions (As Johnson (2010) has noted, as the first widely performing group in New Zealand, Kodama has been influential. Pieces originally introduced by this group remain even now in the performance repertoire of at least Haere Mai, Tamashii and Wai Taiko).

This is what defined for WaiTaiko, at least, what was authentic repertoire in the initial period: pieces taught by Japanese performers and judged to be suitably effective in performance. Instrumentation was essentially that experienced by the group founders, which was also that used by Kodama: four to six large *nagadō* drums, backed by one or two higher pitched small *shime-daiko* ('rope(or bolt)-tightened drums') whose role is generally that of ornamented time-keeping.

For Wai Taiko, contact with Japanese performers has continued to be the pattern for defining authenticity of repertoire. Contacts with the original Japanese high school club have been maintained, contacts with visiting



Japanese community taiko groups have been made, and there have been workshops with invited and visiting professional players. In other words, taiko in Japan remains a touchstone. The professional players who have given workshops, for example, are all either Japanese, or else non-Japanese with the cachet of association with well-known professional groups of Japan (The professional Japanese players who were the centerpiece of the 2008 New Zealand Taiko Festival described by Johnson (2008) are examples of invited players). In using Japan as a touchstone, Wai Taiko is doing at an amateur level what the professional group TaikOz does: its members have trained individually and as a group with top players in Japan, and have also performed jointly with them.

The repertoire of Tamashii, on the other hand, includes its own compositions. What makes these authentic? Firstly, and this is what authenticity often boils down to, other taiko players generally agree that the rhythms, voicings and choreography give the pieces the feel associated with pieces transmitted from Japan: they have the aura of the core. And secondly, to seal the authenticity, Tamashii's original pieces have Japanese titles. In their most recent public concert, in December 2010, for example, original compositions included Sannin no Yuushi (The Three Warriors (all English translations given here are the ones given in the printed concert programme)), Hime-Daiko (Taiko Princess), Arashi (Storm), Asahi (Sunrise) and Kettou (The Duel), all explicitly linking the drumming with martial images and primal forces of nature. The concert itself was entitled *Tamayura*, also the title of a piece on Kodō's most recent CD, *Akatsuki*. This is an archaic Japanese word that recalls the words *tama* ('gem') and *yuragi* ('swinging', 'swaying') and means 'faint', with the sense of also being subtle, profound. The English subtitle was *Echoes of the Soul* (In comparison, Wai Taiko's most recent public concert, in September 2011, was entitled *Matsuri* ('Festival')). The repertoire of Tamashii parallels those of TaikOz and the major Japanese groups: it has pieces that are arrangements of traditional rhythms, original compositions by non-group composers and the group's own compositions (See de Ferranti on TaikOz' repertoire).

### **The search for authenticity two: 'Wrapping'**

The previous section addressed what could in some sense be called content. This section looks at how this content is 'wrapped' for display, how it is presented. Hendry (1993) has discussed the cultural importance of 'wrapping' and the information it carries, focusing on Japan and looking at language, clothing and so on. In the world of taiko, wrapping could include instruments, costumes, and performance dynamics.

Costume was briefly touched on in the earlier look at the question of which Japan to display, and this hinted how content and wrapping are generally intertwined: an imposing martial-feel repertoire goes with imposing instruments and a correspondingly imposing stage dynamic; a cheerful festival repertoire calls for lighter instrumentation and a lively stage dynamic. This section will pick up costume again, and also consider the instruments; both of these commonly feature in questions of authenticity in musical genres.

The instrument line-up in *kumi-daiko* first transmitted to New Zealand was essentially that described in the previous section: large *nagadō* providing the dominant sound, and one or two *shime-daiko* providing a basic backing (One exception to this is in the group Taikoza, which uses very large rope-tightened drums set horizontally, reflecting the original Japanese influences on the group's founder). The *nagadō* in particular, especially if made the traditional way from a single section of tree trunk, are very expensive (starting at around \$US4,000) for an unfunded community group, and groups like Wai Taiko and Tamashii began with home-made drums using barrels, a compromise in authenticity. There was, however, no compromise in the appearance of these drums: they are double-headed with cowhide heads fixed permanently to the body using large-headed tacks in neat rows around the rims. In Wai Taiko, the desire to have Japanese-made drums remained strong, and this was achieved through purchasing drums with stave-constructed bodies (These drums were developed to deal with the same problem in Japan: there were large numbers of community groups that could not afford drums with bodies made the traditional way).

When Wai Taiko decided to expand its instrumentation, there was the same desire for instruments of Japanese provenance. Again, it was possible to achieve this using instruments produced to suit the budgets of Japanese community groups (Tamashii, however, continues with its 'do-it-yourself' attitude, making its own *ō-daiko* and *katsugioke-daiko* ('shoulder-slung cylindrical drum', described later)).

Costume is an equally important consideration in wrapping. There are several demands here. The repertoire of most taiko groups, along with the instrumentation, emphasises coordinated teamwork, and costume becomes part of this. Costume also tends to match the feel of the pieces performed, as well as enhance the body display that is a taiko performance. Finally, running under all of this is the desire for an identifiably Japanese look.

There are some tensions in all of this. Especially in more 'martial' ensemble performance pieces, costume should not take too much attention away from the instruments themselves, nor from the body dynamics of the performers. De Ferranti describes Taikoza's answer to this: their stage costumes suggest "elements of Japanese historical dress" at the same time as leaving the arms free and this is the approach taken by many groups. Wai Taiko uses short-sleeve jackets that bring to mind the *happi* jackets of festivals. On occasion, to emphasise a Japanese festival feel the group wears actual *happi*. Many groups, including Tamashii, use tops suggestive of lightweight *hanten*, the kimono-style top. The more senior members of Tamashii often wear *hakama*, with their suggestion of the serious business of martial arts. Along with these they wear tops that are based on the *kataginu*, a sleeveless jacket with exaggerated shoulders, worn by Edo period samurai along with *hakama* on formal occasions, again suggesting serious business. Black wristbands are also commonly worn to emphasise choreographed bare arm movements and suggest strength. All of the above is seen in the costume of prominent Japanese taiko players, so Japan is a touchstone here too.

The above discusses the wrapping of the body in taiko performance; to end, it is interesting to note that to wrap up a performance, WaiTaiko thanks the audience in Japanese.

### **The search for authenticity three: Inner authenticity**

Given the physical demands of taiko playing, and how physically impressive accomplished players are, it can be hard not to conflate the acquisition of the musical and physical performing skills (the 'Japanese body') with a 'Japanese mystique' spiritual path. Stories of training regimens of the iconic groups which have now become part of the lore of modern taiko-the marathons of Ondekoza, the apprenticeship system of Kodō and so on-do nothing to discourage this.

Groups such as Tamashii explicitly utilise this mystique in their outward presentation, and Wai Taiko too has repertoire pieces that emphasise 'Japanese body' dynamics. But what of the 'inner world' of such groups? In the search for authenticity is there a conscious linking of taiko training to more formal philosophies, as in the martial arts?

This seems to come down to individuals making their own connections. To one member of Wai Taiko, for example, a person with considerable academic knowledge of Japanese culture, the desired drum sound was that obtained when one put one's whole being into the single perfect strike. However, Wai Taiko makes no attempt as a group to explicitly use such approaches. This can be understood in terms of the reliance on the outwardly-directed aspects of the Japanese taiko world as a touchstone: as de Ferranti notes, modern taiko drumming, created by players not part of any traditional lineage, has no explicit links to formal spiritual philosophies or practices.

That is not to say that New Zealand taiko groups are not touched by Japanese mystique. There has been a strong urge towards the Japanese body, driven by contact, real and virtual, with Japanese taiko players. The perceived superiority of the Japanese body has often been discussed by Wai Taiko members, usually in the context of the physical skills of professional players, but also when the group has had Japanese members.

Such talk often brings up the training regimes of professional Japanese groups, but these regimes can also be invoked as a response to perceived short-comings in players' technical skills (as Johnson (2008) notes, the majority of beginning taiko players in New Zealand are not musicians, trained or otherwise). The context here is that even if their sense of rhythm is still undeveloped, new players invariably want to perform as soon as possible what attracted them to taiko in the first place: 'in the spotlight' parts on the large *nagadō* drums, rather than time-keeping parts on the small *shime-daiko*. Here, the discussion amongst more advanced members turns to the received lore that Kodō, for example, allows new players to play only *shime-daiko* until their skills are sufficiently developed.

The urge to the Japanese body that comes from using Japanese taiko as a touchstone can, however, interact with the insecurity of performing a

translocated cultural form. For example, after watching Wai Taiko members practice a piece, a visiting Japanese professional player candidly told the players to “stop trying to be Japanese, and instead be your westerner selves.” And after another professional player suggested that players’ posture in one physically demanding traditional piece was not ideal, that piece was dropped from the performance repertoire.

While there is an admiration of the perceived ‘inner’ practices of the famous groups (their training regimes and so on), it is accepted that such practices are unlikely to take root in a New Zealand community group. Apart from the fact that almost all members work or study fulltime and don’t have the time for arduous training, the master-apprentice relationship implied in many Japanese training practices are part of a cultural pattern far from that of the west.

Nevertheless, there is a strong urge to create some sort of Japanese atmosphere in Wai Taiko practice sessions, at least. This is done using a *mélange* of devices originating in popular knowledge of martial arts, members’ knowledge of Japanese language and members’ experience of Japanese training settings. Rules for behaviour at practices (not making a noise on drums while explanations are being given, etc.) have been referred to as ‘rules of the *dojo*’, and counting for timing is done in Japanese. There have also been periods where practice sessions started and ended with appropriate Japanese expressions directed at the teacher/trainer (respectively ‘*yoroshiku o-negaishimasu*’ (thank you in advance) and ‘*arigatōgozaimasu*’ (thank you)). The use of these expressions is particularly impressed on the group when it has Japanese visitors. Members who know Japanese also use Japanese expressions such as ‘*yarimashō*’ (‘let’s do it’) and ‘*gambarimashō*’ (‘let’s go all out’) at practices. For some members this is partly a nostalgic recall of their own time in Japan, but overall, it works towards conveying the idea that taiko playing is something different and special.

### **Broadening authenticity**

One upshot of keeping Japanese taiko as a touchstone is that the New Zealand vision of what taiko can be has broadened, in at least two ways. The first is in instrumentation. With the realisation that touchstone groups in Japan also use smaller percussion and other traditional instruments, Wai Taiko members sought instruction in these, and began to incorporate them into performances. These instruments include the *shinobue* (bamboo folk flute) and the hand-held metal percussion instruments, the *chappa* (small cymbals) and the *atari-gane* (struck dish-shaped bell). Also added to the mix was the *katsugioke-daiko* (lightweight rope-tightened shoulder-slung drum-see Figure 3), an instrument whose popularity is a result of modern taiko. Its form and playing style (using both heads) show a strong Korean influence. The pieces which incorporate these instruments reflect their portability, and have a lighter, more mobile dynamic: the instruments facilitated the evolution of Wai Taiko’s display of Japan described in the previous section.





Figure 3: Publicity shot for Wai Taiko's 2011 concert *Matsuri*. From left: Yukata, demon, katsugioke-daiko

The second way the vision has broadened is in the development of confidence to embrace innovation in the music. Taiko in Japan is not static (Fujie discusses innovations made as taiko became a performance art), and third-generation performers, while still respecting the canon of traditional rhythms, continue to bring innovation to the art. The piece *Yaraiya* ('Shall we do it?') taught by invited Japanese professional players to those attending the first New Zealand Taiko Festival (see Johnson 2008) exemplifies this. The piece, composed by Yamauchi Riichi, one of the invited players, is in brisk 6/8 time with a swing feel. While the swing feel is common in traditional rhythms and the piece contains phrases identifiable with those in traditional rhythms, the unusually staccato rhythms are peppered with triplets, not found in traditional rhythms, and are underpinned by a swing version of the Afro-Cuban 3-2 clave pattern played on the bright red shoulder-slung bass drum associated with Okinawan *eisā* folk dances.

### **Bringing it All Back Home**

In New Zealand, taiko groups take on the display of Japan as an important role. If such a group should perform in Japan, what then could it display there? This is the question that faced Wai Taiko when it decided to go to Japan in 2010 to give members an opportunity to experience taiko in its cultural home. There, the group met with community taiko groups, participated in workshops, performed at a large festival, and performed with professional players who had earlier come to New Zealand. The trip climaxed with a Fringe Stage performance at Earth Celebration, the annual festival hosted by Kodō at its home base on Sado Island, regarded by many taiko followers as the 'Holy Land' of taiko.

There was much discussion on what performance pieces should be played to Japanese audiences, especially since some of those audiences would include taiko players. There was general agreement that there would be little meaning in performing the traditional pieces (or cover versions of very popular modern pieces) in the repertoire; these are so well-known in Japan that their performance would have to be spectacular to make any impression at all. This left the original pieces, composed and taught by visiting Japanese players, from which were chosen a number of pieces judged to be novel to a Japanese audience. In other words, when it came to deciding what should be performed in the cultural home of taiko, innovation won out over tradition.

Innovation was to have a much stronger showing than just this, though. While Wai Taiko members felt they couldn't display Japan in Japan, they did feel that they should display New Zealand. A deeper discussion of this lies outside the scope of the present article, but the dilemma it faced was one that has long faced non-Maori New Zealanders: New Zealand is a new country, and the majority of the population is not indigenous. What exactly is New Zealand culture, and how could it be displayed? Wai Taiko's solution was one used by other New Zealand performing groups: it co-opted elements of the indigenous culture, composing a drum piece to be played in combination with a poi and staff performance developed in collaboration with a Maori supporter of the group (Figure 4). According to Wai Taiko members, this piece received easily the most audience interest in Japan (Asia:NZ 2010). This fusing of taiko and Maori performance art parallels fusion taiko performance that occurs in Japanese taiko groups. One internationally known Japanese group, Drum Tao (then known as the Tao Drummers), for example, composed a piece influenced by Maori culture (and titled 'Maori') after performing in New Zealand in 2006 (Allen 2010). Unlike Wai Taiko's poi piece, Tao's piece shows the influence of the haka, reflecting that group's increasing emphasis on projecting a more martial image.



*Figure 4: Wai Taiko members prepare for a performance of taiko-Maori fusion piece Waikato Awa at Earth Celebration 2010*

## Conclusion

Taiko is now firmly established in New Zealand as part of the global boom in this modern Japanese performance form. This article has looked at some of the practices and production of two groups in particular whose members are mostly not Japanese, and noted the strong urge to display Japan, each in its own way. There is a strong desire to be authentic in this display, and taiko in Japan remains a touchstone for the defining of authenticity.

As practitioners have gained confidence, New Zealand taiko has moved beyond its early rather constrained delimiters, and there has been an evolution in terms of what is viewed as musically authentic. This evolution is recognition, conscious or not, of the innovation that continues in Japanese taiko.

Experiments such as that of Wai Taiko's taiko-Maori fusion parallel the fusion increasingly seen in taiko in Japan, and are part of the beginning of incorporation of the local into taiko at the same time as it continues to globalise. In the tension between 'traditionalism' (albeit a changing one as Japanese taiko evolves) and innovation, the pull of the 'traditional' is still strong in New Zealand taiko. However, with the increasing number of very proficient local players and increasingly confident composers, the development of a more distinctive New Zealand taiko is something to look forward to.

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## **Post-colonial nation-building and the politics of popular culture: Korea's ban on Japanese popular culture and the *hallyu* phenomenon**

Changzoo Song

### **Introduction**

Modern Korean nationalism is strongly based on Korean resentment towards Japan's colonial rule (1910-1945). Colonial rule was painful for Koreans, not only because of the political oppression and economic exploitation they experienced under Japanese rule, but also because of Japan's total assimilation policy in which Japan intended to eradicate Korean culture, language and identity. In addition, the national humiliation that Koreans suffered was especially strong due to the traditional Confucian-based sense of cultural superiority that Koreans had toward the Japanese. Until the 19th Century Koreans viewed Japan as a culturally inferior neighbour, and this self-imposed sense of superiority undoubtedly aggravated the bitterness of the colonial experience (Chung 1995: 38).<sup>1</sup> This, together with the Japanese oppression of Korean culture, language and identity, made Koreans' experience of the colonial rule particularly painful. At the same time, many aspects of Korean life were heavily Japanised under such a policy.

After the Liberation in 1945 a new cultural policy to regain Korean culture and identity was inevitable. After the initial settling period under the US Army Military Government (1945-1948) the First Republic under the leadership of Syngman Rhee started its anti-Japanese cultural policy. For most of the Korean elite in exile who had returned to a liberated Korea from overseas, where they had fought for Korea's independence, Koreans looked heavily 'contaminated' with Japanese culture, and it was imperative to 'cleanse the national soul' and re-establish the national spirit and vigour by eliminating Japanese traits from Korean culture. This was commonly perceived both by rightist and leftist elites of the time. Therefore, the Korean government tried to remove Japanese colonial legacies from the daily life of Korean people and the South Korean government set up the importation ban on Japanese popular cultural products.

As with the cases of most post-colonial states, however, abolishing colonial legacies and severing the long cultural ties with the former colonial master did not prove easy for Koreans. It was particularly difficult because of the complexities of the colonial experiences and the manifold changes that Koreans underwent during the colonial period. As Japan's colonial rule of Korea coincided with the modernisation of Korea, the traditional life of Koreans was changed and modernised during the colonial rule (Shin 1999; Cumings, 1997: 148-54). In particular, the Japanese colonial education undergone by the new generation of Koreans had lasting impact for their lives.

This was the background of the importation ban on Japanese popular cultural products in Korea, when such a policy was adopted soon after the new government was established in South Korea. The same policy continued for the next fifty years until the 1990s, when the Korea-Japan relationship

changed substantially. Compared to five decades ago South Korea was much more globalised in its culture, politics, and economy by the 1990s. It was then that the importation ban on Japanese popular culture was reconsidered, and in 1998 South Korea began to lift the ban gradually. Six years later, in 2004, the ban was totally abolished and Japanese popular culture products such as films and popular songs could be imported to South Korea.

South Korea's policy of banning the importation of Japanese popular culture and its subsequent decision to lift the ban provoke some thoughts on post-colonial nation-building in developing countries and cultural globalization. Did Korea's ban of Japanese popular culture help its post-colonial nation-building? Does the liberalisation of cultural imports from Japan mean that Korea has finally reconciled with their colonial past? As the modernist theorists on nationalism argue (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983), the post-colonial Korean state needed to build a modern nation by creating national culture, which was promoted by nationalist education. Certainly, Korea's nation-building was not from scratch and the country had enough nation-building resources including long history and shared language, the so-called 'proto-nationalism' resources (Duncan 1998).

Based on these questions, this paper discusses the effects and meanings of Korea's ban on importing Japanese popular culture into Korea in the light of Korea's post-colonial nation-building process. In so doing, the paper will also assess the ban in terms of its political, economic and cultural effectiveness. It then analyses the results of the lifting of the ban, considering the rise of *hallyu* phenomenon of the last decade.

### **The Japanisation of Korea under colonial rule**

To start the discussion we first need to look at the Japanisation of Korean culture and society during the colonial period. In addition, we also need to consider the continuing legacies of the colonial rule in Korea in the post-colonial era when Korea pursued nation-building. These are related to the assimilation policy of Japanese colonialism.

To understand the Korean desire for national 'soul cleansing' and the ban on Japanese popular culture in the post-colonial period, one needs to consider the unique cultural policy that Japan pursued in Korea. Unlike the colonised peoples of other Asian and African countries under Western rule, Japanese colonial rule purported to assimilate the Korean nation into the Japanese nation. From the early stage of their colonial rule Japanese historiography was designed to rob Koreans of their historical pride and was systematically imposed through a colonial education system (Cumings 1997; Lee 1984). After the late 1930s, when Japan invaded China, the Japanese colonialists intensified the assimilation policy and forced Koreans to abandon Korean culture and identity and to assimilate into Japanese culture and identity instead. With the theses of *naisenitta I* (內鮮一體) and *nissendosoron* (日鮮同祖論), which claimed that Japanese and Koreans share the same ancestry and therefore are one race, Koreans were forced to identify themselves with Japan. Korean language was prohibited in public life, and Koreans had to adopt Japanese names.



This assimilation policy was applied to the religious life of Korea as well and as a result Japan's state religion, Shintoism, was forced on to the population. The Japanese built Shinto shrines all over Korea throughout the colonial period. A German geographer who visited Korea in the early 1940s reported just how many Shinto shrines were there at that time:

Korea in the 1940s had many Shinto shrines, approached by straight roads lined with cherry trees and stone lanterns. The biggest shrine was to the legendary founder of Japan, *Amateratsu*, and the Meiji Emperor; called the *ChōsenJingū*, it sat on South Mountain in Seoul. There were 58 *jingū* in all, and 322 smaller shrines around the country, plus 310 prayer halls (Lauten 1945, quoted by Cumings 1997: 182).<sup>2</sup>

Koreans were also forced to install *kami-dana*( 神棚), a miniature household altar for a Shinto deity, in their homes. Research conducted jointly by Korean and Japanese historians in the early 1990s on the island of Kōmundo, Chōlla Province, involved interviewing elderly people who lived during the colonial period, and showed more evidence of forced assimilation of Koreans by the Japanese. The research revealed an aspect of Japan's systematic assimilation policy during the colonial period:

One peculiar thing about the Shinto worship in Chōlla Province was that small Shinto altars (*kami dana*) were required not only in Japanese homes but also in Korean homes. To inspect (if Koreans had followed orders), Japanese officials would visit every house once a week. All the villagers installed the altar because of the enforcement (Choe 1992: 71).

Maybe the great majority of Koreans did not want to follow such policies even though they were required to do so. However, Japan's assimilation efforts in Korea were successful to a great degree and their legacy was very powerful as they were methodically carried out through education as well as daily administration. In the language area, the assimilation level was particularly high and the great majority of Koreans spoke Japanese in public life. Such total assimilation was described as a 'national annihilation policy' (民族抹殺政策) by Korean nationalists.

Meanwhile, during the colonial period Koreans largely adopted things Japanese, sometimes with resentment but sometimes with respect as Japanese culture was seen as 'modern' and 'advanced' while Korean tradition was considered 'old' and 'backward.' In a sense, Japanisation and modernisation were always intertwined in colonial Korea. As historians argue, it is not an easy task to discern Japaneseness from modernity in colonial life in Korea where western modernity was introduced by the Japanese through colonial rule (Shin & Robinson 1991; Armstrong 1997). In this process many Koreans eagerly learned modern technologies from Japanese and even collaborated with them. Recent research sheds new light on these aspects of colonial life in Korea; and one example is the work of Korean film producers during this period. The small number of Korean film producers during the time, especially after the late 1930s, functioned as key figures in co-production of propaganda films that were designed to glorify loyalty to the Japanese Empire (Yecies & Shim 2011). For Korean nationalists, discussing the modernisation

of Korea under Japanese colonial rule is not a very comfortable issue as they view Japanese colonial rule as conquest and exploitation. Cumings reiterates such a chasm between viewpoints by pointing out that for Koreans it was 'colonialism' while for Japanese it was 'modernisation' (Cumings 1997: 149).

With such an intensive assimilation policy by Japan, had Japanese rule continued a few more decades, Korean identity would have been seriously weakened if not totally obliterated. Indeed, the possibility of identity loss had been a serious concern for some Korean nationalists during the colonial period. It is not strange that some of the popular novels and films in the post-colonial era deal with the scenarios of the continuation of Japan's colonial rule and Koreans' loss of ethnic identity as a result. One such nightmare scenario was shown in a Korean film *2009 Lost Memories* released in 2002. It was based on a novel, *Pimyŏngŭl Chajasŏ* ("In search of the Epitaph"), by popular novelist Bok Gŏil. This film deals with an imaginary situation where Korea is still under the rule of Japan in the 21st century and Koreans do not have a separate national identity. The story begins with the 1909 assassination of Prince Itō Horobumi, former Japan's Resident-General in Korea and former Prime Minister of Japan, in Harbin (northern China) by a Korean soldier, Ahn Chung-gŭn. In the film version Ahn fails in his attempt to assassinate Itō that year and later Japan wins the Pacific War. Thus Japan's colonial rule of Korea continues to the twenty-first century. In the story, Koreans in year 2009 barely have a national consciousness and believe that Koreans and Japanese are one nation, as was intended by the above-mentioned policy of *naisenittai* during the colonial period.

However extreme it may sound, Koreans also popularly believed during the colonial period that the Japanese took various material and spiritual measures to repress the spirit and vitality of the Korean people and their land, so that the Korean nation would be weakened and ultimately destroyed. For example, it was said that Japanese built the Japanese Government-General Building in front of the Korean King's palace, so that the new building would weaken the Korean spirit and vigour.<sup>3</sup>

Considering all these facts, perceptions and imaginations, it is natural that the nationalist leaders of the newly independent Korea, including Syngman Rhee and his successors in South Korea, and Kim Il Sung and his successors in North Korea, tried to abolish Japanese legacies from every aspect of Korean life. These included removal of Japanese vocabulary from the Korean language and removal of material legacies of colonial rule -- such as the Government-General building which was demolished in 1995.<sup>4</sup> This was considered an essential process for the re-establishment of the national spirit and vitality.

### **The continuing legacy of Japanese culture in post-colonial Korea**

Nevertheless, the deeply Japanised Korean life did not change quickly after the liberation. Certainly, Japanese Shinto shrines were destroyed and so were other prominent symbols of Japanese imperialism in Korea. However, more subtle forms of Japanese cultural practices learned through the colonial period continued into the post-colonial era, especially in language and popular



cultural life. For example, the most popular card game in Korea, *hwatu*, is enjoyed widely in Korea, but not many people knew its Japanese origin (*hanafuda* in Japanese) until recently. Koreans also enjoyed singing Japanese songs and they continued the habit in private life despite their apparent resentment of Japanese colonial rule.<sup>5</sup>

From a nationalist perspective, 'cleansing' Korean souls from the 'pollution' of Japanese influences was an important task for the nation-building project. The first Minister of Education in South Korea, Ahn Ho-Sang (1902-1999), who studied philosophy at Jena University in Germany, was in the front line in this movement. As soon as he was appointed as the Minister of Education, Ahn supported the Hangul Only Act (1948), which stipulated that only Hangul would be used in official documents while Chinese characters could be inserted in parentheses only if necessary. He also included the *Tangun* myth, in which Tangun originated from the Heaven and became the progenitor of the Korean nation, in Korean textbooks.

Such nationalist leaders of Korea, even though some of them were closely connected to the colonial authorities during the colonial period, tried hard to abolish the traits of Japaneseness in the daily life of Koreans, which was a necessity for their nationalist legitimacy as well as for nation-building. For example, there was an on-going movement to remove the use of Japanese words from the Korean language, which included the 'Purification of National Language Movement' (*Kugŏ Sunhwa Undong*). This movement was to remove Japanese vocabulary and expressions deeply embedded into Korean language life. It began after the liberation in 1945 and continued until recently. The South Korean government established special offices to find Japanese words and expressions in Korean language use and to replace them with proper Korean words and expressions. There were also other movements that were intended to remove Japanese cultural traits in daily lives of Koreans. It was from this background that the South Korean government discouraged the practice of Japanese language and culture and launched the policy of banning importation of Japanese popular cultural products after 1948.

Despite the official ban on many forms of Japanese popular culture, however, there was a constant inflow of Japanese popular culture products both legally and illegally. First of all, certain Japanese cultural products were freely imported or allowed to be consumed by Koreans without revealing their origin. Comic books and animations for children were in this category. Japanese animations were the most popular programmes on Korean TV ever since TV was introduced in Korea in the mid-1960s. In fact, almost all animations shown on TV in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s were Japanese. For example, popular animations such as *Marine Boy*, *Golden Bat*, *Astroboy*, *Tiger Mask*, *Mazinga Z*, *The Galactic Railway 999*, that Koreans grew up with through the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, were Japanese, even though most Korean viewers were not aware of this.

Illegally imported Japanese popular culture products and TV programmes were widely copied by Koreans. In particular, Japanese comic books (*manga*) were copied by Korean cartoonists. Comic books based on Japanese

animation programs were widely available. Many comic books in Korea from the 1960s up to the 1990s were either direct copies or imitations of Japanese originals. In both cases the Japanese origins were kept secret and most consumers did not realize they were Japanese. According to surveys in the mid and late 1990s, more than 75 per cent of comic books sold in Korea were Japanese (*Time Magazine* May 3, 1999 and *The Economist* 1994 April 16).

The *enka* style of Japanese popular music was widely imitated by Korean singers. Japanese popular magazines such as *Non-No* were also imported and imitated. In the 1970s, after TV became widely available in Korea, viewers in the Busan region, close to Japan, regularly watched Japanese TV programmes. Colour TV programs were not available in Korea until 1980, and people preferred Japanese programmes to Korean ones due to the advanced technology and diversity of Japanese TV. Such an imitation of Japanese culture has been criticised by Korean critics and consumers, but the practice continued.

In addition, the importation of the classical and high culture of Japan has never been restricted in South Korea. Japanese literature, fine arts and books were freely imported and consumed among Koreans. Japanese language is popular among young Koreans and most universities in Korea offer Japanese language and literature programs. Furthermore, the post-colonial economic development of South Korea was very much the result of the utilisation of Japanese technologies and capital. In its effort to industrialise, South Korea modelled itself on Japan especially in the initial stage of its economic development. Thus the impact of Japanese culture continued in post-liberation Korea.

### **The ban on Japanese popular culture: Korea's cultural revenge and post-colonial nation-building**

As stated above, South Korea's ban on Japanese popular culture was due to the total assimilation policy of Japan during the colonial period. It was also designed to build a new nation after the liberation, which required building a new national culture. That was why the government banned Japanese cultural legacies while promoting Korean cultural heritage in daily life. Banning the importation of Japanese popular cultural products in Korea<sup>6</sup> was an act of revenge for the colonial government's cultural oppression.

Such a policy to ban Japanese traits in Korean language and culture often took an extreme form. One example was Yi Mi-ja, a popular singer who was considered the 'Queen of popular song' in the 1960s. In 1972 Yi Mi-ja was accused of imitating Japanese *enka* style, and all her songs were prohibited on the grounds that they were 'Japanese style' (*waesaek* 倭色). Needless to say, this was a big shock to her fans. As her songs were prohibited, she was not allowed to sing in public and her songs were circulated only in the black market. Later, in the 1990s she came back to the stage and sang the songs that had been forgotten for more than twenty years. Her songs quickly regained popularity amongst the elderly and middle-aged.

The heavy-handed policy of the South Korean government in controlling the popular culture of the time was also to oppress any cultural trends that might cause political resistance to the authoritarian rule of the country. For example, it was not just Japanese popular culture that the authoritarian South Korean government prohibited. Through the 1960s, 70s and 80s the government controlled any popular culture products that allegedly might harm 'sound customs and life' of Koreans. The regime inherited the so-called 'prohibited songs' (*geumjigok*) from Japanese colonial rule. Much of this, however, was to oppress anti-government movements, which were on the rise in the last phase of the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. Popular songs that were critical of the current society and government were also prohibited. Especially in the 1970s, the Yushin era<sup>7</sup> government prohibited many popular songs for their self-defeatist, decadent, and critical quality. In 1975 more than 200 songs were banned. They included both the works produced by musicians and writers who went to North Korea and numerous Western popular songs. For example, Bob Dylan's *Blowing in the Wind* was prohibited because of its anti-war content. Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* was also on the list of prohibited music due to the use of 'murder' in the lyrics. In the 1980s even anti-Japan songs such as *Tokdonŭnurittang* ('Dokdo is our territory')<sup>8</sup> were prohibited by the government because of diplomatic concerns. Such heavy-handed policy was abolished only in 1996 through the struggles of artists, musicians and civil organisations.

In 1997 the ban of a film co-produced by Korean and Japanese companies, *The Revelation of Love* directed by Kim Su-yong, became a big scandal. This was the first film ever made jointly by Koreans and Japanese after the colonial rule. The film is about the life of a philanthropic Japanese woman Tauchi Chizuko who raised more than 3,000 Korean orphans. It was based on her biography written by her son (from her Korean husband Yoon Hak-ja). The film was neither pro-Japanese nor particularly 'Japanese' in its style. Nonetheless, the film was prohibited from showing in South Korea simply because it was funded by a Japanese company and acted by Japanese actors, even though it was directed by a Korean film director. When this film was banned in 1997, it brought a lot of public debate and there were strong calls for the policy of banning Japanese films to be re-considered. For example, a newspaper editorial urged the government to reconsider its strict policy regarding Japanese films and other popular culture products (*Munhwa Daily*, September 11, 1997).

The old generation's conscious hatred of Japanese culture based on their memories of Japan's past atrocities did not stop younger Koreans from preferring Japanese products, from stationery to clothes. Thus, there was a plethora of Japanese products in Korean markets by the 1990s. Japanese products were not just loved for their utility value. With their Asian flavour, Japanese popular culture products tend to be more appealing to Koreans than American or Western examples. They especially appealed to young people. For example, Hello Kitty dolls are a comforting object that most young Korean girls cherish, as occurs elsewhere in Asia. Hello Kitty dolls and symbols in stationery goods, shirts, and shoes for girls have been and remain very

popular. The same is true for Japanese comic books, popular songs, music and films.

As stated above, the policy to ban Japanese popular culture was both to get revenge on Japan for its harsh colonial rule and to 're-nationalise' Korean people and culture, which would also integrate Koreans under the banner of nationalism. However, by the 1990s there was a wide gap between popular practice and government policy and increasing numbers of Koreans began to question if the importation ban on Japanese films, songs, games, and comic books was really reasonable.

### **Lifting the ban: Globalisation and politics of popular culture**

Although the first step towards lifting the ban was implemented only after 1998, such a scheme was first discussed by the Korean government in the early 1990s. In 1994 Japan and South Korea started negotiating and the South Korean Ministry of Culture and Sports proposed a gradual lifting of the ban.<sup>9</sup>

However, this was not implemented due to the rising 'rightism' in Japan and the adverse public opinions of South Korea. Several years later, President Kim Dae-Jung, who took power in the end of 1997, removed the fifty-year-old ban in October 1998. Kim's government set up four stages for the opening of the South Korean market to Japanese popular culture, and in that month South Korea and Japan declared the 'New Partnership for the 21st Century'. For the first time since Korea's liberation, Japanese films (only the ones that are awarded at the four major International Film Festivals), comic books, and comic magazines were allowed to be imported. Also Japanese songs were also legally performed in public in South Korea. The opening process, however, was not smooth. It was halted completely from mid-2000 to mid-2001 when rightist history textbooks were adopted by some schools in Japan. Nonetheless, the road to lifting the ban was clear and by early 2004 the lifting was completed. The Japanese sumo wrestling show in Seoul in February 2004 was a symbol of the new era.

Some important developments in the international and domestic environment were behind this lift of the ban. First of all, the policy change occurred during a general trend towards greater globalisation and free trade. Due to its GATT obligations, South Korea had to respond to the pressure from the international community to liberalise its market.

However, external pressure was not the only factor. There was also a need for the South Korean popular culture industry to develop its market outside Korea. As the popular culture industry grew in South Korea, it became necessary to tap other countries' markets. South Korean popular culture industries looked for bigger markets outside of Korea, particularly in Japan whose popular culture market is the second largest in the world, after the US. In fact, the flow of culture in Asia was becoming more multi-directional and increasingly diverse.

Another factor behind the lifting of the ban was the fact that controlling the flow of cultural products was technically no longer effective. With the rapid development of communication technologies such as satellite TV and the internet, the ban was losing its effectiveness. As mentioned earlier, Korean viewers in areas such as Busan had access to Japanese TV programs through satellite dishes and they had been watching Japanese TV programs for a long time. In addition to the existing practice of smuggling Japanese popular cultural products, now films and dramas could be easily copied on videotapes or digitally, and Japanese pornographic products especially were widely available on the black market in Korea. In the case of music, illegal copying was common and, in particular, various Internet services virtually nullified the ban.

There was also the growing power of the younger generations who are less prone to the anti-Japan stance that came from the hatred based on the colonial past. The young generation in Korea showed more diversity in their tastes and they naturally accepted Japanese popular culture as they did that of the US and other countries. By the 1990s there were many Korean consumers who wanted to enjoy Japanese popular culture. All kinds of popular culture were available to Koreans, but Japanese popular culture was mostly underground.

Further, as mentioned above, there was growing confidence among Koreans in regard to their own cultural and economic strength. By the late 1990s, Korean popular cultural products were gaining popularity in many Asian countries, particularly in China. As Korea gained fame for its economic vibrancy, so did Korean popular culture products. Korean TV dramas, films, popular music, mobile phones, cars, and accessories began to gain popularity among young Asians. In addition, Japanese perceptions of Korea and Koreans improved steadily through the 1990s, and Korean language and food became popular in Japan by the late 1990s. This gave Koreans confidence and lessened objections to the lifting of the ban.

However, when the government's plan to lift the ban was revealed, a heated debate of the pros and cons followed. Many people expressed their worries about the possible disastrous results of the liberalisation policy. Such worries were reflected in various media as well as internet discussion sites. Many people expressed their concerns about economic loss. A discussant expresses the fear of the domination of the Korean culture industry by Japanese popular culture:

Japanese popular cultural market is much better developed than that of Korea. It is much more diverse than Korean popular culture and technically advanced. Therefore, Japanese popular culture will dominate Korean market and that will be an economic disaster for Korean popular cultural industries. The existing trade deficit with Japan will also become much worse (<http://www.naver.com/popup>, accessed on 2 September 2004).

A more serious worry, meanwhile, was expressed regarding Japan's 'spiritual invasion' of Korea. Another discussant argues:

Spiritual invasion is much more dangerous than material invasion. If Koreans accept Japanese popular culture uncritically, Japanese values would penetrate into the minds of the Korean consumers. In another word, there will be cultural dependency, which will develop into capital dependency eventually (<http://www.kin.naver.com/popup>, accessed on 10 September 1994).

Such worries about the possible dependency of Korea on Japan (or even the possibility of re-colonisation of Korea by Japan) were not new. In the mid-1990s, when Korea was forced to open its market for free trade, some Korean intellectuals had warned that Korea might fall under Japan's rule again if it was not careful. A sociology professor at the Seoul National University warned:

Should Korea get lost in the WTO system, she might not become a full colony of Japan, and it will maintain its nominal sovereignty.

Nonetheless, Korea will be totally dependent on Japan not only economically and culturally, but also militarily. Korea will not be able to progress further from its dependence while only dealing with low-value industries such as highly polluting industries and entertainment industries, which Japan would permit Korea to have (Shin 1995: 22).

This argument reiterates the deep-rooted Korean perception of Japan as the nation's enemy.

There also was a more optimistic view on the lifting of the ban. People who supported the opening policy insisted that by importing Japanese popular culture, Koreans would enjoy more diversity. They also believed that this would improve the competitive power of Korean popular culture as Japan imported things Western, but then incorporated them into Japanese culture. Similarly, Japanese popular culture products would help Koreans improve their own culture. They also insisted that the liberalisation would improve the relationship between Japan and Korea, which would attract more Japanese tourists. Indeed, since the early 1990s, Korea has become a very popular place to visit among Japanese. At the same time, by 1992 Koreans had become the most numerous visitors to Japan (*The New Leader* August 10, 1992: 9-11).

### **The *Hallyu* phenomenon**

Immediately after the lifting of the ban, Japanese films gained popularity among Korean film-lovers. Japanese popular songs also attracted Korean fans and so did other cultural products. Nevertheless, there was no 'domination of Japanese popular culture' as many had worried. In fact, the Korean popular culture industry is evidently doing well. For example, Korean TV dramas such as *Winter Sonata* gained unprecedented popularity all over Asia, including Japan. The Korean star Bae Yong-jun (Yonsama) became an idol among middle-aged Japanese women, and the number of Japanese visitors to Korea soared.

Interestingly, the number of Japanese residents in Korea has been increasing continuously since the late 1990s. According to a news report, more than 6,100 unmarried Japanese ladies live in Korea, and they are allegedly allured

by the *hallyu* as they expressed their wish to marry someone like Bae Yong-jun, a famous *hallyu* star (Han 2011).

Today the economic effect of the *hallyu* is a staggering US\$3.8 billion (Heo 2011) and regardless of some earlier predictions, the popularity of Korean popular culture is ever increasing. Recently this phenomenon has been expanded to various Korean idols such as B-Boys, Girls' Generation, and 2PM. The popularity of popular culture also spread to Korean food and an increasing number of foreigners are consuming Korean cuisine all over the world. In addition to the economic effects of the global popularity of Korean popular culture, Koreans tend to feel more proud of themselves, especially in their relationship with Japanese.

What are the reasons that Korean popular culture did so well after the lifting the ban? First of all, it was the competitive power of the Korean popular culture industry. For example, Korean films had a surprising 40 per cent share of the domestic market from 2001 onwards. By 2002, Korean film directors were well recognized at major international film festivals such as Cannes. This was partly thanks to the learning opportunity that Koreans had from the much more advanced Japanese popular culture, which was available even under the official ban.

The *hallyu* phenomenon after the lift of Korea's ban on the importation of Japanese popular culture implies many things. One of the most important implications of this is that even in the popular cultural sector the Export-Oriented Industrialisation (EOI) strategy, which was the beginning of Korea's successful industrialisation, seems to work well, at least in the case of Korea. Koreans controlled the importation of the more advanced and powerful Japanese popular cultural products, and developed their own while imitating and learning from them. Eventually Koreans themselves developed a strong popular culture industry, which they could export overseas. On one hand, Koreans 'cleansed' their culture, and then developed their own unique culture. This strategy might be a model for other developing countries.

For Koreans, Japan has therefore played two conflicting roles in modern history. On the one hand, Japan, as the colonial ruler of Korea, functioned as the 'national enemy', from which Korea had to liberate itself. In this regard, Japan has been the national enemy or the national 'Other' which Koreans had to negate and remove from within their soul and history in order to establish a new Korean nation (Song 2003). On the other hand, Japan, as an advanced nation in Asia, has also functioned as a 'model' for Korea. Here, Japan has been the model for industrialisation and modernisation from which Korea learnt and which it aspired to emulate. Koreans have utilised Japan both as an enemy and model, and successfully imitated and exceeded it at least in terms of popular culture industry.

## **Conclusion**

Koreans resented Japan due to the brutal experience of colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, Koreans adopted Japanese culture and values as a part of modernity. Therefore, Koreans have

both cherished and hated the Japaneseness within their culture and life. After the experience of the colonial policy of national obliteration, Koreans have tried to cleanse Japaneseness from their souls. However, Japanese culture was deeply embedded into Korean life.

In a sense Korea's lifting of the ban on Japanese popular culture products was rather a symbolic gesture. The ban was an attempt to regain national identity and to re-build the nation. Maybe 'cultural cleansing' is a matter for the past in the era of liberalism and globalisation? Liberalisation has been a keyword in the era of globalisation. At the same time, however, national governments try to control the popular culture market for their own national interests. In the case of South Korea, control of Japanese popular culture shows a similar pattern to its economic development: from import-substitution policy to export-led growth. In any case, were not the artificial efforts to control popular culture a political tool that served particular interests?

Koreans are struggling with the ghosts in their own souls and the past: the deep and long lasting colonial legacies that run through the post-colonial history of Korea. Perhaps it is time for both Koreans and Japanese (and other Asians including Chinese) to reach out over the apparent ideological gap and work together to reconcile with their own past: colonialism and the Korean War. The recent trend of cultural exchange within East Asia shows the possibility of regionalism in East Asia. The traditionally hostile relationship between Korea and Japan changed at the end of the twentieth century, with signs of improvement becoming apparent. For example, the 2002 World Cup co-hosted by Japan and Korea is an indication of the improving relationship between the two countries. The omens are that, as far as popular cultural exchanges are concerned, East Asia is moving away from the conflicts and hatred that dominated the region through the twentieth century and moving into a new era.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Chung Chai-sik refers to the traditional Korean feelings of superiority to Japanese, based on Confucian world view, in explaining why Japan has always impressed the Korean people as the primary enemy country. Behind this special anti-Japanese feeling is the Korean attitude of cultural superiority to the Japanese, which is based on the Korean belief in Confucianism and the Sino-centric spatial symbolism and cosmology (Chung 1995: 39).

<sup>2</sup>Cumings quotes this from Hermann Lauten, *Korea: A Geography Based on the Author's Travel and Literature*. Translated by Katherine and Eckart Dege (1945); reprint, Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1988.

<sup>3</sup>Koreans also popularly believe that Japanese colonialists planted iron bars on the tops of many Korean mountains to weaken Korean national vigour and spirit. On May 24, 2012 major newspapers reported that the Korean government made a plan to reconnect the "BaekduDaegan" (the Grand Baekdu Mountain Ranges), which was "disconnected by the Japanese to kill the Korean national spirit" (cf. *Seijong Daily* <http://www.sjdailynews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=7475> accessed on May 25, 2012).



<sup>4</sup>The year 1995 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan (1945) and the South Korean government decided to demolish the building, which was considered the symbol of Japanese colonial rule of Korea.

<sup>5</sup>For example, it was well known that the former President Park Chung-Hee (in power 1961-1979) enjoyed singing Japanese songs at drinking parties with his close aides.

<sup>6</sup>Han (1998) points out that the statement that South Korea prohibited Japanese popular culture is not true on the grounds that Japanese popular culture products have been always popular among Koreans and available to them. He is right in the sense that only certain Japanese culture products were prohibited.

<sup>7</sup>The dictatorial rule by President Park Chung-Hee, 1972-79.

<sup>8</sup>Dokdo is the Korean name of Takeshima, the rocky island in the East Sea (or the Sea of Japan as Japanese call it).

<sup>9</sup>Such events were reported by major international magazines including *The Far Eastern Economic Review* v.157, n.47 (Nov 24, 1994), 114-115; and *The Economist* v.331, n.7859 (April 16, 1994), 94-95.

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# **Herbivorous Boy, *Otaku*, or Petit-Nationalist? Floating Japanese Men, Masculinity and National Integrity**

Keichi Kumagai

## **Introduction**

In this paper, I am exploring recent Japanese sub-cultures with a gender perspective. I highlight the changing roles of men and masculinities within globalisation and try to examine how this shift relates to recent social and political change in Japan, especially concerning a growing sense of nationalism among Japanese youth.

In the process of globalization, men are said to be losing their power and are in crisis (Chant and Gutmann 2000). Flexible capital accumulation through a proliferation of non-regular employment situations leads to a number of unskilled employees earning lower wages that are predominantly allocated to women or immigrants. On the other hand men are losing their status as breadwinners of the family, which necessarily impacts on their own sense of identity and masculinity. In this paper, I present the three research questions:

- (1) What is the background of these changes in men and male identity in Japan?
- (2) What types of masculinity are appearing in Japanese youth and how does this shift relate to recent socio-political change in Japan?
- (3) Are the Japanese men becoming more nationalistic? If so, why they are?

## **Recent Socio-Economic Change and Youth Problems in Japan**

The period from the late 1950s until the 1980s in Japan is defined by high and steady economic growth. In this period, Japanese men devoted their whole lives to the company (Amano 2006). Their working lives even led to “*karoshi*” (lit. death due to excessive work). Such extreme imbalances in the working and personal lives of men were socially mitigated by the continuous support of women. As housewives, women devoted themselves to domestic work and child-care.

Such structures are implicit in the ideological construction of one’s firm as family. A firm has been a distinctive place for Japanese men where they

construct their everyday experience and their prestige as well as their collective identity as men. On the other hand, Japanese women, devoting themselves to domestic work and child care, only could join the work force as part-time workers whose wages are kept low because their income is regarded as only a supplement to a male partner’s regular wages. That is the major gender issue of post-war family model; men as breadwinners and women as housewives. This standpoint, however, as well as the Japanese management system itself, collapsed in the 1990s with the end of the bubble economy and the rising influence of globalism. From the late-1990s, non-regular employment rose dramatically in the Japanese labour market. As

young workers in particular were more likely to end up in non-regular jobs, the Japanese youth faced broad social criticism for “failing” to undertake regular work, and they began identifying with new categories such as ‘the NEETs’, ‘the freeters’, ‘parasite singles’ and ‘hikikomori’, that captured the essence of their experience.

‘NEETs’ (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and ‘freeters’ (free *arbeit*-er or permanent part-timer) are closely related to each other. Both categories connote criticism of a demographic reluctant to find regular jobs in the labour market (Honda and Goto 2006).

The Japanese term “parasite single” (it might sound strange) refers to unmarried young women and men who live with, and are often subsidized by, their parents (Yamada 1999). They are often criticized for being too self-centered and dependent on their parents to make any effort to marry and start a family. The “*hikikomori*” is the youth known for reclusively shutting themselves in at home. The number of *hikikomori* is estimated at over one million (Zielemzinger 2006), a majority of whom are young males. The burden of confrontations with such children falls disproportionately on mothers as fathers are escaping from family affairs, all of which clearly presents a latent gender issue in Japan.

It is noticeable that such criticism of those youth who do not struggle for regular employment and the construction of family originated in their deviation from social and gender norms at that time. Now new gender issues emerged among young men earning low and unstable wages through non-regular employment. They experience difficulty in establishing themselves as ‘men’ because they occupy a precarious position with regard to future prospects (*precariato*), yet all the while they are still expected to abide by gender norms that define men as breadwinners. It is critical to examine how this drastic socio-economic change in Japan may affect the gender identity and behaviour of young men.

### **Emerging New Types of Masculinities among Japanese Youth**

In this paper, I am presenting three clearly distinguishable types of masculinity currently emerging in Japan. They are; *soshokukei-danshi* (lit. herbivorous boy), *otaku* (Maniac, fan, or fetishist) and *petit* (neo) nationalist. I believe these three cover most of the young men’s attitudes and behavior that have recently appeared in Japan.

#### **(1) *Soshokukei-danshi* (Herbivorous boy)**

The term *Soshokukei-danshi* (Herbivorous boy) was first used by Maki Fukazawa in 2006 (Fukazawa 2009). Characteristics associated with herbivorous boys are given as: 1) a lack of active association with women, including through sexual intercourse; 2) a failure to adhere to the “manly” behavior of older generations; and 3) a lack of hesitation regarding engaging in acts considered feminine, such as cooking or eating sweets! The term connotes two things, namely, that: 1) men should be or should have been carnivorous, and 2) women are becoming more carnivorous or men-like.

A bi-annual magazine for herbivorous boys, known as *Hanako for Men*, first appeared in November 2009. The magazine is appreciated predominantly by young men in their 20s and early 30s. Eita, an actor and fashion model famous for his popularity among young men and women, and who is also quite representative of the herbivorous boy aesthetic, was featured prominently in the magazine's first issue.

The total number of pages of the first issue of *Hanako for Men* is 134. Among them 38% are the introduction to, or advertisement (they are entangled) of, new goods; 23% are the guide for restaurants and town walking; 16% are the articles on indoor hobbies such as cooking, *bonsai* or aroma therapy. It is interesting that amongst these figures, only a very few pages of photographs of young women are present, which is unusual in a clearly identified men's magazine. In *Hanako for Men*, the discourses of heterosexuality are either restrained or only slightly expressed.

It is worth noting almost all the articles and photographs present images of domestic space, not only of private homes but also the domestic scene within Japan. There are no articles or photos such as fashion in Italy or adventures in Africa. Instead, the magazine presents its readers with images of domestic comfort and bliss. It is interesting that this image of home is favourably presented in the magazine, which reflects the common aspiration of young men who are tiring of competition, seeking to escape from hard work and be comfortably accommodated in domestic sphere. The idea of domesticity once only related to femininity is now promoting to young men in Japan.



Figure 1

According to this author's interview with a chief editor of the magazine, readers of *Hanako for Men* have an average age of 31.8 years, and the male-

to-female ratio is 7:3. He stressed that though herbivorous boys are often criticized by older generations in Japan for having little ambition, lower spirit, and less communication with superiors, he does value their capacity for displaying tenderness and modesty—qualities which are integral to Japan's cultural tradition. He highlighted that masculine and feminine cultures are both intertwined in the herbivorous boy's character in a way which fittingly reflects contemporary Japan. As he comments, "It's a good thing to talk about flower or moss, besides business.... They get interested something within Japan and rediscovered (that) Japan is a wonderful country..." .

## (2) *Otaku*

The term *otaku* first appeared in the early 1980s and has become increasingly popular in years since. An *otaku* is a person—usually a young, single male—who has become absorbed in Japanese sub-cultures such as animation, manga or computer games. The word *otaku* is a formal term meaning “you” which is used regularly within their community. Certain images of *otaku* stand out within popular culture. It is thought that *otaku* devote their energy and money to a particular set of interests while neglecting their appearance and dressing much like nerds. Conventional wisdom dictates that they are not good at associating with women. Instead they favour (*moe-ru*), imagined girl-like-figures, and animated characters over real ones. The *otaku* phenomenon has just recently swelled to include younger girls and international fans, particularly owing to the popularity of Japanese sub-cultures in foreign countries like France (Kiyotani 1998).

Akihabara, a dense district filled with shops selling computer and game software, is known as “Mecca” for *otaku* men and boys. Not only homemade *otaku* but tourists from overseas together and international fans of Japanese sub-culture are attracted to Akihabara as their special place.



Figure Two

There are a number of 'maid cafés' in Akihabara, one of the new fashions that have been created by *Otaku*. A maid cafe is a typical cosplay (costume play) restaurant which originated in Akihabara at the end of the 1990s. There young girls are costumed as house maids and welcome customers (mainly young men) by saying "Welcome back home master!" This is not caricature but a fictional and exaggerated image of an old-fashioned and colonial home with the hierarchical gendered relationship between master and servant being interplayed within this space, although it is a maid rather than a master or customer who is here taking initiative in the play.

*Otaku* have inspired a thriving new cultural content industry which includes the animation of films and programs as well as the development of computer software. *Otaku* not only consume these products with enthusiasm, some also willingly provide labour to the industry at lower wages. The *Otaku's* preferences in consumption are narrowly-defined and imbalanced; while they spend a lot of money on particular special interests, they refrain from spending on other life expenses. They are keen to communicate with persons who share the same interests but are generally reluctant to work with other people. Rather than constructing relationships in the real world, they tend to prefer expressing their passions in cyber space. They are generally apolitical and isolate themselves from social issues. Discourse that takes place in cyberspace, however, often tend to be laden with extreme and exclusionary tones. Group polarization, also known as cyber-cascade (Sunstein 2001), is frequently witnessed in Japanese internet communities, within which vulnerable and minority groups such as immigrants are fiercely attacked—as are those who have power and vested rights.

It is worth noting that Hiroki Azuma, a critic on Japanese sub-culture, stated as follows:

"Japanese" style of expression and the theme which *otaku* created entangled with the narcissism in the 1980s gave rise to the idea of distinctiveness of Japanese culture and the fantasy of Japan as the leading nation in the world. (2001)

The latter two characteristics suggest that *Otaku* might overlap in some characteristics with the last type of men, the petit-nationalists discussed next.

### **(3) Petit (Neo) Nationalist**

"Petit-nationalist" is the word I picked up from the title of Rika Kayama's book (Kayama 2002). She is a popular psychoanalyst and, in her writing, she highlights the naïveté of a Japanese youth's growing appreciation for things Japanese and refers to this as "petit nationalism". At the same time, she also warns that this sentiment might be mobilized into a more exclusivist nationalistic movement. Generally speaking, it is hard to assert with any certainty that such emotions are not just a part of passing braggadocio triggered by events such as Japan and Korea's co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup soccer game.



While this petit nationalism may be widely shared by youths regardless of gender, some hard-core neo-nationalistic sentiments are spreading more rapidly among young men. The neo-nationalists are by no means one singular, cohesive entity; rather, a wide variety of groups are actually included among them. However, the one thing they all have in common is their ability to relate to and support recent reactionary political movements in Japan.

In the early 1990s, there appeared a series of reflective comments on WWII made by the Japanese government. One is the *Kono's* (chief cabinet secretary's) statement on "*jugun-ianfu*" (comfort women at war) and another is Prime Minister Murayama's statement in 1995 "On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end". Both of these official statements admitted the mistaken national policy and wrong behaviour of the Japanese military force at war and functioned as apologies to the neighbouring East Asian countries. Opposing to this trend, reactionary movements by historical revisionists have appeared in the late 1990s. In 1996, "*Kokumin no Yudan*" (Negligence of the Nation) was published by the historical revisionists (Nishio 1996) and they established "the Society for History Textbook Reform" the following year. These movements, supported by the neo-conservative faction of the Liberal Democratic Party and the right-wing mass media such as *Sankei shinbun*, have successfully framed the neo-nationalistic sentiment as the "right way".

In 1999, in the same year as The Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society was established, Shintaro Ishihara, who was once a novelist and was well known for his militaristic attitude together with anti-feminist behaviour, became the governor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. In 2001, Junichiro Koizumi's Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) government started and lasted until 2006. They have in common their populist attitudes and their neo-nationalistic sentiment, both of which have been strongly supported by the Japanese youth.

### **Koizumi's government and his attitude**

It should be noted that Koizumi's government was the one responsible for effectively pushing privatization and deregulation in the early 2000s, justifying this with forceful slogans of structural reform for the sake of Japan's political economy in an era of globalisation. He lifted restrictions against corporate hiring of temporary employees in 2004. This almost immediately triggered a dramatic increase in non-regular workers who, by the nature of the terms of their labour, are deprived of access to a fair safety net in Japan.

Ironically, Koizumi's government gained enthusiastic support from youth because of his overt assertions that he would destroy vested rights including those of public servants, the national Post Office bureau and the LDP itself (which he actually did). His overall stance and populist performance were also appealing. He displayed his nationalistic attitude for the world to see, such as when he insisted on visiting *Yasukuni* shrine (a religious symbol of World War II) despite strong objections by the Korean and Chinese governments. The spectacle created a fantasy for younger generations where Koizumi's boldness in the face of controversy painted a picture of nationalist strength and pride—all which succeeded in diverting their attention from their own hardships of youth.



In 2009 the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took over as Japan's ruling party replacing the LDP which had held the country since 1955. This should have brought the possibility of change in the form of greater equity and justice, however, which still remain uncertain promises. After Koizumi, 6 prime ministers (3:LDP, 3:DPJ) appeared during five years; all have been short-lived and have not gained much popularity.

### **Yoshinori Kobayashi's "Gomanism Sengen"**

The series "Gomanism Sengen" (lit. A Declaration of Arrogance) is one of the most popular manga (comics) in Japan drawn by Yoshinori Kobayashi. The artist published over 15 volumes under this title alone and each has been reprinted well over several hundred thousand copies. Each issue in the series presents the voice of Kobayashi as he narrates his personal views on a variety of social issues. His tone is both frank and aggressive, which is popular among younger generations who did not experience the war. In the early volumes, he criticizes those in power such as the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare at a time when an incident involving the spread of HIV-AIDS through contaminated blood products came to light, as well as the *AumShinrikyo* cult, later responsible for a terrorist act which killed numerous people. In subsequent issues, he goes on to fiercely criticize Japanese left-wing groups (*sayoku*), Korean *Jugun-Ianfu* ("comfort women", or women used as sex slaves during WWII), and also the Korean and Chinese governments which, he states, have simply been trying to frame Japan for war crimes and thereby humiliate its nationhood. He concludes that the Second World War (referred to as the Great Asian War) was a war of reason and justice for the Japanese and that the soldiers who died in the war should be remembered with respect and not put to shame.

### **Yoshinori Kobayashi's "Gomanism Sengen":**



- ▶ *"Japan was the only one nation who could fight with the Western countries in the era that other part of East Asia was totally colonised.."*
- ▶ *"The understanding of Great Asian War (WWII) has been wrongly coloured in self-criticism (jigyaku-sikan) of Japan...but it was the most sublime warfare man has ever had..."*

These sentiments and statements are not uncommon among Japan's older generations; they are explicitly stated by some right-wing politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party. It should be stressed, however, that Kobayashi's message is created for and embraced by youth in their teens, 20s and 30s. His work, expressed in a comic book style, was a great success insofar as it was able to appeal to younger generations and cultivate sympathy for neo-nationalistic sentiments.

### **Historical Revisionism and the Petit-Nationalist Youth**

Also relevant to this subculture is the work of the Society for History Textbook Reform, a group advocating the need to revise Japanese history, established in 1997. While Kobayashi once stood as one of the group's ideologues, the main actors are neo-conservative and revisionist academics. They disapprove of individualism which they believe has been propagated by Japan's post-war democratic regime and, accordingly, insist on the restoration of the nation as a collective. They emphasize that too much 'self-criticism' of the war (*jigyaku-sikan*) has prevailed in Japan's post-war decades. They stress that this spoils the dignity of the nation and, furthermore, has led to rampant, irresponsible individualism (me-ism) born from an American and Western influence. In particular, they are wont to blame left-wing intelligentsia (*sayoku*) and the Japan Teachers Association (*Nikkyoso*) for bolstering this trend. This movement excites the interest of young participants who feel endowed with the opportunity to restore moral values and order to society by establishing Japan anew as a strong and 'glorious' nation.

It is interesting that most of the young male supporters of this movement are not fanatics but, rather, obedient individuals who see themselves as 'ordinary citizens' (Oguma & Ueno 2003). They join the revisionist movement because they need their own place to belong and are searching for a sense of stability in their identity. Ironically, they are not good at collaborating with the members of the older generations who have actual experience of the Second World War.

These younger petit nationalists are unable to rely on family, school, residential communities or the company as their place of identity, in the way older generations once could. They are seeking for their own place but are not satisfied with real places as they find conflict within them. Instead, they tend to prefer cyberspace and construct their identity by not depending on everyday places but ultimately by overlapping with the nation, Japan. In the face of globalization and the precarious labour market in Japan, youth face unprecedented insecurity, as well as a fear of becoming "losers", due to their weakened socio-economic standing. One way of lashing out is by expressing disdain for the established liberal 'left-wing' (*sayoku*) intelligentsia and mass media, such as *Asahi Shimbun*. To a petit-nationalist youth, these targets represent the mentality of a post-war majority from which they think they (as an underclass) have been excluded (Young 1999).

## Conclusive Comments

Japan believed itself to be an egalitarian society during the era of high economic growth. In the years since, however, a gap has emerged effectively distancing each of contemporary Japan's new middle class (managerial and professional workers), regular workers, and non-regular workers including freeters or NEETs (Hashimoto 2009). There is also a broadening economic divide between generations. Younger generations suffer higher rates of unemployment and also face more difficulty in finding work outside of non-regular employment.

It is in this period of time that the new types of men are emerging from the late 1990s (even though the *Otaku* originated in the 1980s). This is closely linked with the period of the rapid increase in non-regular workers and criticism of youth in Japan.

These developments also overlapped a period within which gender-mainstreaming movements achieved some successes. Some young men frustrated with their situation blamed their hardships on "feminists" who seek gender equality and thus deprive men of their jobs and status. The terms such as "feminist-phobia" or "*femi-nazi*" (feminists as Nazis; a term frequently used in internet discourse) have spread widely among younger men (Kaizuma 2005). This mentality fits with the neo-conservative ideas advocated by older generations insistent on revisiting traditional family norms; together these sentiments have bolstered a recent rise in irrational backlashes against feminism and gender studies in Japan. The reactionary movement of historical revisionism and neo-conservatism seeking to keep traditional family and gender norms under globalisation seems to be synchronised with growing frustration of young men who are losing their status in changing Japan's economy.

Young men who identify with neo-nationalism openly express disdain for neighboring East Asian countries such as (North and South) Korea and China. Their hatred stems from the open criticism of Japan's colonial and imperial past voiced by Korea and China, which young neo-nationalists regard as menacing to Japan's own national legitimacy. It should be noted that nationalist movements are also emerging in Korea and China. According to Takahara, they have similar situations in that they also mobilize youth displaced in the labour market by appealing to their frustration (Takahara 2006).

It is interesting that, while there is a fierce criticism of Japan's nationalistic movement within Korea and China, especially by men, Japanese popular culture such as TV stars and pop singers tend to be widely appreciated by Korean and Chinese youth, especially women. Japanese women, too, have been highly attracted to, and an appreciative audience of, Korean actors or singers since the early 2000s. This is the phenomenon well known as "the *Kan-ryu* (Korean style) boom" within Japan. Therefore signs of transnational sympathies exist among women in East Asia in terms of popular culture, while men display antipathy in nationalist politics. Both trends not only independently influence international relationships, but also represent key gendered issues therein.

Each of these three young men's sub-cultures can be individually distinguished by the specific tastes, modes of expression and political sentiments adopted by subscribers. While the herbivorous boys are more feminine in their tastes and outlook, *otaku* do not care about their appearance. While *otaku* are pursuing their own closed community and do not care about others, the petit-nationalist assaults opponents and excludes them. Many possibilities as well as constraints exist at the intersection between these new types of men and the unfolding of Japan's future. The herbivorous boys present an opposition to the elder generations practice of devoting their whole life to the company and therefore takes sides with a call to balance work and life. Women may be more receptive of herbivorous boys because of their propensity for cooperating in domestic work and their relative departure from hegemonic masculinity. Substantial numbers of women in the same age group, however, have expressed skepticism over whether the herbivore's passivity made him a suitable partner. While *otaku* carry potential for becoming both creators and transmitters of Japanese sub-culture to the world, they might suffer from lower wages and unstable working conditions of the contents industry.

However, these groups also share some commonalities. The first two, herbivorous boy and *otaku*, are both inward looking and individualistic in character. Petit-nationalists seem to be more active and group-forming, but their action is sporadic and is not necessarily well-organized. Both *Otaku* and petit-nationalists are deeply involving in cyberspace. They also manifest exclusionary attitudes with neo-nationalist tones—at least within much of their Internet discourse.

All of them are seeking for their own place or home. This might be a real house, cyber space or Japan as a nation. All of those images, however, lack interactive others. All of the men belonging to these three sub-cultures appear little concerned with getting to know or understand anyone deemed as the "other". Much of their world-view derives from their experience of "falling from grace" after neo-liberal changes had transformed the Japanese labour market. A painful irony lies in the fact that these men shape their place of identity by excluding others such as women, Korea and China, or immigrants, just as they are excluded.

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## Part Two: Globalised Popular Cultures

### Neo-Tokyo revisited: Deterritorialised youth, globalisation fears and reader response to Karl Taro Greenfeld's *Speed Tribes*

Ted Bonnah

#### Introduction

*Speed Tribes*, Karl Taro Greenfeld's 1994 book about Tokyo subcultures, is a problematic text in many senses. It is a journalistic fiction, a blend of autobiography, journalistic exposé and social commentary that alienates the academic with its unabashed blend of the narrative and the factual, just as much as it entertains the lay reader. At the time of publication, *Speed Tribes* was criticised as being an unreliable work on Japan, while nowadays it is often dismissed as dated (Moorghen, 2004; Amazon, "Reader comments"). However, I believe that the polemics surrounding the text's (non) fictive status obscure its value to the discourse on globalisation, touching as it does on deterritorialised identities, Asian modernity, expatriate experiences, Japanese hybridity, and nascent *otaku* culture. I intend to examine *Speed Tribes* not as a picture of Japan, but as an overlooked window on the globalisation processes at work in Japan at the time it was written. These processes are evidenced by the deterritorialised nature of the text's protagonists, the author's agenda of warning Americans against the globalisation processes these figures exhibit, and the divided reader responses to the text.

It is not my intent to debate whether Greenfeld's work is fact, fiction, or an accurate representation of Japan. Greenfeld has stated that *Speed Tribes* is a selection of compelling narrative 'composites' based on friends he interviewed while working in Tokyo (Potts, 2006; Moorghen, 2004), an admission that disqualifies them as reliable in the strictest academic or journalistic sense. Ultimately, what Greenfeld dubs his 'creative journalism' (Wolley 2010) gives little hard data on Japan at that time. Instead, the book's subtitle, *Days and Nights with Japan's Next Generation*, reflects Greenfeld's attempt to supplant the pre-existing 1980's Bubble images of Japan Inc's suited corporate samurai to create a new, darker image of Japan woven from Tokyo subcultural images. Greenfeld uses these marginalized stereotypes to support his agenda of defining post-Bubble Japan as the future that America should best avoid emulating, and ultimately reveals a uniquely American fear of globalisation, but one that was not shared by all readers of the text.

#### Who are The Speed Tribes?

To understand the significance of Greenfeld's text to globalisation discourse, it is first necessary to know how and why he chose the objects of his writing. In the prologue to *Speed Tribes*, Greenfeld inserts himself as a character to explain his motives. Seeing a gang of *bosozoku* (delinquent bikers) on the night streets of Tokyo he declares, "I decided my Japan would be life in the bars, at the nightclubs, and on the streets. I had never read about this in

Time, Fortune, or the Wall Street Journal. I would hang out with these kids and write their stories" (p. xiv). Greenfeld proceeds to draw his stereotypical 'kids' from Japanese underworld, subculture, and youth types, profiling a *yakuza* (Japanese gangster) loan shark and collector; a bootlegging biker; a teenage motorcycle thief; a drug addicted porn star; a promiscuous weekend go go dancer; hedonistic Ivy leaguers; a Gatsby-esque *zainichi* (indigenized Korean) drug dealer; rockers; ultranationalist right wingers; prostituted foreign hostesses; rich juvenile delinquent drug dealers; and finally, introverted computer *otaku*. By labeling all these disparate characters members of his 'speed tribes,' Greenfeld creates a nexus that subsumes Japan's future generation under negative social archetypes.

What Greenfeld's protagonists all have in common is that they exhibit deterritorialisation, which Scholte (2000) and others have identified as one of the central processes of globalisation. Simply put, all of the main characters in *Speed Tribes* show a displacement or alienation from the Tokyo social space in which they find themselves. These displacements are visible in surface details, such as the Japanese nationalists who smoke Russian cigars and surf, or the *yakuza* bookie who wears nice western clothes, but point to a deeper disconnection from the society which entraps them. These displaced protagonists can be classified into three groups: ethnic Japanese with 'westernised' tendencies or experience, foreign nationals working on the fringes of Japanese society, and 'grey zone' characters of deterritorialised identity inhabiting a space between these two.

Greenfeld describes this first and largest group of disconnected ethnic Japanese in *Speed Tribes*' prologue: The speed tribes, the children of the industrialists, executives, and laborers who built Japan, Inc., are as accustomed to hamburgers as to *onigiri* (rice balls), to Guns N' Roses as *ikebana* (flower arrangement), and are often more adept at folding a bundle of cocaine or heroin than creasing an origami crane. (p. xiv)

The author's chosen 'speed tribes' are thus shaped by the economic and cultural flows of globalisation that accompanied Japan's 20th century rise to economic dominance, but are deterritorialised in a double sense. They are both equally or more at home with Americanised pop or global culture than that of traditional Japan, but also demonstrate an inability to fit in to their 'home' culture. This group of protagonists includes, among others, Emi, a returnee from a failed relationship with an American musician in Los Angeles, who does pornography to afford life in Tokyo; Moto, a Tokyoite son of privilege who flees to a home stay overseas after his drug peddling pastime turns dangerous; and weekend *bodicon* (erotic dancer) office lady Keiko, who escapes the regimented future awaiting a Tokyo suburban housewife by taking an Australian lover. These characters' lack of the homogeneity traditionally ascribed to Japanese, as well as their degree of identity displacement from Japan, mark Greenfeld's ethnically Japanese protagonists as emblems of the 'next generation' the author is constructing.

The second deterritorialised members of Greenfeld's 'next generation' of Japan are ethnic non-Japanese working on the sordid or illegal fringes of



Japan, as epitomised by the California girl Jackie and other foreign hostesses, all of who agonize over whether or not to sell their bodies to wealthy Japanese men. These foreign 'speed tribes' also appear as minor characters throughout the book, such as the Iranians who work construction or sell dope, and the US marine who offers a package of drugs to the hostess Rachel, who then passes it along to her *zainichi* (indigenised Korean) drugdealer boyfriend. The implication here is that due to globalisation the foreign has become a glocalised part of 'Japan's next generation,' but one that is inextricably linked with crime and the darker parts of Japanese society.

This relegation of foreign elements to the underworld is even more evident in the last and most deterritorialised of Greenfeld's protagonists, the aforementioned *zainichi* (indigenised Korean) drugdealer Kazu. Despite being a member of a marginalised group within Japan but outside of Japanese society, Kazu finds a niche as a 'map-maker' or translator and go-between for the *yakuza* (nationalist Japanese gangster) drug buyers and their foreign sources. Although Kazu's deterritorialised status does not permit him to realize his dream of assimilation by marriage into the uppercrust of Tokyo society, it does let him act as a bridge between Japan and the outside world and find a space to inhabit within Japanese society, and is emblematic of the conflicting globalising forces at work in *Speed Tribes*. Because Kazu's deterritorialised identity never becomes a way for inclusion, Greenfeld implies that the globalisation which incurred it is similarly suspect.

Why did Greenfeld feel the need to drag these obscure deterritorialised subcultures and underworld figures out of the shadows to create his 'next generation' of Japan? For Greenfeld, it was not the Japanese political or business news which were no longer relevant to post-Bubble Japan, it was Japan itself which had ceased to be relevant economically, and must thus be re-presented by a 'next generation' of its darker figures. By setting up 'Japan's next generation' in displaced and subcultural stereotypes, Greenfeld defuses the image of Japan Inc. that Americans had striven to emulate during its 1980s Bubble economy, and primes the reader for his warning against suffering the same fate as 1990s Japan.

### **Greenfeld's warning**

Just as Greenfeld defines his protagonists in the opening chapter of *Speed Tribes*, he reveals his audience and warning to them by retaking the narrative voice in the last chapter. In this final segment entitled *Snix: The Otaku*, Greenfeld abandons the focus on individual Tokyoites of previous chapters and relegates the Japanese to a homogeneous mass of 'they' upon which he now renders judgment. In this final chapter, Greenfeld lays the groundwork for his message by appealing to his intended audience's sense of cultural superiority with an unflattering comparison between American and Japanese morality:

Compared to the United States and its relatively rigid Judeo-Christian ethical system, Japan is a moral donut you can fill with whatever pleases your fancy: Buddhism, Christianity, top hats, industrialisation, fascism, the Beatles, pacifism, or McDonald's. The Japanese have come to each

of these with the fervor only a people without a strict, all-encompassing moral code could generate. (pp. 271-272)

The intended audience is thus revealed as Americans from 'back home,' bound by a strict and all encompassing moral code and Judeo-Christian ethical system, which keeps them free from Japanese-style fervor and fanaticism. The contradiction of Greenfeld homogenising the individuals whose nonconformity he previously emphasised makes the author's motives as suspect as the moral authority he attempts to build over his readers.

Greenfeld follows this moral pronouncement with his first reference to the 'we' of his audience when he offers examples of Japan's proclivity for short-lived booms (fads): "We have already witnessed the disastrous effects of the boom mentality when the boom is a militaristic impulse to subjugate Asia or a sudden upsurge in the popularity of whale meat" (p. 272). The hypocrisy of this criticism from a writer whose country has acted on its own 'militaristic impulse to subjugate' Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan and Iraq is readily apparent, as is the criticism of the whale hunt in which the US was pre-eminent in the 19th century. Greenfeld's message is clear: America must not be corrupted by Japan's fickle globalised hybrid nature as reflected in its booms. Since one effect of globalisation is an intensification and acceleration of global cultural exchanges (Scholte, 2000), these booms can be interpreted as temporal responses to what Ibuchi (2004) identifies as the increased pace of global cultural flows into Japan leading up to and during its 1980s 'Bubble' economy. Greenfeld's warning against Japan is thus revealed as a fear of globalisation and how it has decentered the supposedly homogenous Japanese identity.

Greenfeld finally proceeds to warn against emulating the Japanese adoption of technology, especially digital media. Coming at the end of Greenfeld's choice of criminal, decadent and marginalised elements to represent Japan, this final chapter sends a clear message: *Speed Tribes'* Japan is a corrupting influence of which his American readers must be wary. Greenfeld's proposed resistance to the amoral media technology and its "blurring of man and machine, of reality and what comes out in the VDT, is spawning a generation of Japanese kids who are opting out of the conformity of Japan, Inc., in favor of logging on to computer networks" (p. 274). Although Greenfeld's sinister man-machine hybrid has yet to appear, his comment instead seems to foreshadow what Allison (2008) calls the Japanese 'products of imagination', the digital and media technologies, which would dominate the American and other global markets in the years following *Speed Tribes*.

### **Negotiating meaning with *Speed Tribes***

If *Speed Tribes* is seen merely as a post-colonial artifact of US-Japan relations, complete agreement between writer and reader would seem inevitable. According to Edward Said, in colonial texts the imperialist writer creates for an audience which he presumes will read his or her work in much the same spirit as it was written, as colonisers exercising power over an alien Other by gaining knowledge about it (1979). However, a wide gamut of readers from academics to expatriate westerners have read and reacted to

*Speed Tribes* in ways different from the author's intent, confirming Fiske's assertion that the meaning of a text is not wholly handed down by the writer, but instead negotiated between text and reader (1989). These alternate readings also reflect the currents of globalisation, and how the historical repertoire of geisha and samurai images of Japan (Littlewood, 1994) have been supplanted since the Bubble days by the deterritorialised future Greenfeld warns against in *Speed Tribes*.

As mentioned in the introduction, academics have kept their distance from *Speed Tribes* because of its fictive techniques, yet have engaged with the text on an informal level. Richard Samuels, an MIT professor who used *Speed Tribes* in his 2004 Japanese government politics and policy course, sums up the academic response to the text; "I do not think of this as an 'authoritative' work, but merely as a window on a slice of Japan that my undergrads (mostly engineering students) would find interesting in a general class on contemporary Japan" (June 28, 2011, Email correspondence with author). Certainly, universities have not adopted the book to any major degree, which is understandable considering its eclectic research techniques. However, besides Richards' 2005 MIT Japanese government policy and politics course, the book's slow seep into the academic realm includes a 1997 international studies course at the University of Oregon (Fry, 1997), a 2006-2007 global cultures unit in at the University of London South Bank (Rietveld, 2006), and a 2009 MIT anthropology course at the University of South Carolina (Moskowitz, 2009).

This shallow yet varied use of the text implies its value to the discourse on globalisation, despite the difficulties traditional scholarship has in dealing with it. Nevertheless, the academic response to *Speed Tribes* has not been wholly negative. Hillagonda Rietveld, professor of the Global Cultures Unit for the University of London South Bank, used *Speed Tribes* to discuss globalisation issues. Significantly, Rietveld prefaced *Speed Tribes* with futuristic scenes from *Akira*, *Blade Runner*, and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and explains: In this context, 'Speed Tribes' helps to illustrate the intersection of globalisation (sic), urban intensification, post-humanism, information society and techno culture, and young cosmopolitan adults. It offers an example of how to understand contemporary urban life, which is partially located, yet also dislocated or uprooted (deterritorialised) as it is embedded in a global information economy. I did not directly address 'Speed Tribes' in class though. (July 17, 2011, Email correspondence with author)

Although Rietveld acknowledges *Speed Tribes'* utility in facilitating discourse on globalisation, her reticence to discuss the text directly once again testifies to academic inability to engage with it. In a similar light, Sakamoto, who admitted using the text unofficially in classes at the University of Auckland, described it as "an easy in" to contemporary Japanese culture (November 25, 2011, conversation with author), but eschewed its academic value, explaining "My thoughts were that it was cultural essentialism and stereotype but have (sic) some truth in it" (December 1, 2011, Email correspondence with author).

This academic reticence conflicted with personal interest implies a need for a more open engagement with *Speed Tribes*.

Although non-academic readers are a disparate population eluding easy sampling, Amazon.com posts reader reviews and ratings from 1998 to the present (2012) for *Speed Tribes*. Of the 44 respondents, half are American, and half of these identify themselves as expatriates ("Customer Reviews"). Like academics, many American lay readers of *Speed Tribes* question the usefulness of Greenfeld's 'creative journalism' techniques. Matthew Arsenault (2003, Amazon.com) opined that *Speed Tribes* "lacked any journalistic bite," while Hans Kessock (2002, Amazon.com) wrote, "I would have preferred more investigation in many areas." Similarly, expatriate Christopher Dahl (2001, Amazon.com) lamented that the "lack of a bibliography leaves this work wide open to skepticism." The most telling comment is by American expatriate David Bonesteel, who excoriates Greenfeld's final chapter:

The final section, about a computer-obsessed otaku, is an unfortunate way to end the book. It's [sic] speculations on the melding of man and machine are overdone; furthermore, it falls back on the old cliché of attributing whatever aspect of Japanese culture is under discussion to the Japanese' lack of a strict prescriptive system of morality. ("Customer Reviews", November 26, 2000)

Bonesteel has insightfully noted that Greenfeld's creation of a 'next generation' ironically rests on the recycling of western images of Japan identified by Littlewood (1994). Although the readers cite their expatriate status to validate their claims on both sides of the polemic surrounding the fictive nature of Greenfeld's text, more importantly they represent a growing deterritorialised community who can support or 'call the bluff' of previously unassailable Japanist interpreters like Greenfeld. Additionally, like the half-Japanese Greenfeld himself, their existence is further evidence of the decentering and glocalisation processes at work in the diverse population of modern Tokyo. Through the experiences of deterritorialised expatriates and instant feedback of online reader reviews, globalisation has defused the power of Orientalist writers like Greenfeld over their audiences, who are no longer passive readers from 'back home,' but active agents with direct access to both the physical space and media products of Japan and other previously distant lands.

Also similar to the academic reaction, *Speed Tribe* reviewers expressed positive reasons to read the text despite its flaws. S. Bergel (1998, Amazon.com) calls *Speed Tribes* "not perfect but worthwhile", and concludes, "The stripping away of the more annoying stereotypes and sugar-coating of Japan is a big enough pay off in my mind to put up with the inaccuracies." Mehrdad Modjtahedi (2002, Amazon.com) remonstrates expatriates that: Japan is not always the picturesque storybook you blindly bought into. Most Americans fail to see the seedy underbelly of this magnificent country, and will therefore never get a full understanding of Japanese society as a whole. Yes, this book deals with

a minority of the population, but that makes it all the more important. For it is the minority that rarely gets a platform from which to tell their tale.

Since Greenfeld's chosen speed tribes are admittedly based on real, marginalised people he encountered (Moorghen, 2004), it is natural that some readers see their descriptions as an antidote to picturesque images of Japan, and thus a redeeming value of the text.

Although both academics and expatriate readers focus on the futuristic imagery of *Speed Tribes*' Tokyo, their motivation is nearly opposite. As previously mentioned, Rietveld cites *Akira* and *Blade Runner* to evoke *Speed Tribes*' usefulness to globalisation discourse (July 17, 2011, Email correspondence with author), whereas non-academic consumers of Greenfeld's book offer this imagery as examples of the limitations of the book's 'creative journalism.' American expatriate Kevin Finch (1998, Amazon.com) lauds the "Startling imagery of a 'Blade Runner'-type world" but concedes that the stories "aren't journalism. They're just fiction masquerading as truth (and larded with enough sex to keep your attention)." Similarly, in a two page diatribe, expatriate 'suspendi' (1999, Amazon.com) writes, "Speed Tribes is void of any supporting data collection which lends the book to those some impression [sic] one would get from manga and Blade Runner style films," and echoes Finch when he concludes "By using startling imagery that could easily have been pulled from Katushiro Otomo's, famed creator of the film *Akira*, imagination [sic]." Both Finch and 'suspendi' are criticizing *Speed Tribes* the image over substance, while Rietveld conversely sees a worthy substance beneath this imagery.

Expat PJ Willy (2002, Amazon.com) concludes, "Greenfeld is living in the Japan of his imagination, a Gibson-esque Japan that most people in the West willingly mistake for the real Japan." His reference to William Gibson is telling, as it was this American fiction author and creator of the cyberpunk genre who famously wrote, "Japan is the global imagination's default setting for the future" (2001, "Modern Boys and Mobile Girls"). I view such popular culture depictions of Japan-as-future through the medium of Neo-Tokyo imagery as an inherently futuristic conception of globalisation as a process of acquiring modernity, but never reaching its end.

The portrayal of Japan-as-future is, of course, simply a metaphor used by Greenfeld, Gibson, academics and others to explain how Japanese society has adapted to the modern world of transnational economic, political, technological and cultural flux. It serves as the backdrop for Greenfeld's warning about the decentering power of Japan's globalisation, just as it does for the Japanese 'products of imagination' which Allison (2008) studies, and the American representations of Japan that Allen perceived in his examination of the American animated TV program *South Park* (Allen & Sakamoto, 2006). Re-reading *Speed Tribes* from a globalisation perspective helps us see both the textual artifact and its depictions as the embodiment of how pro and anti-globalisation forces and flows conflicted about the vision of the future they see in 1990s Japan.

Additionally, the focus on *Blade Runner* style imagery in *Speed Tribes* is exaggerated, for it is not overtly stated by Greenfeld until the last chapter, where he writes: Japan has come to resemble *Total Recall* more than the oft-cited *Blade Runner*; truth is a memory implant: take a package trip to Paris where you will never speak to a non-Japanese and never eat any indigenous cooking. That other place, with the French people and heavy sauces, that's someplace for French people. Paris, for Japanese, is the implanted place, with Japanese people and sushi." (p. 271)

Greenfeld's 'implanted place' presages the 'deterritorialisation' and 'localisation' terminology of contemporary globalisation discourse, while serving as the ideological space created to house Greenfeld's stories and warning of Japan-as-future. This ideological space is readily identified in his descriptions as the same media construct of 'Neo-Tokyo' used in *Akira* or *Blade Runner*.

Modern-day Tokyo is a society in symbiosis with the machine. Exactly where human beings end and technology begins can become confusing in a city that, more than any other city on the planet, is a neon-lit circuit board writ gigantic. (p.271)

According to Greenfeld, Japan is as ethically lost with its 'moral donut' as it is financially after the collapse of the Bubble economy, and if the mechanistic Neo-Tokyo is the default for what the future will look like, Americans should fear it. Levi-Strauss (1987) identifies loss of identity as the fearful aspect of cultural interaction, of becoming the same as the Other. Although this fear is what Greenfeld attempts to play on in the final chapter of *Speed Tribes*, he could not have foreseen that deterritorialised Japan would come to be seen as Allison's 'cool Japan' (2008) precisely because it is a hybrid, a moral donut the *otaku* user can fill with his own desires, or in other words, their vision of a utopian future. Depicting Japan or any other place as the future gives two options-either that of utopia or dystopia. In reality, there is no such thing as utopia-all societies have their functions and dysfunctions, but modern urban spaces like Tokyo may appear to have even more when viewed from a displaced standpoint like Greenfeld's.

## Conclusion

I find it lamentable that academia, which has always been the traditional repository of transcultural and transnational discourses, has not engaged with *Speed Tribes* at more than an informal level. The fact that MIT, University of London South Bank and others have used the text in courses as disparate as Japanese politics and policy, anthropology, and global culture indicates the range of interpretations the book can accommodate. Although analysis of fiction is an acceptable practice in university research circles, the indeterminate fictive nature of Greenfeld's text seems to have also given it a pariah status, and has stymied inquiry into the text's globalisation context, modes of production and reception. Although its nature as a 'compromised' source cannot be ignored, Rietveld's assertion of *Speed Tribes*' usefulness in facilitating debate about global culture, as well as Samuels' inclusion of the

text for his 'otaku' students, testifies that Greenfeld's book fills a niche that conventional scholarship cannot, and shows its resonance with popular culture. Specifically, Greenfeld's use of what he terms 'creative journalism' (Wolley, 2010) provides the dialogic voices which Grudin (1996) identifies as often lacking in pure ethnographic work and which he avers limits the range of scholarly research to "monistic, mechanistic" inquiry (p. 15). Furthermore, Greenfeld himself is worthy of study as a deterritorialised author giving voice to an Asian modernity in ways different from the traditional avenues of either literary fiction or academic socio-anthropological inquiry. Certainly, Greenfeld is as conflicted and deterritorialised as *Speed Tribes*' protagonists; a half-Japanese, American-raised writer who returned to Japan to teach English on the JET Programme (Jetwit, 2009), he transitioned into a journalist for The Asahi Evening News in Tokyo during the early 1990s (Potts, 2006), where he wrote pieces for such disparate publications as Wired, The Face, The Los Angeles Times and others that would later become chapters in *Speed Tribes* (Greenfeld, 1994; Wolley, 2010). Just as Greenfeld situates himself between his Japanese objects and American audience, his act of creation also situates him between being a Japanist 'expert' writing for people back home and a deterritorialised expat on site, all in addition to his nature as half-Japanese. Such decentered discourse is the new form of globalised Japanism articulated in *Speed Tribes*, and which has only expanded in the age of the internet along with the global flow of Japanese popular cultural products. Although global popular cultural studies points one way of analyzing *Speed Tribes*, the variety of university courses that partially engaged with the text implies that a holistic approach incorporating economics, politics, and other fields may also make findings that can be applied to similar instances of urban Asian modernity and responses to or expressions of globalisation.

If we in academia refuse to engage with problematic texts like *Speed Tribes* because of their non-traditional nature, we run the risk of overlooking works important to our understanding of globalisation processes. Recalibration of representative national images over time by traditional interpreters from Lafcadio Hearn to Ruth Benedict, and on to deterritorialised ones like Karl Taro Greenfeld and beyond, can be seen as a natural progression not only in US-Japan relations, but all transnational interactions, and thus demands to be scrutinised in this age of intensifying globalisation. This article is only an initial attempt at demonstrating how even a cursory examination of a problematic text like *Speed Tribes* can shed light on the increasingly complex relation between deterritorialised producers, consumers, and texts of this era of globalisation, but the author hopes it will not be the last such foray into such a difficult yet rewarding text.

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## **Games without frontiers: The rise and rise of the object of the future**

Scott Wilson

Exchange relations seem to be the substance of social life.

Nicholas Thomas: *Entangled Objects* (1)

For Nicholas Thomas, material culture becomes the very means by which cultures and social groups assess each other in those moments of transaction and exchange. As Hulsbosch, Bedford and Chaiklin explain, “At the heart of material culture lie continuous, dynamic relationships and social actions, which are forged between the object, self and society” (11). This would be fine, and entirely innocent, if not for the obvious fact that such exchanges necessarily occur not in the open and equivalent fields of disinterested contact, but in a highly charged and ideologically wrought environment wherein the last thing seemingly possible is the exact reciprocity that is usually framed as the benchmark of such exchanges and moments.

This paper therefore seeks to explore this moment of exchange and assessment in order to pay particular attention to the various discourses that surround these activities, and especially the manner with which these discourses, so accurately charted by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*, have themselves evolved, shifted and mutated in the face of concomitant changes in the flows of global capital, popular culture goods and material. To do this, and to therefore chart the notion of the object of the future, in all of its problematic details, we must first visit the past and its own relationship to the flow of objects and their various discursive meanings.

### **Objects of the past**

As noted, the template for exploring material exchange is provided in Thomas' *Entangled Objects*; a book, as its subtitle makes clear, concerned primarily with 'Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific'. In this book, Thomas explores the reciprocal interests of European colonisers and Pacific peoples in relation to the exchanges of goods that occurred between them and, much more vitally, what happened to those objects when removed from their various contexts of production and made sense of in new and unforeseen ways. This attempt to theorise 'what happened next' is important, especially to our purpose here today, because, as Thomas notes:

Talking about aspects of the culture and economy of other peoples is difficult partly because of the general role which representations of 'others' play in the constitutive myths of Western society. (9)

This is a vital point to make at this juncture because it indicates that any interpretation of an object, divorced from its context of production and utility by the fact of its exchange, will therefore pass through the various received doxa surrounding any understanding of the source culture or population. In developing this line of reasoning Thomas offers two instructive versions of the ways in which these 'others' are utilised by differing Western ideological

structures. The first, named by Thomas as “those who take a positive view of modern history” (9) sees the contemporary Western present as a rational-indeed inevitable-evolution from a ‘primitive’ past towards an increasingly bright future, recognising both a distance from, and continuity with, this past which has been so thoroughly superseded. In this mode of thinking:

... there is an evolutionary interest in identifying the origins of constitutive features of civilisation (such as writing and the state), and aspects of contemporary ‘primitive’ society can be interpreted as embryonic of intermediate forms. (10)

In comparison, the second view of ‘otherness’ holds that the further ‘other’ cultures are from the misery and impoverishment generated by industrial society, the more authentic they are. Again, as Thomas explains:

This ideology of primitivism thus celebrates simple societies because they display what has been lost and provide a model for a more wholesome and fulfilling way of living. (10)

Despite their superficial differences and overt ideological functions, both approaches offer a means of comparison between a putative ‘us’ and ‘them’. These comparisons necessarily occur at moments of exchange; ‘necessarily’ because for those in the metropolitan centers wherein Western ideology is promulgated and launched, it is the material object returned from the periphery to the centre that stands in for the missing or absent-perhaps even alienated-protagonist. This notion is further developed by Andrew Jones who comments that “Things are therefore treated as initially mute materials, which are made meaningful only once they have received the impress of intentional human minds” (2007: 12). In this manner the material object-whatever it might be-is assessed in the light of the dominant ideological frameworks of the social and cultural setting of the group that receives it, and which therefore makes sense of that object in line with what is already held to be a true and accurate way of understanding the world and its various inhabitants. Thus while the object and its utility might speak to the common-sense needs of the culture that produces it, the discursive contexts of that production are, at the very best translated, and at the worst, entirely absent, when it comes to the object’s reception as a result of that exchange.

For Thomas, those objects that originated in the Pacific islands were received in the European metropolitan centers in direct relation to the dominant discursive practices utilised to make sense of them. This means that the objects were either viewed as resembling the Europeans’ own pasts because of their resemblance to local material objects and practices long-since superseded, or as speaking to a more authentic, hence less sophisticated lifestyle for the same reason. Thus the objects from the Pacific present were understood as standing in the same relation to contemporary European material practices as the Europeans to their own past, a factor which itself could then be utilised to justify any number of other material practices from colonisation through to genocide.

The point here, though, "... is not merely to identify complexity but to connect it with political and historical contexts" (Thomas, 18). Here the connection occurs along the evolutionary lines so vital to the Western myths of origin and constitution: for the Europeans, so inclined, the objects from the Pacific present could be understood as objects from their own past. This teleological assessment, based entirely on the respective interpretation of material goods away from their contexts of production, is therefore entirely the point to today's discussion.

Of course, Thomas is not alone in exploring the teleological relationship between the subjective assessment of material culture and the manner with which intercultural activities might (or, indeed, do) occur. Edward Said locates exactly these mechanisms at the art of the range of discursive practices he names as Orientalism, wherein the Western discursive response to contact with 'the Orient' is circulated through material culture as much as it is in policy and governmental practice. For Said, the teleological aspect of Orientalism serves the same purpose as Thomas' analysis: to locate the cultures in contact along an evolutionary continuum that is, at the same time, the proof of and justification for cultural superiority as demonstrated by the very objects being so compared.

### **Objects of the future**

Necessarily, if one can utilise material culture as a way of understanding the present in relation to the discursive constructions that relay one's sense of one's past (be it individual or communal), then the self-same uses can be made of material culture as a way of relating one's present to a discursive sense of one's future. Again, this is not new, although I would venture to guess that we are more familiar with this use as it applies to a culture's own sense of its local material production, as opposed to any kind of cross-cultural exchange of objects. Thus, the course of advertising, at least in the West and across the development of Twentieth Century capitalist discourses, is marked by the mobilisation of 'the future' as an indicator of desirability: the objects of the present, these discourses comment, quickly become the cast-offs of the past. Instead, we are told, we should continuously focus our consumptive attention on those objects that are marked as either belonging to, or leading directly to, our inevitable and glorious future. Inevitably these discursive moments quickly become laughable and quaint with the benefit of hindsight, but that surely is the point to this discussion. We cannot be concerned with any actual relationship between object production and consumption and the movement of societies across and through time. Instead, what we have demonstrated here is the clear and generative relationship between a series of discourses: first is the role notions of evolution and hierarchy play within any social group's sense of its relation to other groups and their own discursive constructions and, second, the manner with which these relationship are played out and made manifest in the arena of material culture.

Again, this idea that material objects from outside any one group might function as examples of that group's own material future is not a new one. The critiques of colonialism are marked with fictional examples of this, with perhaps the clearest being H. G Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Within

Wells' novel, the objects that mark the material present of the invading Martians are demonstrated to be beyond humanity's ability and comprehension, exactly as the Martians, who are accessible only through the medium of their material objects, are similarly incomprehensible. It is telling that this discursive concern remains entirely intact within Steven Spielberg's 2005 retelling of Wells' fable. What this reveals, perhaps aside from Spielberg's own unconscious concern regarding a global response to American imperialism, is that the discursive possibility of objects from the subjective future remains powerful and effective as a mechanism for demonstrating the performative material relationship between groups of peoples, and the manner with which differences in material culture might therefore be understood by those groups as existing along a teleological, and therefore hierarchical, continuum.

Yet, what is important to recognise in this discussion is that we are exploring not so much the objects themselves as the discursive structures that surround them, their production and, most importantly, their consumption. Thus the actual objects themselves are rendered almost irrelevant, given that they are actually temporary placeholders in a longer-term discursive relationship wherein, at the moment of their consumption, their audience understands them as representing a significant set of meanings and discursive possibilities. It is to these discourses that I wish to focus my attention, and, in particular, to the manner with which discourses of locality and geography play, or have played, a role in these material developments. By way of another example, let's turn to Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*.

In *Blade Runner* we see the various discourses of the object of the future—here it is the future of the West, generally, and the United States in particular—played out across the film's mise-en-scene. In this film, what is reflected is the shift in productive capabilities and capitalist leadership from the West—as America generally understood itself—to the ubiquitous East—in line with the generalist and generalising actions of Orientalism. What *Blade Runner* provides is a dystopian demonstration of unchecked Eastern production, wherein the sole route to escape—the Off-World colonies—are presumed to be the new domain of European production, given that the only populations left on Earth are either Asian, artificial or undesirable. Of course, not much can be proved with a single paltry—and now aged—example, but what *Blade Runner* demonstrates is something vital about the object of the future: the rise of Asian soft power in the 1970s and 1980s was marked and commented upon in the American mass media in exactly the same terms as we have seen with Thomas and Said: cultures and societies understand—or, at least—understood—their respective statuses in the terms of their subjective assessments of each others' material production. The rise in Asian soft power following the Second World War therefore saw a concomitant rise in discourses that increasingly understood and represented the objects of the West's future as coming from the East.

These discourses found their way into a number of media objects—we have seen one example—but the fear of the East, once understood as a sensual and erotic threat to Western development even as it was also recognised as a

decayed and exhausted cultural nexus, was translated into a fear of the generative power of a group of cultures whose previously 'uncivilised hordes' now could be understood as a veritable army of productively unstoppable laborers. At the same time, Eastern popular culture itself comes to recognise these self-same discourses and reflect them in its own representations; thus we see with *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988), for example, just one instance where the future of the Earth, after the inevitable global war, crisis, or nuclear exchange, is located entirely in the East. Indeed, what one sees in an increasing number of anime and manga is the complete absence of the West, even as the kind of allegorical function present in earlier texts like *Gojira* (Ishiro Honda, 1957) where the monster could be broadly understood as representing the West to the East (and hence America to Japan).

### **Games without frontiers**

The development of globalisation, in its contemporary forms, has fundamentally altered the direct spatial link between the centers of production and centers of distribution that so typified the post-Industrial Revolution landscape. The global distribution of capital has brought with it a similar distribution of labour and of production, located more often where these resources are cheapest, which is to say, usually where the requisite workforce can be most easily brought and manipulated. Necessarily, as the physical facts of global production and consumption have changed, so too have the various discourses that surround the production and consumption of the goods themselves, meaning that while we should be continuously suspicious of the teleology inherent in the discourses we utilise and are subject to, we can nevertheless explore the fact that the discourses themselves have indeed changed. What the various teleologies of the objects of the past and future have done, as explored briefly above, is locate and signify the importance of geography and spatiality. Wells' critique in *The War of the Worlds* is one of inter-planetary material conflict played across a geo-spatial and bisected environment: the superior material culture of the Martians enables, and therefore justifies (as least, one presumes, to them) the fact of their invasion. This is entirely the point of Thomas' analysis: any hierarchical index that results in one concluding material superiority can therefore be used to justify one's actions in the material sphere.

Yet, as indicated in the shift in discursive focus, from *Blade Runner* to *Akira*, and therefore beyond, something else has happened to these particular teleologies, at least insofar as contemporary globalisation has rendered geo-spatial location invisible, if not downright irrelevant. By this I mean that, increasingly, it no longer matters where an object has come from, or the various actual locations it might have passed through from inception to consumption: what matters are the discourses that accrete and accumulate around the object which are mobilised at the moment of consumption as a means of justifying that action. As noted above, it is the absence of the various discourses of production that permit the object to be reinterpreted along the lines necessary for the culture that receives it; the loss of context is the factor that allows such objects to be understood as primitive or advanced, not any inherent condition of the objects themselves. For example, the spears, clubs or sculptures so prized by European colonists are entirely

contemporary objects for the cultures that made and make them, in the same way that the war machines of the invading Martians are only futuristic to the eyes of those subject to their actions.

This means that we have arrived at a position wherein we can consider the alienation of the object itself, to put it in thoroughly Marxist terms, as a vital part of the colonising process, and a continuously vital part of the evolving face of global capitalism. In exactly the same way that the worker is alienated by the forces of production that generate the material possibilities of capitalism, so too is the object alienated by the fact of its increasingly dislocated production and distribution. What the alienated object loses over the course of its distribution is the history of its making, the context of its generation; yet this should not be understood as either a good or bad thing, merely as a material condition necessary for the functioning of contemporary capitalism. For it is into the space of alienation, exactly as Thomas and Said make clear, that these discourses of teleology have been and can be introduced and utilised. And, what we can see, even in the paltry examples I have provided today, is the fact that as populations become increasingly used to the consumption of goods necessarily divorced from the material conditions of their production, so too do these various discourses refer to increasingly phantasmatic locations instead of actual sites of production.

For example, how many of us actually know, or consider, the physical production of those objects we utilise daily-our cellphones, for example? In the discursive space where the object's history might once have been interpreted and understood-a fact already passé at the first moments of colonisation-we are now free instead to insert other discursive structures to enable our consumption and utilisation of the object, above and beyond the mere fact of its utility. And, I would offer as a way drawing this discussion to a close, it is into this discursive space that are inserted the continuous discourses of the future wherein the objects we are encouraged to find desirable are shown to represent our own impending material developments, brought into our consumptive present by the companies whose names become synonymous with such discourses and objects. In essence, what I am suggesting is that the actual lived spaces of East and West, with all physical locations such terms suggest and indicate, are no longer important as actual referents: instead, these discourses, and especially discourses of teleology, increasingly refer to their own phantasmatic selves wherein the East is not a place, but is instead-exactly as Said explored-a construction utilised to ensure and justify exchange. What has changed-in essence come full circle-is that the location of the fantasy has shifted in the imaginations of the consumers. The post-World War Two boom in Western production named the West, and America,-in essence itself-, as the site of the future-a future that now seems endearingly quaint if not suspiciously retrograde. Subsequently, the East, once constructed as a debilitated poor cousin to the West, became understood as a threat to the material supremacy of the West and it is this threat that is both played out on the streets of *Blade Runner* and so thoroughly ignored in *Akira*. This means that what we see now is the disassociation of both of these semantic markers-'East' and 'West'-from any actual geographic location.



The object of the future is still very much alive and well; its material traces fill our lives and drive our consumptive practices. The successful rise and rise of this discursive strategy can be seen in the manner with which an object's ubiquity is the proof its desirability, and the manner with which the alienated object, divorced from its own material conditions, can be discursively re-written to fit equally well to a variety of previously disparate markets. In this way, we can understand any object of popular culture not in terms of its particular origins, but in the use made of it by the cultures that consume it. Finally, then, it is in the fact of consumption that the use of these teleological discourses will be located, as the thing from 'not here', from 'out there' can be understood to be superior because of the fact that it is so demonstrably not 'from here'. So long as an object coherently utilises these discourses, it can be made sense of in a thoroughly local context, meaning that it doesn't matter where these objects come from, so long as they wind up here bearing the traces of our textual futures to come.

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## Part Three: Discourses of Locality

### **Bali is (not) so beautiful (any more): Popular cultures of architectural and environmental decline in Bali<sup>1</sup>**

Graeme MacRae<sup>2</sup>

In June 2011, Bali Post, the main newspaper in Bali, published a series of articles on the state of Balinese architecture (2011a,b,c). These were followed by a series of letters to the editor, most of them lamenting the loss of traditional aesthetics of architectural and public space. Public discussion of this issue was virtually unknown a decade ago, but has surfaced with increasing frequency in recent years. Similar discussions appeared around the same time in Australian media (The Age 2011a,b; Gardiner 2011). Over the same period, a high-profile expatriate resident has been monitoring and documenting the design and development of a series of ever-larger and often more spectacularly inappropriate hotel developments on the island (Johnston 2011b). What these writers, Balinese, foreign media and expatriate alike, are concerned about is the transformation of a famously beautiful, appropriate and user-friendly built environment into one that could be anywhere in hot, noisy, congested, polluted, new tropical Asia.

This sudden flowering of concern about architecture coincided with a rising tide of concerns about other material side-effects of the latest cycle of dramatic economic development in Bali, most notably waste management and traffic (Johnston 2011a). At one level all of this may be seen as just another case of the decline of traditional culture in the face of global, capitalist modernity or the inevitable side-effects of tourism-driven development reaching a critical mass at which they can no longer be ignored. But it may also be useful to think of it in other ways—in terms of the meanings and understandings underlying it, a cultural phenomenon as well as just an economic and material one. This paper is a preliminary attempt to locate this emerging crisis of built environment into a context of culture—and more specifically of an ongoing meeting and interacting of popular cultures.

Concepts of culture have (at least in my discipline of anthropology) been dominated since the 1980s, by metaphors of meaning. We have come to understand culture more as a process than a product, and more often refer to it in terms of verbs and adjectives such as “cultural” dimensions or processes rather than nouns such as “culture”, let alone “cultures”. Such models of culture comfortably accommodate what is referred to in other disciplines as popular culture.

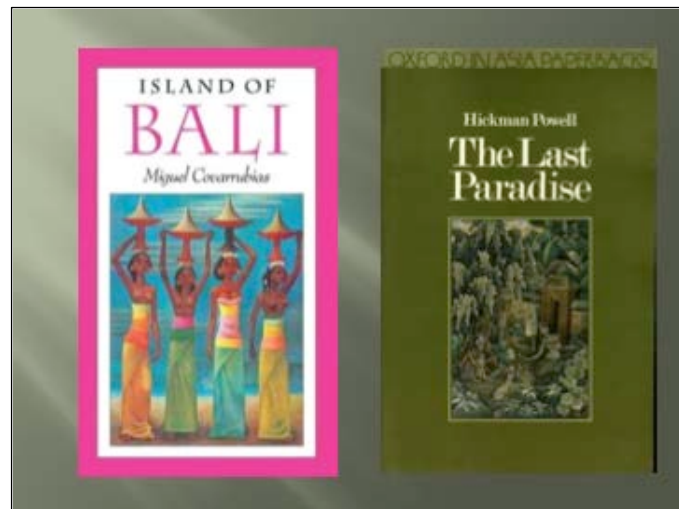
Another key aspect of our understanding of contemporary cultural processes is that they change, travel and transform as they move. Anna Tsing (in a different context) refers to “travelling allegorical packages”:

globally circulating terms, theories, and stories...utopian visions...  
political models (which can) travel when they are unmoored from the

contexts of culture and politics from which they emerged and (are) re-attached as allegories within the culture and politics of (others... where they are) translated to become interventions in new scenes where they gather local meanings.... (2005:215-238)

In the case of Bali, the story of its (perceptions of) beauty and loss of beauty and of its built environment, is a story of such movements and meetings of meanings. We will begin by reviewing this story, then return to the contemporary crisis of built environment.

The story begins in Europe in the 1920s. One of the themes of European popular culture at this time (especially among the trend-setting upper middle class) was of escape from the austerities of post-war Europe to other places, especially tropical islands, where everything was warm, sweet-smelling and beautiful (Fussell 1980). Paul Gauguin in Tahiti was a prototype for this imaginary, but Bali also filled the slot perfectly, having something of the flavour of the South Seas islands, but with the added bonus of something of the exotic and mysterious east as well (another theme of popular culture of the time, c/f Picard 1996:30-31). Bali was seriously cool in the 1920s and this was manifested in a minor explosion of popular culture-books, films, paintings and especially photographs (Vickers 1989).



Copyrighted image<sup>3</sup>, viewable at <http://www.bad-bad.de/mybali/topless.htm><sup>4</sup>

At the heart of this romance were images something like this.

They worked at two levels-one an obvious kind of soft-pornographic level, but the other an expression of something beautiful, innocent, natural, and inherently gendered (Picard 1996:30). But this kind of beauty is so pure, so innocent, so virginal, that it can easily be lost, violated, corrupted, degraded-surely it is too beautiful to last, especially when exposed to the corrosive influence of modern western commercial culture (1996:34-5)<sup>5</sup>. Nearly a century later, these concerns remain, as does the imagery in which they are expressed.



*Red Scooter Nocturne, by Ashley Bickerton6 (copyrighted image, but viewable at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/68015515@N03/6272471789/>)*

This vulnerability and the fear of its loss, is the other side of the image of natural innocent beauty. Every generation of tourists and expatriates that has come to Bali since the 1920s have believed they were seeing the last of beautiful old Bali, before it was lost forever.

Balinese life and culture... are ...doomed... under the merciless onslaught of modern commercialism and standardisation. ...the gradual breaking down of their institutions, together with the drain on their national wealth, will make coolies, thieves, beggars and prostitutes of the proud and honourable Balinese...

Covarrubias 1973 (1936):402

BALI'S not the same. Not like it used to be. It's not Balinese any more. ...Kuta's a seedy slum by the sea, swamped by drunk, unkempt, unclothed, uncouth yobbos, where every night is like a bad Saturday night in the sleasiest pub in the worst Australian suburb you can imagine. Bali's a paradise lost, a sweet place gone sour.

Hyland 2011

This image, which was essentially a product of transatlantic popular culture, became the cultural capital on which the tourist industry in Bali was founded, and has been endlessly recycled with minor variations, until the present (Vickers 1989). It also formed the basis of the expatriate lifestyles of the 1930s, which likewise have changed little in their essential aesthetic style.



*Photo of/by Made Wijaya, copyrighted but viewable at  
<http://www.ptwijaya.com/wijayawords/madewijaya/swagat/sm2004.html>*

Let us turn now to the Balinese side of this story-what was going on in Balinese culture while Europeans were building this minor industry of ambivalent images of, in and about Bali?

### **Balinese Responses**

Balinese from the start proved very adept at taking from western culture what suited them and adapting it to their own purposes, in matters of aesthetics as well as practicality:

His batik sarong was... covered with a design of flowers and tennis rackets. He wore a silk sport shirt, and over it a white jacket, elegantly tailored American style. In the breast pocket were an Eversharp, a fountain pen and a comb. On his feet were sandals and on his head a batik headcloth, in the folds of which he had fastened a rose. (McPhee 1979 [1947]:16)

They did not, at least initially, share the foreigners' fears of the vulnerability of their culture, although they did harbour rather mixed feelings about tourism (Picard 1996:116, 1999:39-40). It was not until several decades later, when mass tourism began in the 1970s, that Balinese intellectuals began to become seriously concerned about the potential effects of tourism on their cultural beliefs and religious practices (MacRae 1992, Picard 1996:118-9). But the vast majority of Balinese were far too busy enjoying the new prosperity that flowed from tourism to worry much about any side effects. They developed a working ideology that integrated tourism into a traditional cultural framework-along lines of "All this prosperity that has come to us is because of our devotion to the gods and the diligence with which we make offerings to them." In this model of ritual/economic causation, tourism does not mean very much



in itself, but is merely the vehicle the gods have chosen to deliver this prosperity.

At around this point, scholars began to rethink the relationship between Balinese culture and international tourist culture-from one of destructive “impact” to one of a more subtle and creative merging into a new popular culture which combined the two: ‘Tourism is ... a process transforming Balinese culture from the inside ... an integral part of Bali’s culture’ (Picard 1990:74).

By the 1990s, tourism and the development that flowed from it, were growing so fast that Balinese once again became concerned about what they saw as threats to their culture. At this stage their fears began to shift from a general fear of the corrosive cultural influences of decadent western culture to one of the political-economic power of big money allied with big politics, both based in Jakarta. But because of the political climate of the time, these fears could only be expressed in the form of images of cultural pollution (Suasta and Connor 1999). This time the specific focus was on the violation of sacred space around temples by resort hotels and golf courses.

This threat was interrupted by the financial crisis of 1997 and the associated political crisis which began with the protests which led to the resignation of President Suharto in 1998 and continued with a series of ineffectual and unstable central administrations. The power of central government was further weakened by the process of decentralisation of government and administration which began in 1999.



*Bali Nirwana Resort and Tanah Lot Temple. Copyright image, viewable at [http://www.tripadvisor.com/ReviewPhotos-g294226-d301923-r120659442-Pan\\_Pacific\\_Nirwana\\_Bali\\_Resort-Bali.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/ReviewPhotos-g294226-d301923-r120659442-Pan_Pacific_Nirwana_Bali_Resort-Bali.html)*

After 9/11 everything changed again. The American ‘war on terror’ had the effect of polarising and radicalising Indonesian Islam and the focus of Balinese concerns shifted again to a fear of Islamic invasion and conspiracy theories about an Islamic plot to destroy Balinese Hindu culture (MacRae 2010). The bombs in 2002 and 2005 served to confirm these fears. Tourism ground to a halt and took several years to recover. A minority of more reflective Balinese saw this as an opportunity to rethink the kind of development that they wanted, but the majority sentiment was to revert to a dominant ideology that everything will be OK as long as there are no more bombs and the tourists keep coming (Hitchcock and Darma Putra 2007).

Eventually tourism did bounce back and less than a decade later is at its highest levels ever. Most of the old threats have faded or gone. Nobody worries any more about the corrosive influence of decadent western culture on the younger generation. Government is as corrupt as ever but it no longer has the control it once had and corruption has been decentralised and democratised to all levels of administration. “Islamist” militancy has gone quiet for the time being.

What is happening though is development and more development and all the material and environmental consequences of this development. These consequences have become so obvious and even overwhelming that nobody can fail to notice them. Traffic and rubbish are the two most obvious ones, but there are also more subtle effects on the general aesthetic environment. To summarise, very broadly, Balinese have moved, in the space of less than a century, from more or less unconsciously living what outsiders saw as a spectacularly beautiful culture, to a more conscious self-awareness, through these foreign representations, of this culture. Then, through their engagement with tourism, they began to objectify and reify this culture, at the very time when the reality of their lives was changing away from this culture. They then began to take on the dual views embedded in western representations of this objectified culture- as both beautiful and vulnerable. They then developed a similarly paired ideology- one part cleverly ignoring the effects of change by subsuming it into a religious frame of reference-the other erupting into a series of critical responses to change and perceived threats.

While beauty, vulnerability and degradation have been the main themes of this meeting of popular cultures, the physical environment, both natural and built has, at least until recently, been at best a very secondary concern compared with culture more broadly. But, where does architecture fit into all this?

### **The contemporary crisis of built environment in Bali**

The foreigners’ fears about cultural degradation in the 1930s, extended to architectural styles and included specific recommendations about building materials, such as:

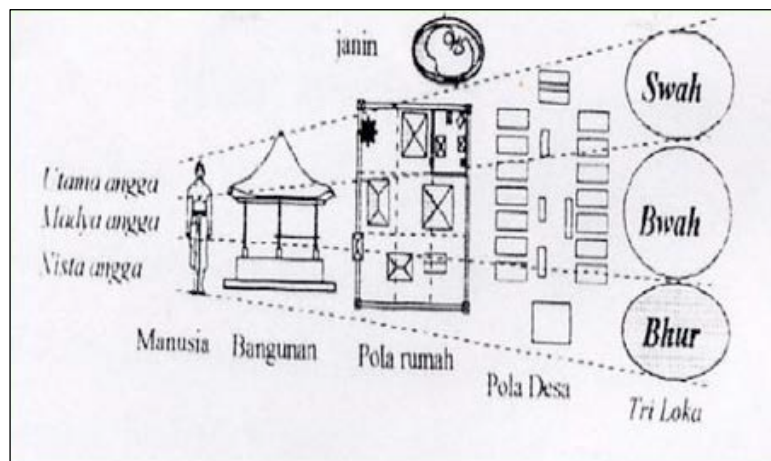
... a heavy import duty on... galvanised iron roofing [and to] teach the villagers to make tiles to replace the galvanised iron roofing....  
(Roosevelt 1982: xvi)

At the same time, the Dutch administration, through its policy of Baliseering (Balinisation) sought to preserve and enforce practices and products it defined as authentic, while controlling and restricting aspects of this material modernisation. Architectural styles were not exempt from this policy and Dutch architects designed schools and even temples in properly “Balinese styles” (Pollman 1990:15-16).

Meanwhile the Balinese aristocracy were experimenting enthusiastically with the modern Dutch *stijl* kantor (office style, Vickers 189:137) and half a century later, such fears of loss of architectural culture were still not shared by “the villagers’ themselves. One of the first formal interviews of my field research in

Bali in 1993 was with a senior member of the first generation of tourism entrepreneurs in Ubud, who was also a successful artist and community leader. He assured me that a sign of the vitality of traditional culture was that everyone who could afford to renovated their houses in the traditional rather than modern/western styles. Through the 1990s most Balinese seemed to share this confidence that all was well with traditional architecture and that this would never change, because these forms were manifestations of basic philosophical concepts of Balinese Hinduism.

Aspects of Balinese architecture were at this stage also to a degree protected by government regulation. The most famous of these was that no building could be built taller than a coconut tree, a height of approximately five stories.<sup>7</sup> This limited the development of multi-story hotels, in favour of an



Copyrighted image, viewable at <http://jasmeenzuhairi.blogspot.co.nz/2010/10/triangga.html>

attractive bungalow-in-garden model, which eventually led to a rapidly expanding suburban sprawl. Other regulations required government buildings to be rendered 'traditional' by having Balinese-looking decorations stuck onto them. This resulted in conventional modernist boxes unconvincingly disguised as palaces, temples or village houses.

There was a small minority of voices critical of the gradual destruction of traditional built environment and aesthetics, notably the architect, teacher and social critic Nyoman Gelebet (MacRae 2002:265-6), but they were drowned out by the majority sentiment of "all is well-the gods will take care of it". Since then however, these voices have grown and now they have become the dominant voice of popular culture-manifest in the regular media articles referred to above.

The emergence of this popular critique of the decline of Balinese architecture may be usefully understood as the latest in a century-long history of Balinese culture adopting and adapting not only global/modern cultural practices, but also global/modern critiques of global cultural practices. More specifically the shift of focus from cultural/religious environment to physical and built environment may reflect a growing ease with more materialist, rather than religious, bases of critical analysis. Exploring this further will be the subject of ongoing research, but meanwhile, I offer the following provisional observations, preliminary conclusions and indeed framework for this research.



The first phase of the development of modern architecture in Bali was inspired, as in the rest of the Dutch East Indies (Kusno 2000:47, MacRae 2011), by the architecture of colonial offices and buildings. While this led to innovations in the palaces of the elite and in the small urban centres of Denpasar and Singaraja, it had little effect on the wider built environment. With the economic development fuelled by tourism since the 1970s however, the styles and model of modern international architecture have arrived and grown in Bali by two parallel routes.

One is the way they have arrived everywhere else, by increasing availability and affordability of the ubiquitous materials of the modern building industry: concrete blocks, corrugated steel roofing and aluminium windows, along with electrical power, and the accompanying technologies such as fluorescent lighting and air-conditioning. These have enabled the proliferation of the lowest-common denominator of modern architecture which now characterise urban development all over the world: the basic utilitarian box, unmoored from any local cultural, ecological or historical context.

The other point of entry of modern architecture is at the other end of the market-the design of upmarket buildings for the enjoyment of foreigners: hotels for tourists and houses for expatriate residents. This produced a genre of extravagant and often beautiful buildings combining international/modern design principles with aesthetics derived from the forms and styles of tropical Asian building traditions.



*Copyrighted image, viewable at  
[http://www.oberoihotels.com/oberoi\\_bali/gallery.asp](http://www.oberoihotels.com/oberoi_bali/gallery.asp)*

These were designed initially by western architects, but later by S.E. Asians and more recently by Balinese themselves. While the cultural origins of this style go back to the earliest expatriate houses of the 1930s, the (generally acknowledged) beginning of this movement was the design by the Australian architect Peter Muller for (what is now) the Oberoi Hotel in Seminyak (near Kuta).

Another key figure was another Australian escapee from architectural training in Sydney, Michael White, aka Made Wijaya. He began designing gardens for hotels, then small hotels and



*Copyrighted image, viewable at  
<http://www.ptwijaya.com/architecture.htm>*

houses for expatriate friends and now designs hotels and gardens all over tropical Asia.

Probably the best known local architect, Popo Danes, whose career has followed a similar trajectory, has developed an approach he calls “hospitality design” which he claims blends traditional Balinese culture of hospitality with Balinese architectural principles in the design of boutique hotels and which he believes are more aesthetically appropriate and environmentally friendly than others.

Perhaps the most exciting and innovative work of all has come from a local company, PT Bambu, owned by long term expatriates and staffed by a combination of foreigners and young local architects. They combine a modern abstract sculptural aesthetic, with international structural engineering principles and local traditional bamboo technology.<sup>8</sup>



*Copyrighted image, viewable at <http://www.bestautodesign.com/green-school-by-pt-bambu-badung-bali>*

On the other hand, the growing Balinese middle class, like those in other parts of Indonesia (van Leeuwen 2011) who have grown up in an increasingly cosmopolitan cultural environment and many of whom have been educated and travelled extensively overseas, are taking on increasingly hybridised lifestyles which blend aspects of global/modern culture with elements of local tradition, often with historical/colonial references as well. These lifestyles include building houses which draw on such diverse influences. For example, a Balinese friend (who will remain anonymous and the privacy of his home unviolated by photography) studied in America, has worked overseas, is married to a foreigner, runs a successful business based on tourism, collects vintage cars and motorbikes, and has recently built a sprawling new residence comprising recycled pavilions collected in Java, reinterpretations and

adaptions of local house forms, and modernist elements reminiscent of the best hotel designs.

While these kinds of developments were initiated and largely driven by foreign influences, demands and individuals, they are best understood, like the broader synthesis of Balinese and modern/western popular cultures referred to above, as a creative meeting and merging of architectural cultures that has been going on since the 1930s. As such, they offer models for a culture and aesthetic of built environment rooted equally in Balinese tradition and global modernism. Such developments however, constitute only a small minority of contemporary building in Bali and more visible in glossy magazines than from the public streets.

At the same time, less and less ordinary Balinese have either space or money to build houses in the traditional style or the cultural resources to imagine, let alone the financial resources to build the kinds of alternatives discussed above. While there are precedents elsewhere in Indonesia for creative reworkings of traditional forms utilising more affordable modern materials<sup>9</sup>, I am not aware of any such developments in Bali. Meanwhile the public domain is increasingly dominated by the kinds of unplanned, commercially-driven building and urban development now lamented by Balinese as well as expatriates.

So, while the problem of degradation of built environment is real, and has been long in the making, it has been mediated and sometimes obscured, by varying cultural understandings of it. Both a critique and an alternative model have long formed part of (what I have loosely labelled) expatriate culture (which is itself a response of transatlantic popular culture to Balinese conditions), but neither has had significant effect on popular understandings, let alone government policy and commercial practice. Balinese popular culture has been dominated by a discourse of subsuming material conditions into a wider framework of supernatural causation which has in turn tended to downplay the seriousness of environmental degradation and over-ride the voices of a critical minority. Recently however, environmental problems have broken through into popular culture in no uncertain manner.<sup>10</sup> A culture of protest and critique is one thing, often visible in popular cultures, but alternative solutions are another, less often forming part of popular cultures. While the 'expatriate culture' described above may be seen (with some justification) as elitist, exclusive, built on economic inequality, neo-colonial, sometimes badly designed and at worst as contributing to the cultural and environmental degradations it deplors, the best of it nevertheless has the virtue of celebrating and keeping alive a vision of the beauty of Bali. It also offers a set of models of built environment that might provide a starting point for a new and more productive discussion of built environment in Balinese popular culture.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The first version of this paper was presented at the 'Cool New Asia' symposium on 26 November 2011. On the evening of the same day, my old friend and Baliophile par excellence, John Darling departed this world. His

commitment to the ongoing beauty of Balinese culture, in the face of the very things I write about here, both shamed and inspired me. If there is anything of value to be found in this essay, I dedicate it to his memory.

<sup>2</sup>This essay is based on acquaintance with Bali since 1977 and regular research there since 1993, initially facilitated by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and partly funded by Auckland and Massey Universities. More specifically it is informed by ongoing conversations with friends in Bali and Java, including Eko Prawoto, Susi Johnston, Gusti Ayu Suartika, Alexander Cuthbert and Odeck Ariawan and especially critical comment from Diana Darling and Michel Picard.

<sup>3</sup>This, and other images referred to here appear to be subject to copyright, but they may be readily accessed at the web addresses shown.

<sup>4</sup>This image is a particularly beautiful example of a genre pioneered by Gregor Krause and indeed appears to be one of his photos (see also <http://baliculture.org/people-community/973>).

<sup>5</sup>The pervasiveness of metaphors of virginity (and its potential violation) is striking across the spectrum of visitor, expatriate, and colonial (e.g. Rouffaer, cited Robinson 1995:41) discourses and later of Balinese ones as well.

<sup>6</sup>Ashley Bickerton is an American artist, who has been living in Bali since 1993. He describes his recent work as a critique of the Gauguin-inspired mythology of the expatriate artist in paradise (Nathan 2011) and refers to his adopted home in terms of such uneasy metaphors as "... a toilet that doesn't flush but has had a bottle of perfume dumped in it." (cited Douglas 2011).

<sup>7</sup>This regulation has been challenged by developers ([http://www.balitrips.net/news\\_23\\_Taller-Building-Issue-in-Bali-has-a-little-Support.html](http://www.balitrips.net/news_23_Taller-Building-Issue-in-Bali-has-a-little-Support.html)), but has never been repealed and was recently reinforced by the provincial parliament ([http://www.balitrips.net/news\\_26\\_The-maximum-building-height-in-Bali-still-not-higher-than-15-meters.html](http://www.balitrips.net/news_26_The-maximum-building-height-in-Bali-still-not-higher-than-15-meters.html))

<sup>8</sup>PT Bambu's leading designer, Aldo Landwehr, died suddenly in 2009, key employees left soon afterward and the company has since been through a change of management and style and now appears to concentrate primarily on furniture.

<sup>9</sup>One example is the work of Eko Prawoto around Jogjakarta (MacRae 2011).

<sup>10</sup>There has also been a parallel chorus of public debate about revisions of the spatial planning laws (RTRWP), which are relevant to this discussion. My thanks for Michel Picard for drawing this to my attention, but it will have to wait for another paper.

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# **Imaging New Zealand: China's views of the world**

Phoebe H. Li

## **Introduction**

Over the past three decades, the whole world has witnessed the staggering economic development in China. According to the World Bank, in 2010 China became the world's second largest economy.<sup>1</sup> Within the broad context of China's growing prominence in the global economy and its subsequent impact, this study aims to explore the Chinese views of this changing world order through a New Zealand lens. Statistics show that the New Zealand economy is increasingly tied to the massive Chinese market: China now ranks as one of the top consuming countries for New Zealand exports (2nd in 2010),<sup>2</sup> such as international education (1st from 2000 until 2007) (Li, 2010, p.66.), and tourism (4th since 2006),<sup>3</sup> which are some of the pillars of New Zealand economy. In addition, as China has also been the second-largest source country for immigrants to New Zealand since 2003 (Li, op.cit., p.63); these recent PRC Chinese migrants will further escalate the economic linkages between the two countries.

In response, I wish to address an important question: what is New Zealand's place in China? To phrase it in another way, what is New Zealand's national image in China? Despite a few specific studies of Chinese tourists and students' reflections on their experiences in New Zealand (e.g. Ryan & Mo, 2002; Bai, 2008), existing research on awareness and perception of New Zealand among the general public in China is still scarce; to date, the most extensive work on this topic is by William Tai (2005), which is a historical account covering the period between 1674 and 1911.

According to Kunczik (1997, p. 47), national image is "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a national and its people". Numerous studies (e.g. Boulding, 1956; Albritton & Mannheim, 1985; Taylor, 1997) have established the key role mass media play in the process of ordinary people gathering and disseminating the images of other nations.. Using a media studies approach, this study aims to canvas how the national image of New Zealand is represented by the mass media in China. Given that traditional Chinese print and broadcast media are still subject to strict censorship(e.g. Lee, 2003; Brady, 2008; Zhao, 2008) and cyberspace has increasingly become an alternative public sphere (Habermas 1989) in the country, this study also intends to investigate how Chinese netizens respond to the New Zealand constructed by the state-controlled media.

## **Research design and data collection**

### **Conceptual considerations**

I first considered applying framing theory to conceptualise how New Zealand's national image is portrayed by Chinese state media. In mass communication, a frame means that the information disseminated through a public source

such as a media report or a politician's speech influences audiences' attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1989; Chong & Druckman, 2007). For Entman (1993, p. 52), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

When studying the mass media and audience reception within China, Brady's popular authoritarianism model of New China provides another important conceptual framework. This refers to "the CCP's post-1989 adoption of the methodology of social control and mass persuasion of modern democratic societies, for the purpose of maintaining the dominance of a single political party and its elite members" (Brady, 2008, p. 200). While scrutinising Chinese media content and public opinions as responses to media messages, I will adopt this new model to pay close attention to three key issues-the CCP's ultimate goal of maintaining social stability (or 'constructing a harmonious society' in President Hu Jintao's term), the PR role played by state media, and the thoughts of Chinese elites.

I therefore decided to concentrate on acquiring empirical data of New Zealand's national image in China's mediasphere from two primary sources-China's leading state media, and the Internet portals most popular with the country's intellectual elite.

### **Data collection**

I began to collect data from baidu.com to obtain a general picture of how New Zealand's presence in the world is reported by China's print, broadcast and online media. In comparison to Google's prolonged struggle in China since its launch in the country in 2006,<sup>4</sup> Baidu has cooperative with the Chinese government's censorship efforts and as a consequence, has become China's number one search engine; giving access to the largest pool of media reports available to Chinese audiences.<sup>5</sup> Table 1 below shows the result of an initial search through baidu.com, which compares New Zealand with the top twenty countries frequently reported on by Chinese media between January 2003 and April 2011.<sup>6</sup>



Country	Total Reports (millions)
United States	40.2
Japan	16.9
United Kingdom	12
South Korea	9.11
Germany	8.97
France	7.87
Russia	6.62
India	5.23
Italy	4.71
Australia	4.51
Singapore	3.87
Brazil	3.8
Canada	3.68
Spain	3.7
Iraq	2.89
Netherlands	2.55
Switzerland	2.55
Thailand	2.48
North Korea	2.28
Iran	2.19
New Zealand	1.16

Table 1: World news in Chinese media, 2003—April 2011 (data source: baidu.com)

It is clear from the results that great attention was given to the United States, Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and Russia, which are strategically sensitive to China, and countries like the United Kingdom, Germany and France, which

are China's important trading partners. New Zealand is far away from the Chinese media's focus.

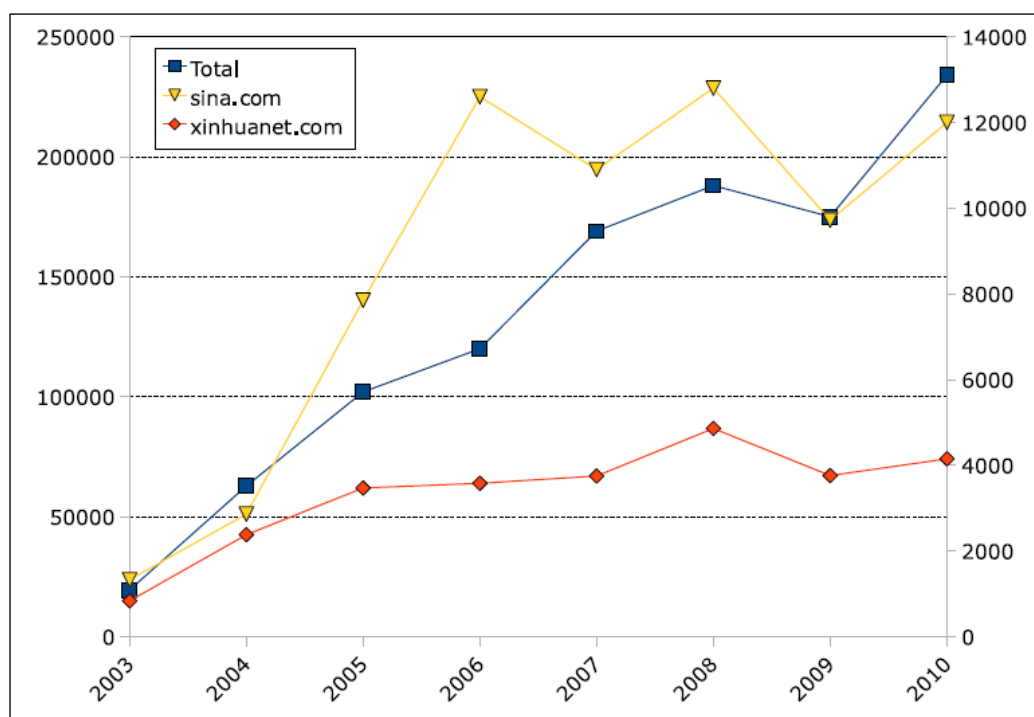


Figure 1

The blue line in Figure 1 depicts the increasing number of Chinese media reports about New Zealand from 2003 to 2010. This increase may be partially attributed to the overall surge of websites in the country; for instance, in 2000 there were only 265,000 sites in China while by 2008 this had grown to 2.878 million (CNNIC, 2009, p.24). Even so, we should also be mindful that the total number of New Zealand news articles published by the Xinhua News Agency (as indicated by the red line) did not change significantly over those years, except in 2008. With its 150 branches all over the world,<sup>7</sup> Xinhua News Agency is the 'voice of the party' and the primary source of international news flowing into China (Scotton, 2010, p.115). Although the editors of both state and commercial media like sina.com, have shown increased interest in reporting on New Zealand; Xinhua News Agency's enthusiasm has been rather static. Figure 1 and Table 1 are both consistent with New Zealand's remoteness from the Chinese media spotlight.

In contrast, Chinese netizens' interest in discussing New Zealand has been increasing, particularly at tianya.cn and kdnet.net, two leading internet portals in China. According to Chinese official sources,<sup>8</sup> Tianya's BBS (tianya luntan) and kdnet's online club *Maoyan kanren* (which literally means 'cats' eyes on humans) have consistently been regarded as China's most popular sites for netizens to post messages. The main difference between the two sites lies in the character of their users. Tianya's BBS attracts a very wide range of people with various interests according to their age, education background,

occupation and income, etc.; whereas *Maoyan kanren* mainly appeals to intellectuals who wish to comment on news and current affairs.

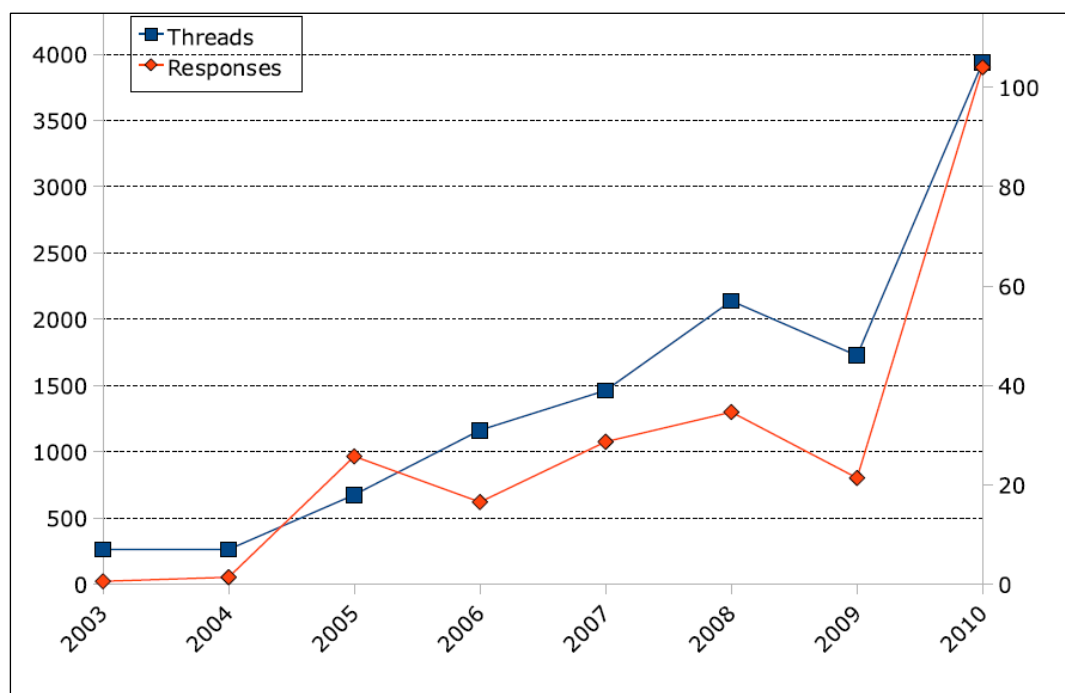


Figure 2

Figure 2 depicts activities on *Maoyan kanren* between 2003 and 2010. On this site, there were only 7 New Zealand related threads posted in 2003 and 2004, which received 22 and 53 responses respectively. This situation changed significantly in 2008 and 2010, during which thousands of posts were made about New Zealand. I categorised the 357 threads, and found that they mainly focused on decisions made by the New Zealand government, particularly about issues of food safety, disaster relief, and Chinese students and migrants in New Zealand. The nearly 1,600 posts at Tianya's BBS reveal a similar pattern; this site even has a 'New Zealand Forum', which is almost exclusively devoted to immigration matters such as how to find a job in New Zealand or choose which institution to study at.

### **New Zealand in Chinese media and focal issues on kdnet.net Fonterra and China's food safety**

Figure 1 and figure 2 both indicate that New Zealand attracted significant media and public attention in China in 2008. This was mainly because of its involvement in the Sanlu tainted milk powder scandal of that year which caused the death of six infants and made almost 300,000 other babies ill in China.<sup>9</sup> Although the scandal broke in July, the Chinese media did not follow it closely until September. State media led by the Xinhua News Agency and China Central Television (CCTV) predominantly reported on how the Chinese

authorities handled this crisis; while Fonterra, the New Zealand dairy giant, was only mentioned briefly as Sanlu's joint-venture partner.

According to the New Zealand media, it was Fonterra that first notified the New Zealand government about the melamine contamination problem, and then the New Zealand ambassador alerted the Chinese government, which began to take action.<sup>10</sup> The discussions on *Maoyan kanren* were initiated by a post uncovering this. Most responses were satirical about the Chinese government suppressing the scandal in order to keep social harmony during the Beijing Olympics in August; there were also opinions like "thanks to New Zealand for saving our babies lives". As a result, the Sanlu scandal turned into a successful marketing campaign for New Zealand infant milk formula, which has become a popular product sold through Chinese shopping websites. Posts at *Maoyan kanren* were dominated by a distrust of Chinese food safety standards. Many supported the New Zealand government's decision to decline Natural Dairy's bid for the Crafar farms. A typical post gave the reason, "Don't sell New Zealand farms to the Chinese, otherwise they will produce milk to poison the whole world."

### **The Canterbury earthquake**

The Canterbury earthquake is another New Zealand news event of global interest, and of course appeared as a major topic on *Maoyan kanren*. Chinese media reports about this earthquake mainly focused on the damage, deaths and casualties. The Xinhua News Agency also provided a large amount of coverage about Chinese students' experiences during the aftershock in February 2011.

The first round of discussions at *Maoyan kanren* were primarily comments on the zero death toll in the 7.1 magnitude earthquake in September 2010 in comparison with China's catastrophic earthquakes in Sichuan in 2008 and Qinghai in 2010, which together killed almost 72,000 people according to Chinese official sources.<sup>11</sup> Chinese netizens concentrated on criticising the poorly constructed civil buildings in China, in particular the 'tofu-dregs schoolhouses' that collapsed in the Sichuan earthquake, in which more than 5,000 pupils died.<sup>12</sup> Many posts were satirical about local governments' rebuilding efforts for the sake of generating GDP growth rather than attending the real needs of earthquake victims; some comments even went further and expressed anger towards the widespread forced demolition and relocation (*chaiqian*) in China, which has resulted in numerous protests by residents fighting for their property rights (e.g. Wilhelm, 2004; Feng, 2009; Shih, 2010).

The deadly aftershock in February 2011 however initiated the second round of discussions on *Maoyan kanren* and changed the positive image of New Zealand in many people's mind. It was mainly because of the Christchurch Police Operations Commander Dave Lawry's comment on abandoning search efforts at the ruined CTV building, in which more than 100 people including 20 or so Chinese students were trapped. Drawing comparison with the Chinese rescue efforts in the Sichuan earthquake, posts were divided by opinions on whether or not New Zealand should give up the rescue operation. Many raised questions like, "It may be because they were Chinese; if New

Zealanders were trapped there, how would Lawry react?” Rational views were also expressed, for instance, “The truth should not be like this. There are New Zealanders trapped in the building; in fact most missing people are New Zealanders.”

### **Chinese students and migrants in New Zealand**

Unlike the Sanlu scandal and the Canterbury earthquake, Chinese students in New Zealand, as a separate topic has never been a focal issue for the Xinhua News Agency or CCTV. Most news circulated in China about these students actually originates from New Zealand mainstream and Chinese-language media, which have overwhelmingly portrayed Chinese students in a negative way because of their decadent lifestyles, and links with such crimes as prostitution, kidnapping and homicide. In response, discussions at *Maoyan kanren* reinforce a common view that the Chinese students in New Zealand are ‘garbage’, and are just spoiled children of corrupt government officials or their rich business associates. A large number of posts even approved of kidnapping Chinese students for ransom; for instance, someone said, “I strongly support the ‘local’ gangs, making a contribution to our country’s anti-corruption effort.”

Original Chinese news reports about immigration to New Zealand are even more difficult to find on China’s state media. Nevertheless, it is the most frequently discussed topic about New Zealand on kdnet.net and tianya.com. The two most popular threads at the two sites were posted by two recent PRC Chinese migrants to New Zealand. They both presented many photos of New Zealand scenery and every step of building their first home in the country. With criticisms of China’s dense population, deteriorating environment, and soaring property price, thousands of responses showed people’s interest in the natural beauty of New Zealand and willingness to live in this ‘paradise on earth’, but also raised many questions, such as “Why do New Zealanders choose to live in wood-structured houses unlike the concrete buildings in China? Is this kind of house strong and warm enough?”, “Does New Zealand have any industry?”, and “New Zealand does not manufacture anything; why has it become an advanced country?”

### **Discussion**

#### **New Zealand’s national image in the Chinese mediasphere vs. reality**

The questions addressed at *Maoyan kanren*, an intellectual web portal in China, indicate that at present the general Chinese public have very limited knowledge and understanding of New Zealand, which is the first developed country to sign a free-trade agreement with China. Except for commenting on Fonterra in association with Sanlu, Chinese online discussions hardly touch upon other aspects of New Zealand economy. The New Zealand pavilion at the 2010 Expo in Shanghai provided Chinese with a window on the country; however, reports of the pavilion in the Chinese media focused on the exotic Maori singing and dancing, while neglecting the significance of Maori in New Zealand’s political landscape. They were similar to Chinese media reports on the Sanlu scandal and the Canterbury earthquake, which reveal almost nothing about the social dynamics of New Zealand.

## **Chinese state media framing of the world vs. public interest in domestic issues**

As mentioned earlier, Chinese media gives great attention to countries that are either strategically or economically important to China. This way of framing the world may have had a significant influence on Chinese public awareness and perception of foreign nations, since a great majority of Chinese netizens seem to view the world primarily as China's 'enemies' or 'friends'. In consequence, when dramatic incidents happen in countries outside either bloc, most Chinese people, even the intellectual elite, tend to use them as catalysts for comment on domestic issues, usually social problems.

### **Chinese cyberspace as a mirror of Chinese society**

Chinese netizens' discussions on immigration to a less familiar country like New Zealand, and their concerns over various social problems in China, including the lack of transparency in government operations, food contamination and environmental damage, reveal the many inner layers of current Chinese society, in contrast to China's outer appearance as a rising superpower. Therefore, these discussions may be seen as indicating the Chinese public's judgement on China's position in the world-in other words, the Chinese people's assessment of the Chinese development model or Beijing Consensus (Ramo, 2004).

We do need to be skeptical of the validity of the information available in China's cyberspace, since a lot of discussions have been censored because of their 'inappropriate content', which Chinese authorities fear may disrupt social stability. Nevertheless, many accessible online comments are provocative and raise further interesting questions: how far can Chinese netizens go further to pursue more freedom? And what would be the impact of it on the wider Chinese society? When answering such big questions, one has to keep in mind that many online discussions can be easily circulated and engage a much larger audience via the hundreds of millions of cellphones in the country.

## **Preliminary conclusions**

This research is still ongoing, and I can only draw three preliminary conclusions at this stage. The first one concerns Chinese news reports on New Zealand. While the official diplomatic line, primarily but not exclusively for external consumption, is that New Zealand is a friend of China, in practice it is framed by China's state media as belonging to neither China's enemies nor its friends. This probably has resulted in the majority of Chinese public having very limited awareness and understanding of New Zealand. Therefore, online information from PRC Chinese migrants in the country may be regarded as an important source of news for Chinese audiences. In this case, our examination has to be closely related to PRC migrants' adaption in and perception of their host society.

The second one is that some members of the Chinese audience do show any interest in exploring countries other than China's enemies or friends; however, their attention is reframed and constrained by domestic issues. In this vein,

Chinese netizens' discussions in cyberspace may be perceived as a mirror of current China-a fragile superpower (Shirk, 2007).

Lastly, there are indications that with China's growing influence, Chinese public views of the world are in their way just as important as official announcements from Beijing. Indeed, China's current political system is unlike western democracies, which allow ordinary citizens to choose foreign policies through general elections. Even so, Chinese people's purchasing power represents a strong voice in China's relationship with other countries, especially small ones like New Zealand.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview> (accessed 20 January 2012).

<sup>2</sup><http://www.nzte.govt.nz/features-commentary/features/our-economy/pages/new-zealand-exports-1910---2010.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2011).

<sup>3</sup><http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/Documents/International\%20Market\%20Profiles/China\%20Profile.pdf> (accessed 9 October 2009).

<sup>4</sup>See Google's official statement and many other links to it, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/new-approach-to-china.html> (accessed 18 August 2011).

<sup>5</sup>The Baidu search engine lists 358 Chinese news sources including print outlets, broadcast media, and the websites of central and local governments as well as various industries.

<sup>6</sup>Data available on Baidu.com can only be traced back to 2003. This study was commenced in April 2011.

<sup>7</sup>For more details about the Xinhua News Agency, see, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/about.htm> (20 January 2012).

<sup>8</sup>The *People's Daily* began monitoring Chinese public opinion on the Internet in 2006 and has produced a series of annual reports since 2007. These reports have been adapted into the *Blue Books of China's Society* released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

<sup>9</sup>See e.g. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/02/china> (accessed 7 July 2011).

<sup>10</sup>See e.g. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/archive/national-news/632473/You-just-pray-that-they-get-better> (accessed 14 January 2011).

<sup>11</sup>For more information about official death tolls for the two earthquakes, see e.g. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-07/08/content\\_8511125.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-07/08/content_8511125.htm) and [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2010/china/2010-05/31/c\\_13325439.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2010/china/2010-05/31/c_13325439.htm) (accessed 17 September 2011).

<sup>12</sup>See e.g. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/07/china-quake-pupils-death-toll> (accessed 17 September 2011).

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## Part Four: Representing a (fictional) Identity

### Bad boys: Exploring juvenile delinquent narrative in contemporary Japanese popular culture

Marie Kim

#### Introduction

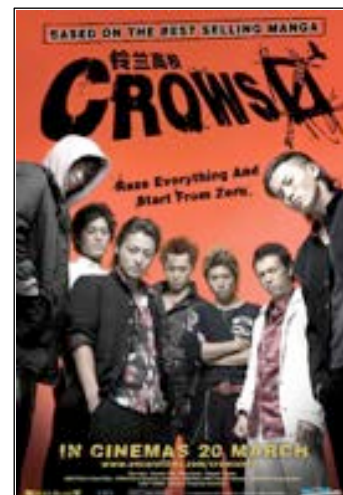
In the 21st century, Japan is rising as the new cultural superpower, exporting various cultural products ranging from Hello Kitty merchandise to *visual-kei* rock bands.<sup>1</sup> The demand and consumption of Japanese popular culture around the world prompted the Cool Japan discourse initiated by Douglas McGray's article Japan's Gross National Cool (McGray, 2002) and promoted by the Japanese government itself. Although the list of exported Cool Japan products are extensive, ranging from high art to animation, not all cultural products are part of this mass cultural export. This article argues that *furyō* (juvenile delinquent) texts in particular form a distinct category that has been bypassed by this Cool Japan phenomenon.

While some individual *furyō* texts have been exported and consumed outside Japan to varying success (for example, Takahashi Hiroshi's manga series *Worst* (2004)<sup>2</sup> and *furyō* films like *Crows Zero* (2007)<sup>3</sup>), an understanding of *furyō* as a specific sub-category of popular culture is yet to emerge in the non-Japanese market, especially in the West. In Japan, the *furyō* subculture first emerged

in the context of high school delinquent culture and developed into a social phenomenon by the 1980s, where fashion, lifestyle and culture were all interwoven, much like today's *lolita* and *otaku* culture. From the 1990s onwards, *furyō* would disappear from the surface of Japanese society and would be replaced by new categories of delinquent youth culture such as *Shibuya-kei*, (Shibuya style)<sup>4</sup> *chiima*, (street gang)<sup>5</sup> and *karāgyangu* (colour gang).<sup>6</sup> The *furyō* style became out-dated and considered *dasai* (uncool) by contemporary youth.



(Left): *Worst* vol.1, Takahashi Hiroshi (2004)



(Right): *Crows Zero* distributed by Media Blasters in U.S. (2009)

And yet, interestingly, *furyō* as a cultural icon has maintained its strong presence in contemporary Japanese popular literature. This article suggests that one of the reasons for this is the strong historical linkage between the *furyō* phenomenon of the 1980s and *furyo* as a cultural icon found in



(Left): *Bad Boys vol.2*, Tanaka Hiroshi (1989)



(Right): *Bad Boys*, directed by Kubota Takashi (2011)

contemporary texts. This can be seen, for example, in the way

popular *furyō* manga from the 1980s is being revived through film adaptation in recent years, such as Tanaka Hiroshi's *Bad Boys* (1988~1996). Also, using Iwabuchi Koichi's theory of "cultural odour", I will further argue that the lack of such a shared image or understanding of *furyō* in the non-Japanese consumers is one of the reasons why this particular subculture has been bypassed by the Cool Japan phenomenon.

Despite the continuing popularity and recurrent portrayal in Japanese popular culture, *furyō* has been neglected by the scholars of both cultural studies and literature, perhaps because of its low profile in the globalised Japanese pop. This article attempts to fill in this gap. Since the usual translation into English of *furyō* as juvenile delinquents does not do justice to its multiple meanings, I will begin by defining *furyō*, and in doing so, argue that the recurrent and nostalgic usage of 1980s *furyō* style in Japanese popular culture over the years has created a shared image in the minds of Japanese consumers; and that the style and behaviour of 1980s *furyō* has become the prototype for representation in Japanese film, manga and novel. Giving rise to a new type of adolescent hero-Good bad boys, to borrow from Leslie Fiedler's analysis of American juvenile delinquent hero.

### Defining *furyō*

The term *furyō shōnen*, or *furyō*<sup>7</sup> is commonly translated as 'juvenile delinquent' in English. Yet a brief etymological investigation alone illustrates the complexity of the word *furyō*. For example, the English word 'delinquent' is likely to be translated as *hikō* which carries a more negative meaning that stresses criminality. So the word *hikō* is often used in a legal context to refer to a juvenile criminal while *furyō* is used to refer to devious and rebellious youth. This subtle difference in meaning is lost when translated into English. The matter is further complicated by the usage of other Japanese terms like *tsuppari*<sup>8</sup> which was used to refer to delinquent students in the 1970s and early 1980s, and *yankii*<sup>9</sup> which first emerged in the 1980s. The general understanding of these two terms is that they are the alternative terms for

*furyō*. While the usage of the term *tsuppari* is less frequent due to it being considered as a *shigo* (obsolete word), the term *yankii* is still used regularly and *yankii* and *furyō* are often used interchangeably in the Japanese discourse on juvenile delinquent youth by academics today.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, further examination of the terms, *furyō* and *yankii* in literature suggests that the meaning and images attached to them are different. One of the noticeable differences between these two terms is that *furyō* emerged from the 'anti-school' culture of high school students, while *yankii* emerged from the streets. Therefore school and one's status as a student plays a crucial part in the construction of *furyō* identity, but not that of *yankii*. This difference is best illustrated in literature where only one term tends to be used. If author chooses to use *furyō* in the text, only *furyō* is used. In both *Furyōdokuho* (*Collection of delinquent stories*, 2008), a collection of short stories and essays, and *Tōkyō furyō densetsu* (*The legend of Tokyo delinquents*, 2010), a semi-autobiographical text, the delinquents of the 1980s (and 1970s) are referred to by using the term *furyō* rather than *yankii*.<sup>11</sup> The fact that these texts reminisce about the delinquent youth of the 1980s by specifically using the term *furyō* illustrates that nostalgia is key element, while no such emotion has been attached to the term *yankii*. This suggests that even though the term *yankii* also emerged in the 1980s, it is used to refer to a newer type of delinquents and the nostalgic sentiment is not manifest.

### ***Furyō* culture of the late 1970s-1980s: An aesthetic of deviance**

In the years leading up to the economically prosperous years of the 1980s, the population of high school students increased substantially. In order to deal with the increasing numbers of students, school authorities began to enforce carefully prescribed routines, dress codes and a strict code of behaviour. The school regulations applied to students even when they were not in school, and the teachers patrolled the "hot spots" that attracted students in the after school hours like the amusement centres under the name of "daily guidance," (G. Foljanty-Jost, 2003) The increase in the student population also led to an increase in competition for university entrance, giving birth to the term *juken sensō* (entrance exam hell). The competition intensified throughout the 1980s when the number of high school students peaked in Japan. As economic prosperity generated wealth, society began to assert pressure on the student population to study hard and enforce an ideology that the ultimate goal in life was to become a white collar worker and contribute to Japan's economic production. Therefore under such a conformist ideology and strict school system, in the late 1970s and 1980s, rebellion for *furyō* began by challenging school authorities; and the first step of rebellion consisted of breaking school regulations by refusing to wear the standard school uniform.

The *gakuran* (school uniform) was the typical Meiji military style high school uniform until the late 1980s and *furyō* formed their identity as 'delinquents' by making various alterations to the standard uniform issued by schools. This was to present an 'anti-school' stance rather than to look 'cool'. The pants were widened (*bontan*), or customised into high waisted pants, the jackets were either lengthened (*nagaran*) or shortened (*tanran*), with the words "The Great Empire of Japan (*dainihon teikoku*)" and school name embroidered in

red or orange thread. In addition, the national flag badge and school badge were worn on the collar. Such a style became a tradition rather than a trend, and was passed down from one generation of *furynd* to the next as the 'dress code' of *furys* (Endo, 2010). It was not about looking 'cool' but looking like a delinquent, differentiating oneself from non-delinquents; for example it was customary for *furylo* to tape the handles of their school bag with white or red tape which was understood as a message inviting other *furyap* for a fight. These styles did not spread like the later uniform fads (for example, the later customisation which was inspired by the hip-hop style) which spread across delinquent and non-delinquents alike. The *furya* style functioned as group recognition amongst the *fury* and at the same time, as a statement to society of their "*fury*" status. Clothing was a crucial element in their performance of "*furya*" identity.

In addition to customising the school uniform, *furyō* borrowed the greaser style from 1950s American juvenile delinquent culture. For example, *riizento* (pompadour) became the standard hairstyle of *furyō*, and they also donned the leather jacket and blue jeans, which was the standard clothing of *bosozoku* (motorcycle gang)<sup>12</sup> before the spread of *tokkōfuku* (gang uniform adapted from the kamikaze pilot uniform). Although *bōsōzoku* and *furyō* are two separate identities, at times they overlapped as some delinquents identified themselves as both *furyō* and *bōsōzoku* by associating with delinquents in school and with members of a motorcycle gang outside school. Professor of Arts and Design, Narumi Hiroshi explains that the *furyō* style is an amalgam of various symbols of rebellion, borrowed from a wide range of styles; from greaser style in 1950s, to Japanese right-wing supporter style. The right-wing motif was especially popular among the *bōsōzoku* members, but the incorporation of the rising sun flag, the use of words like "Empire" and *tokkōfuku* was not a statement of allegiance to right-wing political organisation or even to the Emperor, but rather these motifs were simply chosen because they looked "threatening" (Narumi, 2009). Narumi makes a comparison with the British punk style, where Nazi symbols were used not for their ideological import but for their shock-value. The same can be said of the Japanese right-wing inspired symbols and phrases that were used by *furyō* for the purpose of looking dangerous and different, rather than 'cool'.

A similar approach is reflected in the way *furyō* rigorously customised various fashion items. Narumi points out that in the late 1970s the *furyō* style was not so extreme but by the time it reached its peak in the 1980s, the *riizento* hair style was done up in an almost comic fashion (the bigger the better), and the *tokkōfuku* became more colourful and decorative. The *furyō* style was about being noticed and going to extremes rather than looking trendy and Higa Kenji calls this a *hazushi no bigaku* (Higa, 2008). This aesthetic is also reflected in the way *bōsōzoku* customised their vehicles. Often the body of the vehicle was in black, with the logo and various symbols of rebellion painted or stuck on for a display of masculinity but at the same time, the seats were upholstered with pink or purple velvet materials and the handlebars were decorated with perfume bottles or soft toys. Higa points out that if the vehicle was customised in a completely masculine manner, it would send the message that they were "trying to look cool" which was against the aesthetics

of *furyō*. A similar mixture of masculinity and femininity can be seen in *furyō*'s choice of clothing as it was a trend among *furyō* to wear women's sandals. The addition of a feminine item to the overall masculine style unbalances the whole style, reflecting their desire to be different and extreme. Narumi observes that due to this aesthetic of deviation, the *furyō* style is too extreme and lacks cool-ness and therefore cannot be commodified as a "fashion trend" (Narumi, 2009).

### **The rise and fall of the *furyō* phenomenon: The commodification of *furyō***

Originally, the *furyō* style was about rejecting and resisting mainstream culture but it gradually turned into fashion trend. According to Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, it is not uncommon for counterculture to transform into mass culture, indeed it is inevitable. They examine American countercultures such as Punk and Hippies which began as a counterculture but transformed into mass culture as the market began to produce designer safety-pins and peace medallions. Similar observations can be made of the development of *furyō* culture in the 1980s; the shift from counterculture to mass culture is best illustrated by the way *furyō* protagonists emerged in popular mainstream media in the early 1980s. For example, the development of *furyō* manga can be traced back to two quintessential manga, Yoshida Satoshi's *Shonan bakusō zoku* (Shonan Speed Tribe, 1982~1988) and Kiuchi Kazuhiro's *Be-Bop High School* (1983~2003). The plots of these manga revolved around a group of *furyō* who spent their high school years rebelling against school and society and *furyō* protagonists were glorified as the 'new' heroes of Japanese popular culture by their readers. These *furyō* manga illustrate not only the popularity of *furyō* texts but also exemplify the rigorous commodification of *furyō* in the 1980s. Both manga were adapted into various different media, ranging from film, television series, OVA (original video animation), V-cinema (direct-to-video film), television game, and even a *pachinko* machine. Such extensive adaptations illustrate how *furyō* was marketed towards mainstream consumers.

At the same time, the emergence of bands like Carol and Yokohamaginbae<sup>13</sup> in the Japanese music scene in the 1980s turned the anti-school *furyō* style into a fashion trend. The *furyō* style such as *riizento* and leather jackets were used as a stage costume by these bands and became a 'new trend' among Japanese youth in the 1980s. This was also when the term *tsuppari* emerged as a new label, marking the further commodification of *furyō*.

Yokohamaginbae, who rose to fame with the popularity of Tsuppari High School Rock 'n' Roll in 1981, played a crucial role in spreading not only the *furyō* style but, at the same time, spreading the 'positive rebel' image, mirroring the construction of the *furyō* hero in popular culture through serialisation in the aforementioned manga. As positive rebels, the band members opposed school violence, drugs and under-age smoking, urged fans to attend school, and argued that being a *tsuppari* (*furyō*) was not about breaking rules or participating in delinquent activities. Leaving aside the fact that what they told their fans in their interviews often contradicted the lyrics of Tsuppari High School Rock 'n' Roll (which was generally about *furyō* behaviour such as fighting and smoking), the popularity of Yokohamaginbae



illustrates how *furyō* culture moved away from the 'anti-school' anarchistic culture and became incorporated into mass culture.

Through these cultural icons, *furyō*, which had been considered a social menace in the 1970s, was turned into a 'sell' factor by the Japanese entertainment industry by the 1980s. Through rising popularity and rigorous commodification, *furyō* became transformed throughout the 1980s from the 'anti-school' tradition of delinquent students to a fad. The *furyō* phenomenon reached its peak when the *nameneko* (Perlorian)<sup>14</sup> character was created by Tsuda Satoru, who produced photos of kittens dressed in *furyō* style, and displaying *furyō* behaviour. These images of *furyō* kittens were an enormous hit among Japanese youth in the 1980s, and at the height of their popularity, there were more than five hundred items of merchandise available. Superficially, this may seem like the peak of the *furyō* phenomenon but in the light of developments in the late 1980s and its eventual decline in the 1990s, it is more appropriate to suggest that the emergence of *nameneko* foreshadowed the end of a fad. *Nameneko* had reduced *furyō* to a 'cute' character, a collection for school girls, moving ever further away from the deviance of the original *furyō* culture.



*Nameneko mock driver's licences*

Through commodification, *furyō* had become part of 'coolness' (and eventually 'cuteness' to a certain extent through *nameneko*) and thus subject to becoming old-fashioned and being replaced by the next 'cool' style; indeed, by the 1990s, *furyō* style was considered *dasai* (uncool) by mainstream Japanese youth. More importantly, the *furyō* style was also discarded by Japanese delinquents because through its commodification, the *furyō* style no longer sent the desired message of deviance' which was crucial to the performance of *furyō* identity. Today, as noted by many scholars, the *furyō* style has disappeared from the streets of Japan and only exists in the form of *cosplay* (costume play) (Hirota, 2008; Nanba, 2009; Narumi, 2009).

### ***Furyō* as a sub-category of literature**

By contrast, the fictional representation of *furyō* in Japanese popular culture survived the end of the fad and the portrayal of *furyō* continued in textual media. The portrayal of *furyō* as 'positive rebels' first emerged in the early 1980s with quintessential works such as Kiuchi Kaxukito's *Be-Bop High School*. Leslie Fielder terms such delinquent heroes as "good bad boys" and explains that society may regard delinquent boys as a menace to society but if

they are morally sound they are “good inside”, making them “good bad boys” rather than “bad bad boys” (Fiedler, 1960). Fiedler was referring to juvenile delinquent characters in American literature but his analysis of good bad boys can also be applied to the study of *furyō* since the protagonists in *furyō* literature illustrate Fiedler’s good bad boy traits. This good bad boy narrative instigates empathy towards fictional *furyō*, enabling a wider audience to enjoy the protagonists’ rebellion and adventures. Heath and Potter argue that the reason why consumers are drawn to deviance (i.e. counterculture) is based on Freud’s theory of human nature, whereby the human desire to be ‘bad’ is governed and restrained by the ego (Heath and Potter, 2004). According to this theory, the appeal of *furyō* is the result of this underlying desire to be bad and explains why many *furyō* texts were consumed not just by delinquents but also by a non-delinquent readership. Thus vicarious access to delinquency and rebellion can be seen as a vital component of *furyō* texts.

### Fictional *furyō* in contemporary films

*Crows Zero* (2001) and *Badass Rumble* (2010) are both examples of the rigorous commodification of *furyō* since *Crows Zero* was a spin-off film of the popular *furyō* manga by Takahashi Hiroshi, and *Badass Rumble* was an film adaptation of the popular *furyō* television game of the same title. In both these films, the plot revolves around main characters who strive to be the toughest and the best fighters in their school, focusing on their friendship and loyalty, which can be interpreted as a display of ideal masculinity. This is a prototypical plot in the *furyō* narrative that originates from *Bebop High School*.



Crows Zero (2001)

Despite engaging in violence, the protagonists are depicted as kind, and morally healthy youth who fight to prove their strength, not for the love of violence or for greed; they are good bad boys. They often end up helping a damsel in distress or a helpless civilian, and their violence is depicted as a display of their strength and heroism, rather than criminality.



Badass Rumble (2010)

In terms of target audience, *Crows Zero* targeted a mainstream audience while *Badass Rumble* targeted a specific audience, the fans of the game. This is not only indicated by the budget or the casting of the two films but also by the way the *furyō* style was used. The characters from *Badass Rumble* are in full 1980s *furyō* style, which is considered “*dasai*” (un-cool) by contemporary Japanese youth, while in *Crows Zero*, the traditional *furyō* style is toned down and incorporates more contemporary styles to add a ‘cool’ element to the film, which can be interpreted as an attempt to attract a



wider audience. For example, not all the characters wear the old school prototypical *furyō* fashion. *Furyō* films like *Waruboro* (2007), which has a similar plot but a lighter and more comic atmosphere, suggests that when the genre is comedy, the traditional *furyō* style is used so that this *dasai* aspect can add to the humour. Whereas, in more serious films like *Crows Zero*, the portrayal of protagonist as the 'cool' character is vital and therefore the traditional *furyō* style is somewhat toned down.



Figure 1 *Waruboro* (2007)

### Fictional *furyō* in contemporary manga

*Furyō* manga and film have developed alongside each other as adaptation between these two media is frequent. One of many similarities between them would be the usage of the *furyō* style. In a similar way to the film *Waruboro*, in comedy manga like *Kyokara orewa!!* (Today, It's My Turn!!, 1993~), the characters are depicted in an old school *furyō* style. Yet in more serious manga that glamorise the struggle of becoming the toughest and strongest fighter in school, like Takahashi Hiroshi's *Worst*, and Yamamoto RYūichirō's *Samurai Soldier*, the 1980s *furyō* style is toned down and their fashion tends to be more up-to-date.



Today, It's My Turn!! Nishimori Hiroyuki (1993~)

Yet some elements of the *furyō* style are retained like the *riizento* hair style and the greaser-inspired style of the *bōsōzoku* to differentiate the protagonists from other thuggish youth. This suggests both that clothing plays a crucial role in the depiction of *furyō* as good bad boys and that their behaviour is signified by the *furyō* style. Like the *furyō* heroes of the films, the fictional *furyō* in manga strive to be the toughest students and are misunderstood but decent youth, who exercise violence not out of greed but only to prove their strength or to protect others. Again, violence is a display of masculinity and the *furyō* protagonist is glorified by the manga artists through the good bad boy characteristics; for example, their violence is strictly directed against other *furyō* and never against a civilian or those unwilling to fight.



*Worst* Takahashi Hiroshi (2001~)

Traditionally, *furyō* texts were set in school since the *furyō* phenomenon emerged out of the 'anti-school' movement among delinquent students, but an

exploration of contemporary *furyō* manga shows that there is a shift in setting. In works like *Worst* (2001~), the story is set in school and the overall plot of the series is about the protagonist becoming the leader of the *furyō* in his school, but in more recent manga like *Samurai Soldier* (2008~), the story is set on the streets of Shibuya and the protagonist is not a student but works at a flower shop. This shift from school to street is also evident in novels like Ishida Ira's *Ikebukuro uesuto gēto pāku* (*Ikebukuro West Gate Park*, 1998~) series which suggests that although a strong continuity with the 1980s *furyō* culture is maintained, evolution is also taking place and more contemporary styles or issues that are faced by Japanese youth today, are incorporated.



*Samurai Soldier* Yamamoto Ryūichirō (2008~)

### ***Furyō* in autobiography: remembering *furyō***

While the *furyō* narrative thrived in film and manga, the representation of *furyō* in literary texts did not emerge until the 1990s. For example the only *furyō* novel to enjoy commercial success was an autobiographical text *Oretachi ni wa doyo shika nai* (*We Only Have Saturdays*, 1975) by Urita Yoshiharu who was a former leader of a legendary *bōsōzoku*. It specifically targeted *furyō* consumers and it was indeed consumed mainly by the *furyō* throughout Japan and was treated by them like a “bible” (Endo, 2010). Thus, the publishers had assumed that the *furyō* contents would only attract *furyō* consumers. It was also assumed that delinquents did not read novels since the *furyō* phenomenon had emerged from the “anti-school” culture and that *furyō* would view books as tools of their nemesis, the school authorities. Nagae Akira notes that *furyō* were indeed rarely seen in bookstores since they considered bookstores as the territory of the enemy and preferred to purchase magazines and manga from convenience stores instead (Nagae, 2008).

It was the publication of the *Kishiwada shonen gurentai* (Young Thugs) series, written by an ex-*furyō* Nakaba Riichi in the 1990s that heralded the eventual emergence of a *furyō* sub-category in literature. The publication of autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novels depicting experience as an original style *furyō* evoked nostalgia for the 1980s among readers; this remains a popular genre, as illustrated by the recent success of Shinagawa Hiroshi's *Drop* (2006) which was also successfully adapted into film. In autobiographical or semi-autobiographical texts, the authors often depict ‘good bad boys’ and the narrative stresses the fact that they are delinquents *but* decent boys, by emphasising that they may be *furyō* but they are not *hiko* (juvenile criminal). For example, looking back on his youth, Japanese writer Asada Jiro who contributed to *Furyōdokuho* (2008), claims that he was a *furyō* but not a *hikō*, and that he “was good for nothing but, not a criminal” (Asada, 2008). Kaido Ryūichirō, another contributor to the same book, also makes a similar statement by saying that *furyō* have no desire to become professional criminals (Kaido, 2008). These narratives by former *furyō* claim authenticity in their depiction of *furyō* culture and carry authority as they

remember 'their' days as 'real' *furyō* in the 1980s. Through this type of autobiographical narrative, 'authentic' images of 1980s *furyō* re-emerge through nostalgia.

### ***Fictional furyō in contemporary novels***

The glamorisation of *furyō* through the 'good bad boy' narrative begins to extend beyond the category of autobiography, particularly to the entertainment novel (Naoki prize nominated/winning novels) from the late 1990s onwards. Naoki Prize winning author Kaneshiro Kazuki's the *Zombies* series is one such example, which has been adapted into both film and manga. Yet despite the popularity of such novels, the concept of *furyō* as a distinct sub-category is yet to be recognised. For example, on the Japanese Q&A website Okwave, one user asked for a recommendation of *furyō* manga and novels, but out of twelve recommendations, none of them were novels.<sup>15</sup> Also in the bookstores or libraries, *furyō* is not recognised among other sub-categories of novel such as mystery or romance. This illustrates how understanding of 'furyō' as a sub-category of novel is somewhat uncertain in comparison to that of film or manga. However, with respect to cell phone novels, the use of *furyō* as a sub-category is frequent; there are ranking sites specifically for *furyō* novels and pages of *furyō* recommendations provided by the fans of cell phone novels.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the major publishing companies, distributors or libraries, the world of the cell phone novel is more interactive. Most cell phone novels are written by amateur writers, such as Yū, the author of the popular *furyō Wild Beast* series, and the publication of cell phone novels in paperback form is determined by their popularity among their main target audience of high school girls.

Despite targeting contemporary youth readers, the entertainment novels illustrate a strong link with the 1980s *furyō* culture by using culturally specific references such as *bōsozōku* instead of more contemporary 'zoku' (tribes), such as *hashiriya* (street racer) or *chiimaa*. The authors revert back to the 1980s despite the story being set in contemporary Japan. This suggests that unlike the concepts of *furyō* or *bōsozōku*, neither *hashiriya* nor *chiimaa* has yet developed a positive image. In both the *Zombies* and *Wild Beast* series, the *furyō* characters are depicted as heroes who are 'good' inside but are labelled 'bad' by society because of their delinquent ways. They smoke, consume alcohol, engage in violence, do not study. These traits are seen by society as signs of delinquency because the *furyō* have strayed from the 'right' path. However, both the *Zombies* and Ryūki and Mikage from *Wild Beast* are morally sound; in other words, they are rebels but not criminals. They do not show any enjoyment of violence but are dragged into violent behaviour to save their friends/girlfriends. Throughout the series the members of the *Zombies* come to the rescue of helpless students and citizens, while in *Wild Beast*, Ryūki and Mikage are *bōsozōku* members but their main activity is to ride out in their Mercedes Benz and motorbikes as the *bōsozōku* of the 1980s used to do, and are only dragged into a war between *bōsozōku* when they are rescuing the heroine. Such portrayal of good bad boys raises the question as to whether *furyō* are really as 'bad' as social values suggest, and further, question those very values that label these 'good' boys as 'bad'. Thus

by portraying such *furyō* characters, these texts subvert the values enforced by mainstream society and encourage their readers to question them.

Unlike the autobiographical texts, these novels cannot claim authority but can claim 'authenticity' via nostalgia, or what Arjun Appadurai refers to as "imagined nostalgia" (Appadurai, 1996). Appadurai argues that mass culture creates an illusion or a feeling of nostalgia for things that consumers have never really experienced. The recurrent portrayal of *furyō* in popular culture since the 1980s has created a shared idea and image of *furyō* in the minds of contemporary readers. Therefore even though *furyō* has become out-dated, readers are able to recognise them as they share this 'imagined nostalgia' for 1980s *furyō* culture. The *riizento* and *gakuran* are no longer seen in reality but these nostalgic elements have become a crucial part of fictional *furyō*, especially in film and manga representations. However, when the medium shifts from a visual to a literary text, style or appearance loses its centrality in the portrayal of *furyō*. In *Bungakuteki Shōhingaku* (2004) Saito Minako makes the observation that in adolescent novels, fashion is not depicted in detail, and points out that even in Tanaka Yasuo's *Somewhat Crystal* (1981) which refers to hundreds of brand names, clothing is not described but rather, only the brand names are given. Saito goes on to note that clothing is depicted in detail only when the characters are dressed poorly, dressed up or in special costume. Although her analysis does not refer specifically to *furyō* novels, a similar observation can be made in this context.

In all three volumes of the *Zombies* series, *Revolution No.3* (2001), *Fly Daddy Fly* (2003) and *Speed* (2005), descriptions of clothing are kept to a minimum. The only time when the protagonist refers to the school uniform is when he describes how he used to wear his uniform before he became a *furyō*, suggesting that he now, wears uniform in *furyō* style. Similarly in the *Wild Beast* series, the depiction of clothing is minimal; for example when the protagonist realises that Ryūki and Mikage, the *bōsōzoku* members she befriends, are in fact high school students only when she sees them wearing a grey *gakuran* uniform. The uniform is mentioned not to indicate their '*furyō*' status but to indicate that they were high school students. The detailed depiction of the typical *furyō* style is absent in these texts. The crux of *furyō* portrayal in novels is behaviour rather than appearance; this is what drives the plot, where the protagonist and his friends repeatedly express their hatred for mainstream culture. This is most explicit in *Revolution No.3*: the *Zombies* refuse to carry a cell phone, a 'must-have' item of a typical Japanese student, reject karaoke, one of most popular leisure activities of a typical Japanese student, refuse to support the local baseball team, the Giants, and despise *Shibuya-kei*, the contemporary youth trend. These rejections of mainstream culture illustrate the refusal of the protagonist and his friends to conform to mainstream values. Such behaviour suggests the *furyō* style in the minds of the readers who would already be familiar with it through its recurrent depiction in the media. Thus these novels appeal to an assumed community of readers with a shared culture, and there is no need for a detailed depiction; clothing items or commodities are used as a reference point that triggers the reader's imagination.



### Re-visualising *furyō* novels: Reconfiguration of *furyō*

However, when *furyō* novels are adapted into visual media such as manga or film, the appearance of *furyō* characters becomes foregrounded again. When these characters are re-visualised the 'authentic' *furyō* style implied in the novelistic representation is diluted.

As the next images illustrate, the '*furyō*-ness' is lost; visual adaptations of *Fly, Daddy, Fly* (2005) especially the film adaptation, have moved away from the prototypical *furyō* style completely as there are no nostalgic elements, like customised *gakuran* or the *riizento*, that link them to the 1980s *furyō* culture. Also in the *Wild Beast* series key words like *bōsozōku* serve as the link between the 1980s *furyō* culture in the text, but the visuals are toned down, as illustrated by the appearance of Ryūki in the manga version. His appearance alone does not suggest that he is the head of *bōsozōku*, let alone a *furyō* due to the lack of more recognisable and expected *furyō* styles that are common in *bōsozōku* manga and film. This lack of traditional *furyō* elements suggest that *furyō* is indeed still *dasai* (un-cool) and that in order to appeal to wider consumer base, the industry has revamped the characters so they look 'normal' by the standards of contemporary youth culture.



(Left): *Fly, Daddy, Fly* [Manga] (2005)

(Middle): *Fly, Daddy, Fly* [Motion picture] (2005)

(Right): *Wild Beast* [Manga] (2011)

### Conclusion

The original *Furyō* style begins as self-consciously uncool but becomes cool via a commodification process through which a gradual loss of those characteristics through which '*furyō*-ness' is constituted takes place. However, the original uncool version is reconstituted in post-1980s popular fiction via an imagined nostalgic authenticity which redeploys aspects of traditional *furyō* style such as *riizento*, *gakuran*, and *bōsozōku*. Although there are signs of fictional *furyō* gradually shifting away from the 1980s anti-school *furyō* culture, as illustrated by the revisualisation of *furyō* novels and recent developments in contemporary manga such as *Samurai Soldier*, the link to 1980s *furyō* culture is embedded in the minds of Japanese consumers through a shared idea of *furyō*. The original *furyō* culture was not about 'cool' but rather celebrated deviance, and Narumi argues that due to this lack of 'cool-ness' it will never

become 'cool' in contemporary Japan (Narumi, 2009). Thus we see a gradual shift away from the 1980s deviance and a softening of the *furyō* style in more contemporary media such as *Crows Zero* or the manga adaptation of the *Wild Beast* series. This illustrates how the *furyō* text continues to evolve and reconfigure the image of *furyō* in response to the contemporary context so that it can appeal to the current generation of consumers. However, the continuity of production and consumption of *furyō* texts, especially in the visual media, illustrates that although the degree of "furyō-ness" may vary among individual texts, the link between the 1980s *furyō* phenomenon and contemporary *furyō* texts cannot be ignored.

In *Recentring Globalisation: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002) Iwabuchi Koichi argues that popular cultural goods carry the "odour" of their place of production/origin. He points out that "odour-less" product is easily exported and consumed in different cultural settings. *Furyō* texts are full of this culturally specific 'odour' which triggers nostalgia and imagined nostalgia for the 1980s among Japanese consumers, whereas, this odour fails to trigger any recognition or appreciation among non-Japanese consumers. Recently, there has been limited evidence of some interest in *furyō* texts outside Japan, as illustrated by the way the English title for the computer game (and later the film) *Badass Rumble* was chosen by the fans, and the emergence of a Facebook community for *furyō*, as well as other social network pages dedicated to *furyō* literature. However, these minor instances of consumption cannot be considered as part of the Cool Japan phenomenon since those who consume these *furyō* texts outside Japan have made an effort to understand the strange 'odour' of *furyō*; without this knowledge, an appreciation of *furyō* texts is difficult. In addition to this incomprehensible 'odour', the lack of a shared idea and knowledge of the 1980s *furyō* culture outside Japan, contributes to the reasons why *furyō* is difficult to export to non-Japanese markets. This illustrates that not all Japanese cultural products can be exported and consumed on a mass scale under the auspices of Cool Japan.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Visual-kei is a category of rock and in Japan that is often defined more by flamboyant costume rather than the music produced.

<sup>2</sup>The manga was published online by Digital Manga Publishing in 2004.

<sup>3</sup>The film was released in Japan in 2007, and U.S. in 2009.

<sup>4</sup>Shibuya-kei can refer to both music and fashion that originated from Shibuya. As a street fashion, it was popularised by the male models from popular fashion magazine such as Men's Egg. The iconic look of this style is the bleached or dyed hair and artificially tanned skin.

<sup>5</sup>The word Chiimaa is borrowed from the English word "team" with the suffix "~er" which is used to refer to the street gang that emerged in the 1990s. They do not have their own distinct fashion style, but incorporate various fashions that are the trend.

<sup>6</sup>The colour gang also refers to the street gang that emerged in the late 1990s, which incorporated African American street gang culture, and Hip-Hop style in terms of fashion. They were called the colour gang because each

gang had their own colour and members wore their gang colour T-shirts to flaunt their gang affiliation.

<sup>7</sup>The word furyō can be used to refer to both boys and girls and the gender is specified when the words shōnen (boy) and shōjō (girl) is added. However, when the gender is omitted, there is an assumption that the reference is made to boys and that the term furyō is used as an abbreviated form of the term furyō shōnen. This uneven gender representation in both academic discourse and fictional works seems to suggest that it is a male-oriented sub-category of popular culture. Although the existence of delinquent girls should not be neglected in the discourse of furyō, the focus of this paper is on boys therefore the term furyō will be used as an abbreviated term for furyō shōnen.

<sup>8</sup>The word tsuppari derives from the verb tsupparu (to defy) and was used to refer to delinquents who 'defied' authority.

<sup>9</sup>The origin of the word yankii is debated to this day; some scholars argue that the word is borrowed from English as in "yankee" since Japanese youth of the 1980s imitated "yankee" (American) style, while some scholars argue that it comes from the Japanese dialect which ends sentences with "~yanke."

<sup>10</sup>As illustrated by scholars such as Igarashi Tarō and Nanba Kōji, the two prominent scholars of Japanese juvenile delinquent culture.

<sup>11</sup>On the other hand, in more recent autobiography such as Mamii ga boku wo koroshini kuru (Mommy's Coming to Kill Me, 2011) the author refers to himself and his delinquent friends as yankii. This illustrates the link between the 1980s and the word furyō.

<sup>12</sup>Although not all furyō were bōsōzoku, in the 1980s at the height of bōsōzoku culture so many furyō became bōsōzoku members that in many cases identity as furyō overlapped with that of bōsōzoku. Thus this paper will consider bōsōzoku as one delinquent activity that furyō of the 1980s were involved in. Also just as the word furyō illustrates a strong association with the 1980s, so does the word bōsōzoku; which is often understood as the culture of the 1980s Japan.

<sup>13</sup>The full band name is The Crazy Rider Yokohama Ginbae Rolling Special.

<sup>14</sup>The name nameneko comes from Japanese phrase "namennayo" which roughly translates to "Don't underestimate me" and Japanese word for "cat" (neko).

<sup>15</sup>The question and answer retrieved from <http://www.okwave.jp/qa/q2799987.html>

<sup>16</sup>The discourse of cell phone novel is often dominated by the argument of whether it is or is not bungaku (literature). Thus cell phone novel is a category neglected by the scholars of Japanese literature and the study of this new type of controversial 'literature' is led by non-academic researchers such as, Hayamizu Kenrō who is a writer and an editor, who published a book on the relationship between cell phone novels and Japanese delinquent girls.

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## **Dragon Balls and Rugby Balls: negotiating cultural identity on the sports field.**

Elena Kolesova

### **Introduction: National identity, practice of the everyday and popular culture**

The performance and consumption of popular culture in everyday life is rarely included in authoritative discourses about national identity and nationalism. In this paper I will discuss some possibilities for the analysis (and understanding) of often unpredictable interactions between global popular culture and the local cultural context. The particular case involves a group of young Maori men who were inspired by *Dragon Ball Z* (DBZ), one of the most well-known Japanese anime, to form their own Touch Rugby team, the Saiyans Touch club, in the New Zealand city of Hamilton. At a time when New Zealand Rugby players had become a popular sporting commodity all around the world, including Japan, due to their sporting excellence, local Maori men drew inspiration from anime characters that do not even know how to play rugby. Why did they choose *Dragon Ball Z*?

Following the trajectory of this interaction between the group of Maori men and their beloved Japanese characters, I will discuss how the global flow and distribution of popular culture allows consumers and performers of this culture to (re)construct and (re)negotiate their own cultural identity, often ignoring and even contradicting 'official' national discourse. Can it be that the *Dragon Ball Z* and other 'foreign' media forms make a contribution towards local articulations of NZ cultural identity? And if it does, what does this tell us about the everyday performance and consumption of popular culture?

Not long ago popular culture was regarded as something trivial, shallow, unworthy of academic attention. In this sense, the question of national identity was disconnected from popular culture. To explain this further I will introduce Tim Edensor's critique of the most influential theories (and theorists) that continue to impact on our understanding of national identity (Edensor, 2002). Edensor analysed the works of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and his co-editor of *The Invention of Tradition* Terence Ranger, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson.

Without undermining the significant contribution made by all these scholars to the understanding of national identity, Edensor notes that all of them fail to address the set of issues that are grounded in popular culture and the everyday. According to Edensor, all of the above authors usually overemphasise the spectacular and historic. The only kind of popular culture discussed is 'folk' culture as 'pre-modern' mass culture that is contrasted with 'official' and 'high' culture, and which is uncritically absorbed by the masses. As national cultural values are organised by a national elite, and supposedly have a major effect on shaping national identity, popular and vernacular cultural forms and practices, according to these authors, hardly contribute towards national identity, and accordingly become unworthy of scholarly

attention. Finally all of these scholars are engaged with the past, disregarding the currents of globalisation that are unimaginable without flows of popular culture.

In contrast to these scholars, there are other authors who challenge these views of national identity based on the historical past, and bring to the forefront the banal realm of the everyday. One of them is Michael Billig who argues in his book *Banal Nationalism* (1995) that the (re)production of national identity happens through everyday practice. By focusing on spectacular displays of national crises, as in war-time, to comprehend national identity, we miss the opportunity to see the numerous signifiers and reminders of the nation that manifest themselves through everyday practices. Billig uses the metaphor of the 'unwaved flag', emphasising that such routine flagging manifests a rather unconscious engagement with national identity (ibid.: 41). However, his analysis does not pay much attention to popular culture as a special field of analysis.

Nearly ten years prior to *Banal Nationalism*, Michel de Certeau, in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), argued that popular practices, whose origins he finds in the culture of premodern peoples, were ignored for a long time in industrial societies. However, he believes that these everyday practices are full of importance for understanding our lives. He proposes to analyse not the symbolic dimension of cultural products or merchandise but the mechanisms of consumption of these products by consumers or "users" of this culture. De Certeau chooses the word "user" instead of "consumer"; he expands the concept of "consumption" into "procedures of consumption" which then further transforms into "tactics of consumption." De Certeau prescribes an active role to the consumer or "user" of popular culture who produces certain new meanings which the producers of these cultural products had not foreseen. As a passive "consumer", the "user" of popular culture exercises power by producing certain meanings that tells more about the struggle of the "user" than the original producer. Following De Certeau's descriptions, I will examine here a particular case of global popular culture "usage" in a local context and analyse the meaning behind this use of popular culture.

This extremely superficial analysis of some seminal theories on national identity and everyday practice provides a certain justification for this project. On the one hand, there are numerous cultural icons that contribute towards the construction of national identity. Or, it is more accurate to say, that through performance of these cultural icons the national identity is (re)produced. The importance of such icons remains unquestionable for anyone who wishes to explore any national identity. However, referring again to Billig's concept of banal nationalism, it is equally important, if not even more important, to understand everyday, mundane manifestations of national identity. According to De Certeau, it is even more important to understand how individuals still choose actively from the market of cultural merchandise and create their own cultural meaning or actual popular culture, which contributes towards their cultural identity. The performance of popular culture by ordinary people through everyday practice does matter!

By 'national identity' I understand the process of self identification with the group that brings people together as 'we' or 'us', and which can be contrasted with 'other' group(s). It is similar to the notion of personal or individual identity, but at a different level of interaction. An individual identity is also defined by individual performance and can be contrasted with the performance of other individuals who perform their identity differently. National identity, or any other identity in this sense, is not a fixed category; it is 'dynamic, contested, multiple and fluid' (Edensor: vi). Such fluidity makes it difficult to explain national identity as a fixed category as today's definition will be almost certainly different tomorrow.

Here I define local identity/culture as an identity at the local, domestic, home level setting. Local identity unquestionably is influenced by national identity and equally it influences national identity. Local identity is also influenced by the everyday, as is national identity, where popular culture is such an important element of the everyday. In Stuart Hall's words identities are "increasingly fragmented and fractured: never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall, 1996:4).

### ***Dragon Ball Z and the Touch Rugby Club***

With the ever growing effect of global popular culture on the performance of national and local or personal identity, these unpredictable interactions are worthy of investigation. The case under discussion here brings together two cultural symbols, one, the well-known Japanese anime, *DBZ*. The other is touch rugby, a social sport very popular among New Zealanders, and one that is derived from rugby union and rugby league and also contributes towards the New Zealand Rugby culture. It is fair to say that in the last two decades anime has become one of the cultural icons of Japan that leads the list of Japanese soft-power attributes. It is equally right to say that rugby for many New Zealanders is a passion, a religion, and a manifestation of 'kiwi'. The two symbols of national identity and identification, the Japanese symbol and the New Zealand one, were brought together by a group of young Maori men who became inspired by *DBZ* to form their touch rugby club in 2000 in the New Zealand city of Hamilton. In the early 2000 these men were in their late teens and early twenties. They moved to Hamilton from Bay of Plenty to study at Waikato University. Not long after that they formed The Saiyans Touch (Rugby) Club. Saiyans is the name of a nearly extinct extraterrestrial race where the main character of the *DBZ*, Goku, comes from.

In the words Lance, one of the founding members:

We all saw ourselves as being set apart from others, for a few reasons. Mainly we were Maori and similar wave lengths at the time i.e. into our sports, social life we did together. We were kind of new to the Hamilton touch scene, we knew about the top two teams 'X-men' and 'Tamatoa'; who also tried to recruit us. But we thought we could make the competition more interesting by putting in our team; and since we all like watching *DBZ* the 'Saiyans' were hatched.

The story continues:

[For the] first two years boys gave it a crack, we were competitive. Also [it created] another reason for us to hang out and socialise, especially after [our practice or game]. Three years along we started getting funding for men's, woman's, and mixed. We had our own uniforms with our own unique Maori design, courtesy of Kawharu Greensill. That's when we realised we had a club and a culture going; we started to make a name for ourselves.

Lance, his brothers and some of their friends, who were also called 'brothers' following the tradition of *whanau*, the Maori word for extended family, were exposed to *DBZ* since their teenage years. Like most New Zealand children who grew up in late 1990s and early 2000s they watched *DBZ* rushing home from school as the series was broadcasted on New Zealand television at 3.15 pm every afternoon. Lance recaptures the time:

All 'Da Brothers' had spare time at 3.15 pm, we all liked a bit of kung fu (Bruce Lee) and *DBZ* was it. It's action packed to the extreme levels (special powers), and because it is animated the only limits are the limits of the creator's mind. 'Asians – freaky chaps'.

The choice of *DBZ* was initially determined by a simple reason that there was not much else to watch at this time for kids after school or at least the other programmes were not as exciting. It was basically *DBZ* or nothing. But when they started watching *DBZ* there was no way back for these guys as for many other youth around the globe. There was one other factor that also predisposed their love for *DBZ*. Their father spent some time working in Japan when they grew up. They remembered their father bringing toys and different memorabilia from Japan that included some anime and merchandised products. An additional detail was that the brothers had some Chinese heritage; they had a Chinese great-grandmother. This Asian heritage still can be traced in their physical appearances. However, as they honestly admitted their Chinese heritage did not spread beyond their love for Chinese food ("Grandmother could cook Chinese food!") and their love for Marshal Arts movies and Japanese anime. There was certain cultural proximity, familiarity with the Japanese popular culture established by them at the early age. But it was really the *DBZ* that captured their imagination.

Before *Dragon Ball Z* it was *Dragon Ball (DB)*. *DB* was written and illustrated by Akira Toriyama, who, not surprisingly, became one of the most well known and influential Japanese anime artists due to the world-wide popularity of these two anime and manga. *DB* started as many other anime with manga and was originally serialised in *Weekly Shonen Jump* from 1984 to 1995. *Doragon Booru Zetto (DBZ)* picked up soon from the *DB* developing the same story line. *DBZ* started also as manga series. In April 1989 Fuji Television showed the first episode of the new series - *DBZ* anime was born. It did not take long for Western media companies, based mainly in America and Canada, to start probing this anime for "Western" audience. *DBZ* went through trial and error of dubbing, editing content, creating alternative musical score, struggling to find initially the substantial audience and eventually winning the hearts and minds of young English speaking audience in the

USA, Canada, Australia, Great Britain and also New Zealand. The new dubbed series was aired on Cartoon Network on September 13, 1999. And this was the beginning of the worldwide success story of *DB* and *DBZ*. Today *DBZ* is translated or dubbed into many European and Asian languages, which makes it one of the most watched anime in the world. You can be in Italy, in Russia or in the Arab Emirates and see your favourite anime. Year after year *DBZ* is included in various "Top 100 Greatest Cartoons" (IGN's "100 Greatest Animated Series of All Time").

In addition to manga and anime there are seventeen anime films (three based on the original *DB* series and thirteen on *DBZ*), three television specials released in Japan based on the metaseries, a myriad of soundtracks released to anime, movies and the games. Live action films have been released in Taiwan in 1989, in Korea in 1990 and in the USA in 2009. The American film was made by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and considered a failure by both critics and *DB* fans as it only grossed \$57 million at the box office. There are also art books and collectible cards released by Bandai, a Japanese toy and video game giant, and also multiple video games across various genres. According to the Fort Worth Business press: "*Dragon Ball Z* a television series that had already been wildly successful internationally and had generated \$3 billion in associated revenues..." (Bennison, 2001:1) *DB* and *DBZ* are a truly global popular cultural phenomenon that originated in Japan but transcended borders and belongs now to the whole world, a form of cultural globalisation. This popularity of *DB* and *DBZ* world-wide supports the concept of recentring globalisation developed by Koichi Iwabuchi that describes the spread of Japanese popular culture in Asia and beyond and questioning/challenges the assumed hegemony of American popular culture (Iwabuchi, 2002). Since 1999 New Zealand youth were exposed to the global phenomena of *DBZ* and loved it.

What is so special about *BDZ*? *DB* was inspired by the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. In this story a monk is sent by his brother the Emperor from China to India to find and bring back a collection of Buddhist bibles. *DB*'s narrative tells the story of Son Goku, a young monkey-tailed boy, from his childhood through adulthood. His main mission is to search for seven mystical orbs known as the Dragon Balls. The one who finds all seven Dragon Balls will be able to summon a wish-granting dragon. A plot is universal and utilises human desire to obtain magic power that if found can fulfil all our wishes. Along his journey, Goku makes several friends. In some cases their relationships may start at the battlefield against each other but gradually they are transformed into friendship. Naturally he also meets several villains. Many of them also search for Dragon Balls for their own reasons to fulfil their desires. The story develops and get more complicated with many interesting twists. Goku eventually meets his older brother, Raditz, who tells him that they are members of nearly extinct extraterrestrial race called Saiyans. The Saiyans were not a friendly nation. In fact, they sent Goku on earth as an infant to conquer the planet for them. However, when Goku arrived on earth he suffered a head injury that resulted in the loss of both his memory and his blood-thirsty Saiyan nature, another transformation from villain to hero. Goku refused to help his brother and assist in the conquering mission. In later

episodes we find out that the Saiyans race had their own enemies and was nearly completely destroyed by Frieza, the galactic emperor. The continuous twists make the story more complicated and more realistic. The themes of friendship, struggle, and victory remain central throughout the entire series. Protagonists endure never-ending cycles of fighting that result in their continuous improvement. The characters themselves do not fit into Western or Disney tradition as the strongest and most powerful characters are not necessarily the largest in size and physically attractive. Goku himself is a monkey-tailed boy whose image does not resemble a superman. Moreover, he has certain humorous characteristics; just look at Goku's hairstyle, his cloth and your lips starts to smile. These characteristics of *DBZ* who may act as superheroes, but feel like 'normal' people, like one of us, particularly appealed to young Maori men. They felt that this is what made *DBZ* characters 'cool' for them.

My next question is how this global cultural phenomena was included in the local or even personal discourse of identity using the example of the Saiyans Touch Club? This question follows De Certeau's enquiry about how media texts are used beyond their intended and pre-encoded use. When consumers of popular culture become active "users" of this culture and create their own meaning beyond the author's or producer's imagination.

Perhaps it was the alienation that these boys felt coming to study in Hamilton from other parts of New Zealand, mainly from the north of the Northern island, that turn them to the imaginative world of *DBZ*. Being isolated from their *whanau* (family) played a role of catalyst in their search for identity. *Whanau*, extended family, has a particular meaning for Maori people. Through identification with other members of your *whanau* you become who you are, it provides an institute for socialisation. Such identification provides security, comfort, meaning to your life and also differentiates you from others. *Whanau* is a place where you grow up, where you know people and they know you and through mutual support you learn to position yourself, firstly, within this particular *whanau* and later within a larger world. You discover/perform your own identity through identification with your local *whanau*. In this sense, Goku's journey from his childhood to his adulthood, his initial dislocation from his own family and creating his 'whanau' through his journey, making new friends, constantly negotiating his own identity, appealed to these Maori men. (Don't we all have a certain book, film, song or any other cultural artifact that had a significant impact on us when we were growing up?) But then it was the martial arts, fights, the physicality and often brutality to an extreme level shown in this anime. Young men like this too.

The basic attributes that appealed to the world-wide audience attracted *DBZ* to these Maori men. However, what set them apart from many other fans of *DBZ* world-wide including New Zealand, was that they did not want to form just another *DBZ* fan club in Hamilton, which is more traditional path for fans of popular culture, but made a decision to base their touch (rugby) team on *DBZ*. In fact, they resisted the notion of 'otaku' because it doesn't capture their essence. This was a form of hybridisation that brought together the *DBZ* values with *whanau* identification. Moreover, the worldwide popularity of *DBZ*

seems did not worry them, and they did not want to acknowledge that *DBZ* was “cool”. They confessed that it did not really matter to them whether *DBZ* was a Japanese anime, and Japanese popular culture is branded as “cool” first of all by Japanese media these days. According to one of the boy’s sisters:

I think that it was the family story that attracted them. Close relations between people were so appealing to them. As the story developed and the boys were growing up and formed their own families these values presented in *DBZ* became even more important to them. And this is what I like about it too.

And another sister adds:

They are all unique different characters in *DBZ* but they all contribute to the family. I think this family motive was and still remains very important for the boys and for all our family. And the boys are also strong characters in their own right.

Bringing together *DBZ* and Touch rugby and forming the Saiyans Touch Rugby Club confirms De Certeau’s idea that the meaning of cultural objects is transformed and reinterpreted in order to adapt it to the popular interests of a different social group and to accommodate their personal interests.

Rugby, including touch (rugby), is a very important element of adolescent’s identity formation for many New Zealand men. (Tackling Rugby Myths, 2005; MacLean, 1999) Rugby is not simply a popular sport in NZ. Rugby is the game that strongly connects with New Zealand national identity.

Not only rugby players themselves but the whole nation becomes mobilized as rugby fans through the New Zealand media to perform New Zealand national identity through playing or supporting the rugby game. The best example of this ‘edutainment’ (education and entertainment) was the 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC) held in New Zealand. Those of us who were in New Zealand during the RWC were reminded on a daily basis by the New Zealand media at all levels (national and local), about how we should support the All Blacks, the New Zealand national team. The fan zone, the ideal controlled cultural and physical environment, was established in the Auckland in the Central Business District (CBD) area. (There were queues of people trying to get in there.) All Aucklanders received colorful booklets in their letterboxes a few weeks before the RWC ‘educating’ us about what we should do as fans of the RWC. If seems this was not enough, and the fan track was established in the CBD where with the help of the map, and with the support of teams of volunteers, anyone could follow a path to learn something exciting about New Zealand Rugby. Thousands of volunteers marched on the streets of the CBD gazing at the faces of pedestrians ready to assist. The culmination point was the victory of the All Blacks in this World Cup. The nation gathered for one more time attending the All Blacks parades that were held in all major cities. New Zealanders and overseas tourists had a chance to receive a glimpse of their ‘heroes’ and for those who managed to arrive early enough there was an

opportunity for a hand shake with an All Black or even to receive an autograph from a favorite player. More than a quarter of the Auckland population gathered for the parade on a glorious Sunday afternoon. The sun was shining for a couple of hours, guaranteeing the perfect display of national solidarity. For those who missed the opportunity to participate in the parade there was a live broadcast. Edensor's description of the modern day carnival easily applies to the RWC as well. These new technologies of entertainment are a feature of the everyday, mundane settings as well as touristic 'honeypots', as selling culture become part of growth strategies (Edensor, 2002:86). The commodification of national symbols and national identity is also strongly present during such events as RWC.

What made rugby such an important part of New Zealand national identity? To answer this question we need to introduce the notion of white masculinity. White settlers started to arrive to New Zealand first of all from Great Britain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were colonisers and at the same time settlers who had to construct their own identity and disassociate themselves from the imperial power of Great Britain. The qualities that were required from these early settlers to survive were associated with physical toughness, courage, strong connection with the land, "mateship" where any display of emotion was regarded as weakness (Bannister, 2005). "When we looked at all the symbols for what is New Zealand ... men and women all bought the same ... symbols: rugby, All Blacks, barbecues ... gumboots, tractors..." (Bannister, 2005:2) All these symbols are connected with "white masculinity" that have associations with the "kiwi bloke" who works on the land. It is hard to find many of these symbols in the city of Auckland these days but these images are present in NZ cartoons, films, advertising, TV programmes and literature and also well discussed in the academic literature (Law, R., Campbell, H., Schick, R., 1999).

Rugby played an important role in promoting white masculinity as a cultural value contributing towards the emerging New Zealand cultural national identity. It was brought to NZ from the Great Britain. In the nineteenth century British public schools started to promote rugby as a part of the educational curriculum. The values associated with rugby included fair play, modesty, and adherence to rules. The rugby culture in schools was associated with 'muscular Christianity' and connected with the notion of sportsmanship (Pringle, 2003:49). The notion of physically strong male body was directly linked with the demand of British imperialism to teach young men the qualities that can be defended as imperial masculine leadership: endurance, assertion, control and self-control (Ibid:3). Significance was placed on pain tolerance. This was due to the belief that great empires of the past had fallen because the ruling classes indulged in luxury and lost its masculine strength (Ibid.:3). Rugby with other sports played an important role in the construction of British national identity. Initially this strong association of rugby with British public boy's schools and with the imperial pastime met moral opposition from different groups of New Zealand colonial society (Ryan, 2005). However, this opposition did not last too long and rugby soon was institutionalised by the New Zealand education system. The culminating point for turning rugby into a symbol of New Zealand national identity was the success of the All Blacks in



1905 during their tour back to 'Mother Britain' (Daley, 2005). The victory of All Blacks legitimates rugby not as a British, or imperial sport, but as a truly New Zealand game, which can be won by NZ men particularly against its country of origin! The national myth was born and the cultural symbol was created.

The relations between Maori and rugby culture started from the early days of colonisation as well. A special school, Te Aute, was build where an elite group of Maori men was sent to learn the British masculine leadership system. There was no better way for civilisation and enlightenment than to become British. In spite of certain worries expressed by the headmaster, John Thorton, in late 1890s that rugby may 'rouse the passion and fighting spirit of the Maori', the love for rugby among Maori boys won and elite Maori masculinity mirrored the 'white' New Zealand male masculinity that also mirrored 'muscular Christianity' of British men (Hokowhitu, 2008:6). For years Rugby, with other sports, was among the few areas where Maori could gain mana in the Pakeha world. Gradually Maori culture and rugby developed new forms of symbolism that mixes the two. It happens at the local level when the National Rugby League team, 'The Warriors', for example, links rugby with warrior culture. 'The Warriors' motif present in *whakairo upoko* – a carved head with a protruding tongue. This melting or interweaving of Maori culture with rugby happens at the national level as well, particularly when certain cultural symbols started to be used (and abused) by major advertising companies that sponsor the All Blacks. This led to a great deal of criticism from Maori people for "suggesting that the primal passion for sport is implicitly interwoven with the primitive physical passion of the warrior" (Ibid.)

I wish to propose that the performing of rugby as a national sport, a national identity with subsequent commercialization of the sport through global advertising often takes Maori culture out of it local context and by doing so degrades the actual meaning of Maori symbols. This encourages young Maori men to search for other symbols of identification. It doesn't make rugby less attractive for these men, as the All Blacks remain NZ national heroes, but it allows them to experiment with symbols from other cultures that may be more meaningful to them than the national campaign to teach the nation how to be the 'right' rugby fans. One of the possible explanations for choosing *DBZ* as the source of inspiration could be in warrior culture strongly present in *DBZ*. When their own warrior culture became deformed via international advertising, it started to lose its coolness that is so attractive to young people. The founders of Saiyans Touch Rugby team confessed that Maori culture encourages young men to become warriors. However, they struggled to find real life role models among them and it made them to turn to some fictional warriors. In the early 2000s *DBZ* was cool. Ten years ago *DBZ* was still associated with novelty, and Japanese anime and manga were mainly unknown to the main stream New Zealand society. There was *Sailor Moon* in the 1990s but it was mainly for girls. Although *DBZ* was rapidly gaining its popularity it was still novel, different and, at the same time, it fulfilled the desire to create their own place in a new location, taught them warriors' values and assisted with the construction of their own identity –their *whanau* was different to others but very inclusive to those who were willing to share their interests and passion for touch rugby, and for *DBZ*.

In the words of one of the founders of the club:

Every year we were getting Maori and [Poly-]Nesians joining up who were new to Hamilton, and needed a family oriented environment to help as a stepping stone into independence. Especially for those who come to Hamilton on their own. We were a family; [a] home away from home.

The Saiyans Touch Club represents a form of hybrid identity brought together by three or even more different cultures: the imaginative world of the warrior culture constructed by *DBZ*, the blend of Maori culture centered on *whanau* and the Touch Rugby culture that is also a part of national rugby culture. Hence, there is also a predominantly white New Zealand national identity that these men were interacting with through everyday practice. I hope that through discussing this very particular case I have able to demonstrate how people can identify themselves with other culture or cultures. The irony of this case, at least as I see it, is that Maori men in the white country of New Zealand choose to identify themselves with the yellow race of the Saiyans. They did this in a very self-conscious manner through engagement with global cultural flows. They did not simply mimic their cultural idols by creating the conventional fan club, neither did they passively consume popular culture. There is an active agency involvement in the production of identities which entails conscious engagement with specific cultures: Japanese, Maori and white New Zealanders. Finally this brings us to Fiske's definition of popular culture:

Everyday life is constituted by the practices of popular culture, and is characterised by the creativity of the weak in using the resources provided by a disempowering system while refusing finally to submit to that power. (Fiske 1989: 47)

This case study also indicates that national cultural identity is more complex than the "official" national discourse promoted by elites or governing bodies, and encourages further attention to everyday practices that blend different cultures in a global cultural cocktail.

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## Part Five: Pop-cultural Intersections

### Animation nation: Social media trends in the promotion of anime and animated music videos across cultures in Australasia

Elisabeth “Bird” Jensen

This paper examines the use (and potential future utilisation) of social media as a means of developing intercultural fan-bases and increased international audience exposure for the creators of popular music and animation. Whereas *anime* and *manga* were formerly the domain of East Asian consumers, these animation artforms are increasingly popular throughout Australasia, specifically within Australia.

As the global flow of popular culture affects perceptions of national/cultural identity, the use of animation as a promotional cultural marketing tool on-line represents a powerful two-way street for the export and import of regional cultures within Australasia. Animation culture which was previously specific to a nation/region is now a global, internet-based pop culture artform.

In this way, popular culture affects the socio-cultural map of East Asia through the international export of its animation culture; and in return, avenues for the corresponding import of Australian popular culture to East Asia via animation (specifically, animated music video clips) are enhanced.

This paper employs a critical realism approach; not a methodology, but rather, a philosophy which could lead a researcher towards various methodologies and methods suited to their approach to research (Easton 2002). These methodologies encompass aspects of qualitative research, specifically incorporating music industry-specific case studies and interviews, Facebook interviews, and personal observation/documentation.

This paper will utilise this multi-method/multi-media approach because it is necessary to obtain fresh data from within the music industry itself, and to analyse this data using methods specific to case study research, while also encompassing current marketing theory in consideration of the results. In terms of the means by which the global flow of popular culture changes the way people recognise their own history, the use of *anime* and *manga* as a promotional tool for the marketing of culture via the internet represents a powerful two-way street for the export and import of regional cultures within Australasia. Social media such as Facebook, Myspace, Google+ and Mixi enhance the availability of shared intercultural media consumption (and interactive commentary) in a way which was technically impossible during the 20th century. Thus, contemporary developments in the technology supporting social media communities have altered their content in an experiential context. Animation culture which was formerly niche-marketed and specific to a nation or region (i.e., within East Asia) is now a global, internet-based pop culture artform. In this way, popular culture affects the socio-cultural map of

East Asia through the export of its animation culture to other nations in the region (specifically Australia); and in return, avenues for the corresponding import of Australian popular culture to East Asia via animation (specifically, animated music video clips) are opened via the new digital inroads of internet exposure.

The internet is increasingly becoming the marketing tool of choice for independent musicians seeking to export their music to the international marketplace. Hutchison, in *Web Marketing for the Music Business* (2008), expands this theoretical assertion in great detail, promoting the use of carefully planned viral marketing campaigns to promote independent artists on a global basis, thus pre-enhancing any export-based marketing strategies. Dwyer and Tripp (2004) illustrate the need for copyright and other intellectual property concerns to be legally established before artists and composers undertake basic entry into the international marketplace, detailing numerous examples of protracted legal battles within the Australian music industry. Thus, an overview of these texts reveals useful content which could pertain to the use of the internet in enhancing the export of Australian music to East Asia, and conversely, the importation of East Asian music to Australia—specifically employing animation as the principal marketing tool within this process. Although much of the available on-line music marketing content may initially appear to be an unconventional source of information in an academic research context, the researcher contends that such material should be included in the literature because the contemporary music industry is constantly in flux. As digital marketing (and in particular, viral marketing) becomes increasingly important as a means of pitching and selling Australian artists overseas, it should be continually monitored and assessed in order to track and document emerging trends (Canadian Music Week 2009). In this context, the international appetite for animation (incorporating *anime* and *manga*) is an increasingly significant tool for cross-cultural music marketing. Animation in general has always been a part of contemporary music video creation. Early Western examples include the animated cartoons featuring the Beatles as characters and with a Beatles soundtrack (but not featuring the actual Beatles themselves as voice artists within the cartoon), eventually leading to a feature-film animation (aimed at a broader demographic) in psychedelic style which did feature the actual Beatles as voiceover artists. Other child-oriented music animations in the same era included the Jackson Five cartoon, and entirely animated, pop-manufactured bands such as The Archies (YouTube 2011).

Western audiences (including in Australia and the USA) have been exposed to an early diet of Japanese anime since the mid-1960s, via popular televised series such as *Astroboy*, *Speed Racer*, and *Kimba the White Lion* (YouTube 2011). In particular, the apparent wholesale appropriation/copyright infringement/‘borrowing’ of the themes, characters, and setting of *Kimba* (transformed into the similarly-named central character of *Simba* three decades later) by the Disney Corporation resulted in massive profits for the producers and brand managers of *The Lion King*, a profit margin not achieved by the anime’s original Japanese creators (Rotten Tomatoes 2010).

Michael Heins, a major distributor of anime in Australia, relates his experience of Australia's early introduction to Japanese anime thus:

For me, I first remember what I now know to be anime when I was a kid. Having been born at about the time television started in Australia, I spent a lot of my childhood glued to the box and watched whatever I could get away with. I watched *Kimba* and *Astro Boy* and *Gigantor* because they were fun. I watched live action Japanese programs like *The Samurai* and *The Phantom Agents* with great interest. They were so unusual and mysterious, plus the English dubs were so corny. It is one of the great surprises to learn that both these Japanese programs were huge ratings hits in Australia in the mid-1960s, whilst in other Western countries they didn't do so well. Did you know that *The Samurai* was the first Japanese TV show to be aired in Australia, and that in 1965 it was Channel 9's highest-rating program, surpassing even *The Mickey Mouse Club*?! It is reported that more people turned out to meet the show's star, Ose Koichi, when he arrived in Melbourne, than turned out to greet The Beatles when they appeared in 1964. And keep in mind that this happened only 20 years after the end of World War 2. Quite amazing.

Through childhood exposure, it is possible that the Baby Boomer and Generation X&Y demographic spread may have an active, or at least latent, favourable predisposition towards the consumption of anime products in early childhood (Winn 2002). This researcher contends that this early exposure and possible predisposition towards anime as a cross-cultural touchstone may result in triggering future import/export purchasing decisions related to music created by Australian artists which is exported to Asia, and likewise the music created by Asian artists imported to Australia, via the use of anime video clips as a common cultural denominator.

It is important to establish the considerable difference between original anime music video clips (that is, Japanese-style anime cartoons which are specifically and exclusively created in support of a piece of original music) and, in fan parlance, the sub-genre of AMVs, which are fan-created pastiches of existing animes and even computer game footage, which are edited by (often skilled) amateurs into new works, featuring the music of their favourite performing artists. (Hatcher 2005)

Hatcher further details the copyright issues presented by AMVs. Highlighting the development of fan created material, he discusses the origins of *dojinshi*; whereby fans of manga (static) comic books create new material featuring their favorite characters, often transplanted into new storylines and settings; and often interpolate popular culture references, characters, and themes into these hybridised creations. Citing the cultural differences in copyright administration (contrasting Japan with the USA), he notes (P.546) that

fans in Japan are free to create *dojinshi* through a combination of custom and certain features of the Japanese legal system. Because of

this freedom, the *dojinshi* business has grown enormously, to the point where some artists make a living off producing *dojinshi*".

In comparison, he cites the numerous legal battles for copyright infringement faced on an ongoing basis by US fans for their re-mixing of commercial storylines, such as *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fan homage presentations.

Moving on to anime style animation (moving pictures) set to music, the development of animated, fan-created anime and mixed media material (especially by fans in the USA) is supported by an anime fan culture known as otaku. According to anime fan Eng:

"The most hardcore fans are the *otaku*. The word '*otaku*' has a variety of Japanese meanings, but has come to refer to the most obsessed fans of them all. There are anime *otaku*, car *otaku*, computer *otaku*, idol singer *otaku*, cosplay *otaku*, military *otaku*, etc. Although some consider the term insulting and degrading, others wear it as a badge of honor... the otaku phenomenon is truly fascinating, and perhaps even refreshing in our society where dilettantes run rampant and everything is presented on the surface-level, with very few individuals encouraged or willing to learn about anything in-depth. Perhaps the *otaku* ideal (its basic attitude) is something we should aspire to." (Eng 2010)

Fansubbers are somewhat different to *otaku* in terms of self-defined cultural identity. They tend to focus more on the creation of re-edited anime tribute videos, edited to the music of their choice; versus the *otaku* consumers who approach their anime fandom as a whole-of-life/lifestyle choice. The Anime News Network (2011) defines fansubbing thus:

"A fansub is a fan-produced translated, subtitled version of an anime program. Fansubs are a tradition that began with anime clubs in the 1980s, although with the advent of cheap computer software and subbing equipment, they really took off in the mid 1990s."

The Anime News Network notes that most fansub material is fan-generated, and is created and distributed (primarily via the post of hard copies, or digitally via the internet) to other fans without charge. Incidental costs may be voluntarily covered by fan donations. However, the fansub ethos is such that individuals who do expect payment for their work are negatively perceived of as 'bootleggers'. While some commercial anime producers perceive fansub material as complementary marketing, other corporate interests have made clear requests and involved some legal action in preventing the distribution of this unauthorised, fan-created material (Anime News Network 2011).

Fans who re-design, re-cut and re-mix existing, professionally produced anime images into music videos with existing, likewise professionally produced music soundtracks may define themselves as otaku fans or fansubbers. However, with the continuing advancement of computer editing and audio technology, both self-defined creative subcultures still produce AMVs (animated music videos) of relatively high (even broadcast-worthy)

quality. It is within this unofficial, unauthorised 'grey' realm that the most significant opportunities for cross-cultural import and export of music from both English speaking markets (such as Australia and the USA) and East Asia (including Japan, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China). It is through the cross-cultural appreciation of anime with a musical soundtrack that fans around the world are exposed to each other's music, even though language barriers and lack of marketing exposure would ordinarily inhibit such exposure through mainstream means. In effect, the AMVs present a viral marketing opportunity for legitimate/professional copyright owners of both commercially produced music and anime releases.

Although in the current usage and digital deployment of fan-created AMVs, the provision of original music as the soundtrack to existing anime visual footage would be undesirable to Western or Asian bands in terms of potential copyright issues and the potential expense of legal battles which may therefore ensue, this researcher contends that there is sufficient un-tapped, original animation talent within the otaku and fansub subcultures to be potentially accessed by original musicians in terms of the invitation to produce new work which does not infringe copyright, particularly via social media communities such as Facebook and Google+.

In theoretical terms, such crossover marketing could assist both original musicians and animators in reaching new international markets. Some incentives would need to be provided in order to stimulate this type of co-production. Perhaps cash prizes (possibly underwritten by a business sponsor) could be offered for the best original animation to accompany a given selection of original music. Another business model could involve the creation of a mutual interest website or Facebook page where musicians could network with talented amateur/developing professional anime style animators, and thus provide the opportunities to negotiate commercial, original anime music video arrangements on a fee for service basis.

Some anime purists contend that anime cannot be called anime (or legitimate within the anime genre) unless it comes from Japan, and is drawn by Japanese anime artists who are already established within their field. As an example, many Australian anime fans only choose to consume material which has been commercially released in Japan (Heins, 2011 pers. com.). However, as with many Japanese pop cultural exports, this researcher believes that anime is now a firmly-established global animation genre, which has expanded beyond its original Japanese boundaries to become accepted and marketed as an international artform, regardless of its geographical provenance.

One significant contemporary development is the increasing use of mobile phones and other portable communications/computing devices as the primary source of entertainment for the younger generation, particularly via social media platforms including Facebook, Google+, and (in Japan) Mixi. The creation of original anime music clips would be ideally marketed to this niche audience via social media, with the youth demographic traditionally being especially desirable in terms of niche marketing of music and cartoons to a



cash-up, trend-oriented consumer base. Harris cites the international popularity of this year's Angry Birds application (created in Finland, but internationally successful), as well as Lady Gaga's releases for smartphone applications, as strong indicators of the financial viability of this rapidly growing trend. He notes that subscription based mobile entertainment products may soon supplant the traditional 'hard copy'; releases of the old, increasingly obsolete business model of record companies which sold music on hard media such as CDs, and film production companies which sold DVDs (Harris 2011).

To date, some successful examples of the use of original anime to market original music exist. Most notably, a commercially successful instance of contemporary music video clip/anime crossover is exemplified by the Western heavy metal band, Iron Maiden, which has previously released material in anime style (specifically visually referencing the 'Killers' album) even including action figures (Hobby Search 2011). This strategy was previously recommended to Australian music exporters by Australian/Japanese Queensland Government export adviser Ken Kikkawa (Kikkawa 2006; Jensen & Jackson 2006).

The Japanese band Chage & Aska created a mini-movie with Japanese anime director Hayao Miyazaki, featuring their music as the soundtrack. (Chage/Aska 2007). However, the release of this music video in a Japanese language version only significantly inhibited its crossover into Western markets such as the USA and Australia. With the continuing advances of digital technology, however, this inhibitor may become a thing of the past. New developments in translation software have created cross-cultural marketing opportunities of previously unrecognised importance. Singerman, in his interview with DubMc, previously described new musical voice-translation interfaces such as Voxsonic, which he notes have "patented processes to replace a translated dub with the original artist's voice", citing Ky-Mani Marley's simultaneous reggae album release in English and Spanish (Marley 2008; DubMc/Singerman 2008).

Singerman describes Yablas's use of integrated audio, visual, and kinetic material in presenting multi-lingual music videos as a learning tool. Similarly, eMotion Studios is in the process of developing cross-language video technologies, and TextUp is also developing translation programs, in conjunction with Voxsonic. Singerman's recent appearance at the 2011 West Australian Music Industry conference (Perth, WA) has highlighted continuing advances in these technologies, which are still in the developmental stage (Singerman 2011).

On a theoretical level within a music marketing context, Asian language musicians in many genres could potentially gain unprecedented exposure to English speaking markets in the USA and Australia through the use of original anime music videos broadcast and distributed via social media, coupled with the continuing development of music/voice translation technologies (such as those described by Singerman). Likewise, English speaking music artists could also penetrate East Asian markets with appropriate language translation

and animated video production. In both the import and export contexts, the cross-cultural marketing pivotal point is the creation and distribution of quality original anime, which has already achieved a soft entry into these cross-cultural markets as comparatively enduring, independently existing artform with a loyal international fan base.

In conclusion, there is considerable potential for anime creators and original musicians from many countries to network and creatively collaborate on the Internet (and especially via special interest social networking sites such as Facebook and Google+). An effective marketing strategy, encompassing existing and emerging social media communities and utilising current trends in consumer technology, would include a strong commercial focus on the production of original anime music video clips specifically for the mobile phone/portable digital device market. Continued development of voice translation software will further assist in international market penetration. The cross-cultural marketing of original music in conjunction with anime, harnessing the power of fan-based social media networks, can thus become an increasingly significant promotional tool for the import and export of popular music between East Asia and English-speaking markets such as Australia.

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## Part Six: Representation and the Subject

### Coming of age in an era of infantile capitalism: Agency and ambivalence in the narratives of Murakami Haruki and Miyazaki Hayao

Jonathan Dil

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the 'Cool Japan' brand-an umbrella term for the attempt by the Japanese government and other interested parties to market Japan's popular culture as a source of soft power in an age of declining hard power-is its unapologetic celebration of the infantile. While Hello Kitty is the paradigmatic example, it is not difficult to find examples of a culture saturated in *kawaii* (cuteness) that invites consumers and audiences to bracket adult responsibilities (at least for a time) to revel in a world of idealised childhood bliss. This infantile turn extends notions of 'coolness' beyond the more traditional bounds of the stylish or rebellious adult or adolescent. As Asada Akira has famously declared, we seem to have entered into a new age of infantile capitalism, with Japan taking the role of poster child.

The focus of this paper is less on mapping the contours of this infantilised culture than on examining the attempts of two of Japan's 'coolest' storytellers, Miyazaki Hayao and Murakami Haruki, to go beyond it. While both Miyazaki and Murakami are at times tainted with the 'Cool Japan' brush, I am interested in the way their works seek to extend the psychological range of Japan's increasingly infantilised popular culture to wrestle with questions of what it might mean to grow up in the age Asada describes. This paper examines three of their most popular narratives: Miyazaki's 2001 academy award winning *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi* (*Spirited Away*), Murakami's 1987 best-selling coming of age novel *Noruei no mori* (*Norwegian Wood*), and Murakami's award-winning 2002 novel *Umibe no Kafuka* (*Kafka on the Shore*). Borrowing from Asada's basic framework, I wish to demonstrate how all three stories portray the psychological difficulties of growing up in an age of infantile capitalism. I will then go on to argue for what I believe this says about contemporary storytelling practices in contemporary Japan and the ambiguous place Murakami and Miyazaki hold within the larger culture.

#### Japan's infantile capitalism

I start with a brief examination of infantile capitalism, the phrase Asada Akira (1989) first made famous in his short essay 'Infantile Capitalism and Japan's Postmodernism: A Fairy Tale'. In terms of a general timeline, Asada sees this system emerging in the 1970s, first in Japan, and later in other parts of Asia, while he contrasts it with two earlier stages of development: elderly capitalism, associated with a mercantile system and the old world economies of Europe; and adult capitalism, associated with an industrialist system and the new world economy of the United States (p.278).

The main quality of infantile capitalism, as Asada sees it, is the way it provides a safe space for children, both large and small, to play freely, confident in the knowledge that they are being protected by a larger parental presence. The Japan Asada sees today is “a playful utopia and at the same time a terrible ‘dystopia’” (p.276), a world in which an appeal to “an essentially maternal arena of ‘amae [or dependence]’” masks the reality that, “[i]n fact, children can play ‘freely’ only when there is some kind of protection” (p.276). Asada argues that providing this kind of protected play space has become “the core of the Japanese ideological mechanism” (p.276).

Such a system, of course, to the degree that one accepts it as an accurate depiction of at least part of the present historical and cultural dynamic in Japan and elsewhere, must also carry costs, from the psychological to the political. Against this backdrop, the narratives described in this paper all wrestle with the possibilities remaining for maturation in such an age, though all three narratives end on notably ambivalent notes. In the case of *Spirited Away* and *Kafka on the Shore*, the barrier to growth is an external one, in Miyazaki’s case, a powerful maternal figure, and in Murakami’s case, a powerful paternal one. This contrasts with Murakami’s earlier novel, *Norwegian Wood*, where the barrier to growth is internalised, characterised by an aversion to sex, an important threshold passed on the way to adulthood. What all these narratives share, on the other hand, is a desire to persist with the heroic journey to adulthood, despite the failings of the protagonists involved and the almost insurmountable forces they are up against.

### ***Spirited Away***

The first story I will briefly discuss is Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*, a film that deals explicitly with themes of growing up and the excesses of life in late-capitalist Japan. By necessity, the discussion which follows is limited, and so I have chosen to focus on just three questions for each story. First, what does the central protagonist do in the story to grow up? Second, what major force or obstacle do they seem up against? And third, where do they stand developmentally as the narrative comes to a close?

The young heroine of *Spirited Away*, Chihiro, is at an important turning point in her life as we first see her pouting in the back seat of her parent’s Audi on the way to their new family home. She is clearly unhappy with the move, which has taken her away from her familiar routines and surroundings. The story takes its first turn as her impetuous father veers onto a side road and down a bumpy track, increasingly losing control of their vehicle, until he is suddenly forced to break in front of the entrance to a tunnel. Oblivious to the protests of his wife and particularly his daughter, the father then marches off into the tunnel, followed by his wife, forcing the reluctant Chihiro to follow behind. What they discover at the other end of the tunnel looks to the father like an abandoned theme park that he speculates must have been built during the period of Japan’s bubble economy and since abandoned.

One of the most prominent themes in the story is the danger of greed. Entering this new world, for example, the family soon discovers piles of unattended food in open stalls, and the parents quickly begin to indulge themselves, the father assuring everyone that he has his wallet and credit

cards with him. Chihiro, however, is disturbed by her parent's impulsiveness and gluttony and walks away, soon discovering the bathhouse for the gods which provides the main setting for the story. As punishment for her parent's actions, the witch Yubaba, who runs the bathhouse, turns Chihiro's parents into pigs, leaving Chihiro with the challenge of trying to save them.

The conditions for Chihiro's psychological growth are thus set early on and her passing of the first test-her refusal to join in her parent's feast-shows that she has virtues that will help to carry her forward. The danger of unbridled appetite is a common fairytale motif found in such classic tales as *Hansel and Gretel*. From a Freudian perspective the message is clear: the appetites or id must be brought under the control of some higher power lest we succumb to our animal instincts, a notion expressed in *Spirited Away* through the magical transformation of people into pigs. Later in the bathhouse, too, the dangers of unbridled appetites are clearly on display. A figure called No Face, for example, offers an endless supply of gold pieces to the workers of the bathhouse who encourage his generosity with lavish food and entertainment. No Face then begins to eat the workers one by one, becoming increasingly bloated, and only saved in the end by the noble actions of Chihiro, who sacrifices part of a special cake she has earned in an earlier episode and which she was saving to try and help her parents.

Chihiro's journey to this other world provides her with a number of challenges that allow her to grow up. The main obstacle that stands in her way, on the other hand, is Yubaba, a tyrannical figure who tries to keep those around her in an infantile state, and someone who, like the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, rules with an iron fist. Yubaba, however, is also a complex character who both helps and hinders Chihiro's psychological development. By allowing Chihiro to work in the bathhouse, for example, Yubaba provides her with a network of friends and mentors and also the opportunity to develop self-discipline. At the same time, Yubaba steals Chihiro's name, replacing it with Sen (based on a different reading of one of the Chinese characters in her name), thus robbing her of her identity and risking the chance that she may forget who she is. Yubaba, it is later revealed, also keeps a giant baby boy locked away in her quarters, scaring him with stories of a world full of germs that would kill him should he ever try to escape.

In this way, Yubaba provides an interesting representation of the kind of ideological undercurrents Asada describes as operating in contemporary Japan. She is the master of a hierarchal system which encourages self-sacrifice and a strong work ethic, though at the cost of individual identity. Moreover, she keeps a giant baby locked away at the heart of the bathhouse, trying to keep it forever in an infantile state and dependent on her. She can be both an intimidating and demanding figure and a powerful motherly presence, binding others to her in ways that are difficult to break. Rather than Freud's patriarchal figure of the Oedipus complex who provides the superego prohibition which in turn initiates the child into a larger social and moral order, Miyazaki portrays a world where it is a matriarchal figure that dominates, seeking to dissolve individual identity for the collective good, while keeping those around her infantilised and dependent.

It is only later when Chihiro meets Yubaba's twin sister, Zeniba, that she starts to gain a more positive image of matriarchal figures. Zeniba explains that she and Yubaba are two parts of a whole, but that they find it tremendously difficult to get along together. By meeting with this more positive embodiment of the mother figure, Chihiro is able to put her own development on more solid ground. With renewed confidence, she returns to Yubaba and passes her final test, correctly guessing that her real parents are not in a line-up of pigs that Yubaba has put on display. What this final scene shows, however, is that rather than defeating Yubaba, Chihiro has simply learned how to outsmart her. Yubaba, on the other hand, remains unchanged, and so do Chihiro's parents as they are later returned to their human form. In this way, there is a sense that despite Chihiro's own psychological development, the adult world she is returning to may be unable to accommodate her development.

Susan Napier makes a similar observation, noting of the film's ending:

It is uncertain how much Chihiro will retain from her adventure in the liminal world, since Miyazaki leaves it deliberately vague as to how much she will remember. The film makes it obvious that her parents have learned nothing from their experience. *Spirited Away* ends with the family once again in a liminal state, still on the move toward their new home. (pp. 308-309)

In *Spirited Away* we thus have the first example of a dynamic found in all three narratives discussed in this paper. A young hero faces challenges and difficulties and through successfully meeting them starts to develop. Eventually, however, this growth is undermined by either internal or external forces, in this case a powerful matriarchal figure that tries to keep those around her in an infantile state. As the narrative ends, the young hero has obviously developed, but it remains unclear whether the adult world she is returning to will be able to accommodate her growth. While the details will differ, many of these same elements can be found in the fiction of Murakami Haruki.

### **Norwegian Wood**

The first Murakami story I will examine, *Norwegian Wood*, is a nostalgic tale told by a 37-year-old narrator, Watanabe Tōru, who is reminiscing about his student days in 1960s Tokyo and the two women who consumed his affections at the time: Naoko and Midori. The two women offer a case study in contrasts: Midori is a symbol of eros, Naoko of thanatos. Freud's early career was consumed with what he called the life instincts, the basic instinctual drives for sex and survival and the psychological consequences they have for individuals when they come into conflict with competing cultural and social norms. Yet later in his career, Freud also came to write about the death drive, the unconscious desire for the cessation of desire and even for personal annihilation (Freud, 2011). The two women in Murakami's novel play off this kind of Freudian dichotomy, with Midori constantly obsessed with sex and Naoko frigid and obsessed with death. Indeed, Watanabe's memoir begins



with his emotionally charged recollection of Naoko's tale of an unfenced field well that was so dark and deep that those who fell in it would be lost forever (Murakami, 2001, pp.2-6.). The allusion here is clearer in Japanese, where the words for id and well are both rendered *ido*. Naoko, the metaphor suggests, is afraid of falling into a world of chaotic sexuality she feels would consume her, but her withdrawal from eros leaves her instead consumed by the power of the death drive or thanatos.

In *Norwegian Wood* sex is thus a barrier that must be successfully passed through on the way to adulthood. Those who can pass through it successfully go on to live healthy adult lives, while those who retreat are destined to an arrested development and even to an early death. Naoko's psychological problems ostensibly stem from the suicide of her boyfriend and Watanabe's best friend, Kizuki, but this is only symptomatic of a deeper problem which plagued them both. Naoko later confides to Watanabe, for example, her belief that Kizuki's survival would not have solved their problems. She explains:

Because we would have had to pay the world back what we owed it... The pain of growing up. We didn't pay when we should have, so now the bills are due. Which is why Kizuki did what he did, and why I'm here. We were like kids who grew up naked on a desert island. If we got hungry, we'd just pick a banana; if we got lonely, we'd go to sleep in each other's arms. But that kind of thing doesn't last forever. We grew up fast and had to enter society. (p.169)

Given her refusal to pay these metaphorical bills, Naoko has ended up in Ami hostel, a commune for damaged souls in the countryside of Kyoto. It turns out that Naoko and Kizuki, while experimental, had never had sexual intercourse, a consequence of her inability to get wet. Thus, following Kizuki's death, when Watanabe and Naoko have sex on her twentieth birthday, the traditional coming-of-age year in Japan, it psychologically pushes her over the edge and she is forced to retreat from society to the hostel. Watanabe continues to visit her, encouraging her to come and live with him and engaging her in a number of sexual acts, though always falling short of coitus. Retreating further from society, Naoko remains incapable of pushing through this sexual threshold into adulthood, until finally she succumbs to thanatos once and for all, taking her own life.

This broader theme of mental illness and the inability to pass through the threshold of sexuality into an adult world is reminiscent of the classic anti-coming-of-age novel, J.D. Salinger's 1945 *The Catcher in the Rye*, a novel Murakami translated into Japanese in 2003. Salinger's novel tells the story of Holden Caulfield, a troubled young man who, after being kicked out of yet another boarding school, travels to New York City for a short respite before facing the inevitable wrath of his parents. Holden is offered several opportunities for sex in the novel, but ultimately fails to take advantage of them, and as the narrative ends the great twist is revealed that Holden is actually writing his narrative from some kind of mental institution. Holden is constantly ranting about the phoniness of the adult world he sees around him and has fantasies of protecting young children like his sister Phoebe from

ever having to enter it. The price for his recoil from the adult world is a mental breakdown, though the narrative finishes on a positive note, suggesting that he may yet return to school the next fall. *Norwegian Wood* might be read as a reworking of the themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*, with all the options, from frigidity to sexual abandonment, examined and teased out, and the struggles of psychosexual development explored.

*Norwegian Wood*, like *Spirited Away*, also ends on a famously ambivalent note. Having engaged in a sexual encounter with Naoko's much older roommate, Reiko, from the Ami hostel, a ritualistic act that is an attempt to mourn Naoko's passing, Watanabe then sees Reiko off at the train station. Alone again, he then decides to call Midori, who asks him where he is. The famous final paragraph reads:

Gripping the receiver, I raised my head and turned to see what lay beyond the phone box. Where was I now? I had no idea. No idea at all. Where was this place? All that flashed into my eyes were the countless shapes of people walking by to nowhere. Again and again I called out for Midori from the dead centre of this place that was no place. (p. 386)

Watanabe, of course, is the narrator of the story, so we know that, unlike Kizuki and Naoko, he has survived. And yet the melancholic tone of his tale suggests that in some ways he has still not really moved on. While he constantly oscillates between Midori and Naoko in the novel, Naoko, by taking her own life, ultimately makes his decision for him, and so Watanabe's final turning to Midori is less a heroic embracing of eros and psychosexual maturity than a forced choice that is necessary for personal survival. In an important sense though, Watanabe's loyalties still remain in part with Naoko, suggesting that rather than successfully making the transition to adulthood he has settled for a compromise position, an attempt to embrace both worlds that really leaves him with the best of neither. Indeed, the moral of the story that Watanabe ostensibly finds is this: "*Death exists, not as the opposite but as a part of life*" (p.30). Rather than an epiphany which leaves him free to live, it is a discovery which leaves him, like Chihiro, still in limbo.

### **Kafka on the Shore**

Another Murakami character caught in a state of limbo between life and death is Saeki, who appears in Murakami's more recent novel, *Kafka on the Shore*. Saeki is the older woman who the main protagonist, fifteen-year-old Tamura Kafka, meets at the library where he makes his home after running away from Tokyo and settling in Shikoku. Saeki came of age in the late-1960s, the time of Japan's student protests and a period often portrayed in Murakami's fiction as an almost golden age before the disillusionments and disappointments of the 1970s and beyond. The 1960s had been a particularly magical time for Saeki too, with a hit song, suggestively entitled *Kafka on the Shore*, and an intense relationship with the love of her life. Things came to a tragic end for her though when her young lover was killed in the student protests, a devastating case of mistaken identity. Since this time she has remained in some sense dead to the world and simply waiting for her time to go.

As with Naoko, Saeki's difficulties begin with the death of her boyfriend, and it is sex which holds the promise of some kind of restoration. Kafka sees in Saeki a potential candidate for the mother who abandoned him as a young child, and Saeki sees in him a substitute for the young lover she lost in the peak of her youth. Caught in these fantasies, or perhaps even alternative realities, they both entertain and then embrace these forbidden desires. Indeed, the narrative is very clear on this point; in contrast to Oedipus, who seeks to run from the curse placed upon him, Kafka will face and even embrace his father's dark prophesy and play out its ramifications to the inevitable end.

Like Saeki, who comes to stand as a symbol for the passions and disillusionments of the late 1960s, many of the characters in *Kafka on the Shore* can likewise be read as symbols of particular historical generations in Japan. Kafka is a symbol of a younger Japanese generation, deeply hurt and feeling abandoned. An older man named Nakata, on the other hand, offers a potent symbol of the wartime generation. After a violent encounter involving his elementary school teacher during the war, Nakata had gone into a coma, and had woken some time later without his memories, but with the mysterious ability to talk with cats. What is perhaps most significant here is the way his historical amnesia makes him vulnerable to the manipulations of a strange figure named Johnnie Walker who is loosely connected with Kafka's father but is more obviously a symbol of the capitalistic spirit of the age. Johnnie Walker sends Nakata on a journey to Shikoku to find an entrance stone which can open up the portal to another world. It is this portal in turn which allows Kafka to make his journey into a forest where he must learn to forgive his mother. It is also the means, however, by which Johnnie Walker makes a similar journey, one that will allow him to return to the world with Kafka and to build an even more powerful system than the one he left behind. This mixed ending-the heroic journey of Kafka towards forgiveness and his decision to return to the world, together with the corresponding journey of the patriarchal Johnnie Walker-while similar to the earlier stories discussed in terms of its underlying ambiguity, is even more menacing, and is deserving of further attention.

### **The “*Star Wars*ification” of Contemporary Japanese Storytelling?**

The ambivalence found in the ending of *Kafka on the Shore* can usefully be compared with one of the great popular storytelling projects of the late 20th century: George Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy. Imagine for a moment what it would have been like had the now famous trilogy ended with the second movie: *The Empire Strikes Back*? Undoubtedly, audiences would have been disappointed to learn that their hero, Luke Skywalker, after his many personal and public victories, had ultimately failed to defeat his nemesis and biological father, Darth Vader. Of course, the movie works because audiences know this is not the end. Luke lives to fight again another day, saved in the end by his friends in the Millennium Falcon.

*Kafka on the Shore*, on the other hand, offers readers exactly this kind of experience: an *Empire Strikes Back* narrative with no *Return of the Jedi*. The young hero of the novel, Tamura Kafuka, engages in a similar Oedipal

struggle with his father and risks incestuous relations with a woman he believes could be his biological mother, all in an attempt to become what his alter ego, the boy called Crow, constantly describes as the toughest fifteen-year-old in the world. Finally, Kafka makes a journey into a forest where he is forced to face the source of his deepest trauma: the question of why his mother abandoned him as a young boy. While successfully meeting this challenge and learning how to forgive, the reason this does not provide a convincing resolution to the story, as already mentioned, is that Johnnie Walker has made this whole journey possible to serve his own sinister ends. And thus the story ends, with no *Return of the Jedi*, but simply a question mark hanging over Kafka's fate.

This kind of *Empire Strikes Back* narrative—a heroic journey that falls short of total victory—is a common occurrence in Murakami's fiction, and is also found to a lesser degree in the narratives of Miyazaki Hayao. So why, despite the underlying pessimism evident in their works, do Miyazaki and Murakami persist in their heroic modes? What's the point of the hero's journey when the Empire always strikes back? As is commonly known, George Lucas borrowed from Joseph Campbell's classic 1949 description of the hero's journey, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in his creation of the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Since then, a number of self-help books have emerged for aspiring scriptwriters, carefully digesting and expanding Campbell's basic insights, all in the hope of creating the next blockbuster. This trend in turn, as Otsuka Eishi (2009) has argued, has flowed directly into the storytelling practices of contemporary Japan, particularly since the 1980s. Indeed, Otsuka has written a book describing in detail what he calls the "*Star Wars*ification" of contemporary Japanese storytelling, naming as his two primary suspects Miyazaki and Murakami.

While Otsuka is correct to assert the loose influence of Campbell and Hollywood in Murakami's and Miyazaki's narratives, what is even more interesting, as I have tried to demonstrate in this paper, is the partial nature of the heroic journeys they offer—their inability to ever get to the third and final act, *The Return of the Jedi*, where some kind of definitive victory is won. One might argue that this is merely a reflection of Japanese preferences, where tragic or flawed heroes have always been more popular than their less ambiguous American counterparts. There seems to be more than just this going on, however. Rather, I would argue that the ambivalence found in Miyazaki and Murakami's narratives reflects their ambivalent position as two of the leading cultural figures of Japan's late-capitalist society.

Johnnie Walker provides a useful symbol of the kind of dilemma Murakami and Miyazaki find themselves in as artists. He is able to do nothing by himself, but as the 'spirit of the age' is able to manipulate others into doing his bidding. He thus has Nakata kill him, a figure vulnerable to such manipulation because of his historical amnesia, and then has him travel to Shikoku so that he can open the entrance stone to another world. This is what allows Kafka to travel to this other world and to experience the things he needs to forgive his mother and to grow up. It is also the portal, however, through which Johnnie Walker travels so that he can reemerge as an even more powerful entity.

And this in turn is what Murakami and Miyazaki must do. They offer audiences a portal through which they can travel to other worlds, ones they hope will provide them with the psychological resources they need to grow up. At the same time, these portals have been made available by capitalist forces which, like Miyazaki's *No Face* and Murakami's *Johnnie Walker*, have an endless appetite for more. Murakami and Miyazaki both require these systems and simultaneously desire to resist them. The uneasy balance of agency and ambivalence evident in their works is thus ultimately an expression of the situation in which they find themselves.

## Conclusion

It is interesting the way Murakami and Miyazaki persist with their heroic tropes, despite their ambivalence, opening up portals for their young readers to travel to other worlds. These worlds, as such narratives have always done, offer their audiences a safe place to explore their desires and anxieties, and particularly to confront the barriers to growth-the maternal and paternal bullies and the internalised fears relating to psychosexual development-that seem to hold them back. What is not offered in these works, however, is closure-a world where all foes have been vanquished once and for all. And this in turn is part of what makes their works so popular, both in Japan and abroad. Miyazaki and Murakami offer a careful balance of optimism and pessimism, agency and ambivalence, which while undoubtedly 'cool', also seeks to resist the infantilism of the age. Is it really possible to grow up in an age of infantile capitalism? Murakami and Miyazaki's narratives seem to say yes, but with one important provision: you must never forget that the Empire always strikes back.

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## Part Seven: Discourses of Technology and Representation

### Self-representations in new media

Silvia Fok

#### Introduction

The late Eileen Chang's *Little Reunion* (2009) like her other published novels has been dubbed as semi-autobiographical. It can be categorised as a kind of life writing, which "can be biographical, novelistic, historical or an explicit self-reference to the writer" in the first-person narration that chronicles the events and treats "a life as its subject" (Smith and Watson, 2001, p. 5, 7, 10). This kind of self-referential representation, according to Smith and Watson, is an intersubjective process between the writer and the reader, instead of a true-or-false narrative (2001, p. 13). It can also be regarded as "a historically situated practice of self-representation" in which the narrator selectively engaged his/her lived experience through a personal storytelling in specific time frames and places (Smith and Watson, 2001, p.14). As one type of self-representation, *Little Reunion* reflects a need for re-constructing and re-imagining Eileen Chang's self through the process of writing, thus engaging the past experience with politics of selective remembering. It also involves a critical and sarcastic analysis of her painful past experiences in the 1930-40s China in order to recreate it-to lay bare one's own past for creative and therapeutic purposes.

Questions of power are involved in self-representations as discussed by Eugenia Siapera. When producing and delivering a cultural or media product, it involves something more than the actual content. It is about the representation related to the producers or artists themselves, thus the identities of their producers and performers (Siapera, 2010, pp. 149-150). Although self-representations seemingly imply the construction of certain versions of truth, to what extent they are real are questionable. Siapera proposes that the essentialist regime establishes claims of authenticity, a core identity while the alternative regime focuses on "an openness rather than closure, dialogue on, instead of repetition of, core values, and a questioning, rather than assertion, of identities." She concludes that both regimes are necessary for cultural diversity (Siapera, 2010, p.164).

This paper attempts to scrutinize the mediated personal narratives in different types of new media and argue for their critical and fictitious tendencies. The self-representations in Iranian born French graphic novelist Marjane Satrapi's comic strip and animation film *Persepolis* (2007), Taiwanese film director-actor Niu Chen-zer's *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* (2007), and Beijing-based Chinese artist Xing Danwen's installation *Wall House* (2007) will be discussed. As a first-person narration in different types of media, these works epitomise the autobiographical characteristics. The way the experience of the

self is interpreted by these artists and represented to address specific social, cultural and political issues in addition to the personal one will be examined. Since each type of media has certain constraints, the specific ways new media contributes to the re-construction and re-imagination of the self and identity through self-representation will be analysed. Question of ownership, authenticity and the production and negotiation of identity are significant in either the local or the global environment. New understanding of the ways popular culture, film and visual art are produced and consumed in a local or global context will be considered too. As telling a personal life story can hardly be coherent and unified, any kind of creation of self-representation can be seen as a performative act (Smith and Watson, 2001, p. 47). In this paper, I am inclined to regard the self-representations in new media as discursive, constructed identities, portrayed by means of humour, satire and parody.

### **Culturally specific, self-reflexive subjects (Approaches and perspectives)**

Words and images are powerful in the construction of self-representations in new media. Either the imaginary verbal power of words or visual representations of static or moving images of the subject helps to make meaning. Although the three mediated works I am going to analyse epitomise the autobiographical characteristics by means of a first-person narration, their approaches (ways) and perspectives of telling their personal narratives (stories) are different. Analysing them from the contexts in which they are situated in, these self-representations are culturally specific, intertwining with the unique status and cultural orientation of the artists.

*The Complete Persepolis* (2007) is a memoir-in-comic-strip, consisting of 38 episodes. Its title is a reference to the ancient capital of the Persian Empire, Persepolis. It illustrates how the author Marjane Satrapi grew up in Teheran, the capital of Iran (from episode 1 to 19), her brief stay and study in Vienna, Austria as an immigrant in the 1980s (from episode 20 to 28), and her return to Teheran until her emigration to Paris, France in 1995 (from episode 29 to 38). The 96-minute animation film adapted from the comic strip *Persepolis* (2007) portrays nine key episodes of Satrapi's life from her early girlhood till her departure for Paris in September 1994. "Freedom had a price" and "Freedom always has a price" are the last line in the comic and film versions respectively, anticipating her emancipation from the repressed regime in a rather melancholic tone.

Satrapi's black and white stylised line drawing illustration portrays a vivid self-representation. This is best illustrated in the first episode entitled "The Veil" that showed how wearing the veil became obligatory after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. This reminds us of the Cultural Revolution that took place in China from 1966 to 1976 in which Red, Bright and Light (*hong, guang, liang*) was the dominant cultural ideology. Satrapi's self-representation in the veil as a 10-year-old teenager witnessed a clash between the pre- and post-Islamic Revolution life style in Iran and a contrast between a private, open-minded, modern, avant-garde family education and a closed, religious, public education. It signifies such a change in sociopolitical and cultural contexts, thus the life of those who share similar background with her. Satrapi is critical

towards such a change. For instance, she questioned why girls had to wear the veil, “especially since they didn’t understand why they had to” (p. 3). She could not make sense of the segregation between boys and girls in schools (p.4). A hot debate about whether to wear the veil was going on (p. 5). In addition to the critical approach taken when portraying political change in Iran, Satrapi also represented her religious fantasies in an imaginative manner. She regarded herself as the last prophet who had already had numerous encounters with God since she was six years old-several years before the revolution (p.6). Her discussion with God and her idealistic beliefs about justice, love and his wrath unconsciously reveals her approach-an outcry of dissatisfaction with the sociopolitical situation combined with an introspective hope for divine justice. The self-representation combines her comments on concrete political transformation in Iran with her reverie. Such a reverie could perhaps help her to escape from the difficult situation.

Different from the comic-which is all in black and white to symbolise Satrapi’s coming of age in Teheran from a child’s perspective-the animated film starts by portraying, in colour, Satrapi smoking in the waiting lounge at the airport before leaving for Paris.. When she recalls her memories of the political transformation of the Qadjar Empire, the representation turned into black and white. The film version seems to reveal a nostalgic view from an early adult’s perspective, looking back to, and reflecting on, her childhood in Teheran and brief stay in Vienna.

While *Persepolis* presents a vivid image of an Iranian teenager facing difficult sociopolitical changes and issues in her hometown, personal challenges in Vienna, her return to her hometown, and finally, her determination to leave, *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* is a film about the process of producing a mockumentary film, a pseudo documentary, delineating how Niu Chen-zer was entangled with different troubles (fund-raising, casting, production and distribution) in the film-making process in Taipei, and his personal relationship with his mother and girlfriend Zhang Jun-ning. As with *Persepolis*, *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* is culturally specific. While *Persepolis* depicted in detail the political changes the Islamic Revolution and the War which Iraq brought to Iran, *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* is an exercise in self-mockery and self-satire from a high profile Taiwanese actor and director.

Compared with his precedent, world-renowned Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien whom Olivier Assayas depicted and documented in *A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-hsien* (1997 as intellectual and sensual, Niu Chen-zer’s self-representation in *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* (2007) seems to be more performative, personal, superficial and vulgar in nature. He represented himself frequently using foul local Hokkien slang, boasting about inviting the famous Taiwanese actor Jerry Yan and Mainland Chinese actress Zhou Xun to play the lead roles and planning a shot for the protagonist to burn himself at the presidential residence in order to make his film a spectacle, intermingling truth and fiction. (at 8:53-13:40) The self-representation in this film tends to be self-reflexive, disclosing Niu’s ambition, defeat, and perseverance, representing his self-reflection rather than presenting a documentary about the film industry in Taiwan.



*Persepolis* and *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* reveal the life stories of Satrapi and Niu respectively in a self-reflexive manner, posing questions about their uncertainties and doubts about their circumstances. For instance, Satrapi could not figure out why her grandfather, who was a Qadjar prince, and her uncle Anoosh, who was a communist, were being imprisoned and executed by the repressive regimes respectively (at 3:00, 15:11). She uses her writing and illustration to air her views about her nation. In the introduction of her comic strip, Satrapi writes:

“As an Iranian who has lived more than half of my life in Iran, I know what this image (fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism) is far from the truth. That is why writing *Persepolis* was so important to me. I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists. I also don’t want those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under various repressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and flee their homeland to be forgotten. One can forgive but one should never forget.” (2007, Introduction)

Niu Chen-zer also explained to his colleagues that he had changed his idea concerning the structure of his film in a self-reflexive manner portrayed in the last part of the film. He states:

I want to change the theme of the movie. I found that unhappiness stems from our own greed, anger and foolishness. There’s no external cause, not because of any exterior reasons. Everyone should be responsible for his own happiness. All chaos in politics, media and in the society is only reflections of our inner unrest. Therefore, I hope with this new film *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?*, for me, will bravely reveal my own truths. I also hope it will reveal everyone’s truths. (at 1:21:42-1:22:02)

While Satrapi and Niu are telling their personal stories directly through comics and animation, Beijing-based Chinese artist Xing Danwen used her installation *Wall House* (2007) to represent herself in four photographic works and one animation video. Xing took photographs of herself in the Wall House, which was designed by the American architect John Hejduk (1929-2000) and built posthumously on the outskirts of Groninger, Northern Holland in 2001. In addition, a loop of a one-minute animation video of an image representing herself walking in a bedroom alone is projected on one of the walls in her installation. Regarding her self-representation in this installation, Xing’s statement reads:

“In *Wall House* I use Hedjuk’s problematic physical space as a starting point and continue to explore themes of contemporary loneliness and detachment in urban life. I project the idea of emotion and physical displacement through the use of a solitary figure: ‘I’ live alone without a choice and ‘I’ am obligated to accept this loneliness. Confronted with this reality, I am searching for truth and an answer to the question, ‘how does one live alone?’ I intend to raise awareness about living alone, where

'you' are your only companion."

(<http://www.denwen.com/web/works/wallhouse/statement.html>)

Xing's self-representation as a lonely woman in a vast interior space without telling a specific narrative by words perhaps unfolds the concept of alienation in contemporary China in the 2000s.

These three self-representations in different media portray the culturally specific and self-reflexive subjects by using different approaches from various perspectives.

### **Self-interpretation and self-representation, addressing personal, social, cultural and political issues**

The self-representation of Satrapi is closely connected to the transformation of the political regimes of Iran from the ancient times to the last Shah of Iran, finally to the Islamic Revolution (1979) as indicated in the introduction of the *Complete Persepolis* (2007). This introduction provides a context for the audience to understand the specific historical and cultural transformations of Iran, which is not thoroughly explained in the comic strip.

Satrapi's self-representation not only traces her national legacies and traumatic past, but also interprets such legacies and traumas from her critical stance, with painful and humorous reflections. Perhaps the new media, especially comic strip and animation film, permits such a unique representation of a highly serious, melancholic theme created in a light-hearted manner. It portrays injuries, deaths, and fleeing to other nations, of her relatives, neighbours and friends caused by the repressive regime and war in a humorous manner. To a certain extent, Satrapi's ability to re-interpret and re-present the questions and traumas in life empowers her work. For instance, in an episode when Satrapi met her uncle Annosh the last time in jail, he gave her another bread-swan. (He gave him a bread-swan when she met him after coming back from Moscow.) After her uncle was executed as a Russian spy, God appeared to console her in her dream. She shouted at God that she did not want to see him again (pp. 70-71). This episode was immediately followed by a war-they had to run to the basement because they were being bombed. Satrapi was depicted lying supine powerlessly in the dark universe. Satrapi writes, "And so I was lost, without any bearings...what could be worse than that?" (p. 71). "Getting lost" is her self-interpretation and self-representation of this particular incident, summarising her inability to deal with the unexpected sociopolitical situation.

In another episode, she visited her childhood friend Kia who had almost been killed in the front line of the war zone during his military service. He had lost an arm and a leg. His whole life was ruined but he could still laugh (at 1:06:10). During the visit, they kept talking and joking. In Satrapi's words: "That day, I learned something essential: we can only feel sorry for ourselves when our misfortunes are still supportable...Once this limit is crossed, the only way to bear the unbearable is to laugh at it" (pp. 260-266). Her self-interpretation and self-representation of this meeting powerfully highlights the social, cultural and political issues at stake in Iran after the war with Iraq, in addition to her own issues that overwhelmed her.

During her stay in Vienna, after breaking up with her boyfriend, Marcus, she stayed in the cold street for two months, ending up suffering from bronchitis. In the film, she poked fun on herself, stating that she survived the war, but a trivial love affair almost killed her (at 59:08). This statement is indeed a critical self-reflection and self-interpretation.

Similar to the way Satrapi represented herself in relation to her relatives and friends in Iran, Niu Chen-zer and Xing Danwen were eager to represent the socio-cultural issues in addition to their own in their works. Niu's interpretation of the relationship between the media, film industry and politics in Taipei provides the audience with a glimpse of the social tensions in the filmmaking industry. Although Niu managed to get a government film subsidy, he had to seek additional subsidies from other investors. One of the potential investors, Tsai, who was one of his childhood friends and the head of a triad with 1000 followers, was, like other investors, difficult to deal with. Niu had to accompany him to a nightclub, taking drugs, having alcohol and sex. In one episode, Tsai requested that Niu invite a Taiwanese actress Ding Ning to accompany them during the gathering, thus implying the complicated commercial relationship between investor, director and actress. In the end Niu only secured a subsidy of one million dollars from Tsai while they had paid 100,000 dollars for the entertainment they enjoyed together. Niu sighed, "Is Taipei still a place for people? Is it so hard to make a film?" (at 23:40). This episode creates a comical and ironic effect.

In another episode, another potential investor stated, "As an investor, I only think about investments, returns and markets. It is really simple" (at 32:58). Eventually this investor chose to subsidise another director's film. Niu's film unveils the pragmatic concerns for fund-raising to realise his dream of making the first film of his own, not a popular commercial TV idol drama, the genre he has been well-versed in. It boldly exposes his self-interpretation and self-representation of the dark side of the filmmaking industry without reserve. He comically played the role of the pitiful director, who was helplessly dependent on the investor's support. Even when he realised that he no longer wanted to conform to this relationship, he was forced to bring that potential investor to a nightclub, which was portrayed in the last shot of the film. The ending scene does reveal to the audience that this practice still prevails in Taiwan.

Xing Danwen's interpretation of the physical space inside the Wall House is connected to images of the cityscapes of China inserted digitally in the windows of the Wall House. She created a contrast between the vacant interior space of the Wall House in Holland and the dense cities outside viewed through the windows in the Wall House. To her, this work created an invisible relationship between people who were linked by virtual proximity but lacked true interpersonal connection. In this case, a sense of loneliness is highlighted by the portrayal of the artist in the interior space without any interactions with other people. In her words: "As my focus shifted away from the architecture, I become inspired by the psychological experience of living in the house and created my own work, Wall House" (<http://www.danwen.com/web/works/wallhouse/statement.html>). The wall

tends to be a metaphor of barrier, signifying the distance between people, the blockage of communication among people. It can be interpreted as a mental wall that separate the east from the west as the landscapes of China have been inserted in the windows of the European Wall House. Xing's self-interpretation and self-representation of the Wall House extend the meaning from a personal feeling of loneliness to a broad sense of socio-cultural alienation across the globe.

### **Re-construction and re-imagination of the self and identity**

Since each type of media has certain constraints, the specific ways new media contributes to the re-construction and re-imagination of the self and identity through self-representation are worth analysing.

In *Persepolis*, Satrapi re-constructs and re-imagines herself and identity as the story unfolds. She first encountered identity crisis when she was forced to wear a veil as discussed in the previous section. When she arrived at Vienna and met the youngsters from different parts of Europe, she had a strong will to assimilate and gain independence. However, the new cultural value was so different from her own that it puzzled her. In one of the episodes, Satrapi was trapped in an identity crisis when she pretended to be French to a new friend she had met in a bar. When someone discovered her lie, she strongly defended herself and claimed, "I'm Iranian, I'm proud of it" (at 51:35). This episode delineates how Satrapi was trying to re-construct and re-imagine herself and identity in a foreign place she inhabited. Writing and creating this autobiographical novel seems to be a process for her to reassure herself and her identity, in a similar way to Eileen Chang. After living in Vienna for three years and after a failed love relationship, Satrapi desperately requested to return home. She suffered from depression and was doubtful about her nation. Upon her arrival at the airport in Teheran and meeting with her parents, she thought: "Nothing had changed, but, deep down, I know, nothing would be the same again" (at 1:01:23). Her identity crisis what thus seriously aggravated. She further told the doctor, "I was a stranger in Austria and now I'm one in my own country" (at 1:07:10). The doctor diagnosed her as having a clinical nervous depression and prescribed some pills for her (at 1:07:15), but what she wanted was to be alone. Later Satrapi decided to get married when she was 21 years old. Her mother cried and stated, "I wanted you to be independent, educated and cultivated. Now you're getting married at 21. I want you to leave Iran, to be free and emancipated" (at 1:19:39). A year later, Satrapi wanted to divorce her husband. Her grandma said, "The first marriage is just a practice for the second. You'll be much happier next time round. You are crying because you made a mistake. It's hard for you to admit your mistakes" (at 1:21:48). At the airport when Satrapi departed for Paris, her mother said, "You are going for good. Today's Iran is not for you. I forbid you to return" (at 1:26:54).

These episodes delineates how Satrapi had gradually come to realise and resolve her identity crisis as a girl born in Iran but who sought to leave her home country when she thought the era of the ideal nation had ended. In the last shot when Satrapi arrived at Paris, the taxi driver asked where she was coming from. She said, "Iran". This last shot reassures herself of her identity,

the process of her negotiation of self and identity seeming to end at that stage.

Niu Chen-zer's film is about his filmmaking experience in Taipei, embodying the construction of his self and identity as an emerging actor-director prominent in the local film industry. Tsai, head of the triad, pointed out in his last talk to Niu, "You want to be Ang Lee. I don't want to be a gangster. Is life so simple?" (at 57:46). This statement perhaps summarises the dilemma both Niu and Tsai had to face in their different roles in society. It is not easy for them to change their roles. In addition, Niu's identity crisis as revealed in *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* emphasises his relationship with his mother and actress-girlfriend. A sense of denial from his mother resulted in the lack of maternal love he could get when compared with his younger brother during his teenage years. An unfulfilled desire for sex and comfort from his girlfriend Ning Ning, and his desire for getting temporary satisfactions from drugs, alcohol or prostitution, ruined their relationship. To his disappointment, his girlfriend left him after his confession of his guilt (at 59:25). In the end, Niu finally decided to invite Ning Ning, instead of the Mainland actress Zhou Xun, to perform her real role in his film. He states:

"I have changed the whole plot. I will start anew. I want to shoot some real things in my life that I really cannot forget, things that impressed me. You have an important place in my life. So I really hope that you can play this role. I feel that it will be a very special experience. I know the process will be painful and difficult. But digging up something may have some healing effect." (at 1:25:22)

*What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?* turned out to become a testimony of how Niu Chen-zer developed his mockumentary film to poke fun at himself and the industry with a dark sense of humour. The painful process of re-constructing and re-imagining his self and identity in this film is, to a certain extent, comparable to Satrapi's self-exploring journey of her adolescence in Iran.

Both Satrapi and Niu manipulated their authentic identities to tell their life narratives. Their self-representations delineate the different productions and negotiations of identity resulting from their status. They both had the power to claim ownership of their unique creative production. The reception of these two works transcended national borders because they were produced in DVDs with translations and subtitles in Chinese, French or English.

Xing Danwen defended that her *Wall House* (2007) was not about investigating the 'Single Woman' issue. Claiming not to be a feminist artist, Xing hoped to address the notion of an individual, like her, who struggled in the Chinese society for equality through her self-representation. What she strove for was an equal status with man, with an equal share of resources and privilege in society (Interview via Skype, 20 August 2010). Since her refusal to work in the assigned company in her hometown appointed by the state in 1992 after her graduation from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Xing Danwen's identity has been shaped and constructed as an independent artist residing in Beijing. Only when she started to put her own image in her artwork

in *Urban Fiction* (2004) and then in *Wall House* (2007) did she manage to represent and reveal herself in her artworks. As the only subject in the spacious, cool Wall House, Xing's self-image was powerful in imposing her identity. The audience could not stop themselves from interpreting the space through the perspectives of the subject, who was portrayed as a strong, modern, and vibrant woman. As she portrayed herself in a wig, the audience would be tempted to interpret her as a fake subject. The real face of the artist and the wig connote the contrasting notion of reality and fiction. The construction of self and identity in *Wall House* (2007) is thus open to interpretation. It can be seen as a critical statement about the alienated state of human beings, different to the linear narratives presented in *Persepolis* and *What on Earth Have I Done Wrong?*. With *Wall House* neither visual nor verbal texts are created to accompany the images of the artist in the interior space, which may hint that no dialogue, no communication and no negotiation is taking place. It is not as entertaining as the former two works, but a great sense of loss and alienation is exposed. The self-representation of Xing Danwen appears to be more calm, static, contemplative and reflective than the comical images of Satrapi and the performing subject of Niu.

## Conclusion

These three mediated personal narratives made in 2007 are uniquely significant works because they are culturally specific and self-reflexive, highlighting the critical and fictitious tendencies in representing the lives of the artists through different new media for creative and therapeutic purposes. In addition to revealing the personal issues, these works forcefully bring forth the sociopolitical and cultural contexts at stake. Unlike documentary films or photography, these three self-representations illustrate the re-construction and re-imagination of the subject and, thus, the self and identity for a local or global audience. Just as Rosemarie Garland Thomson regards Mary Duffy's self-representation of her disabled naked body as an art form that "unsettles cultural assumptions about humanity, femaleness, disability, and self by invoking and juxtaposing all of these categories", these three self-representations reveal the self-making processes, not only by re-imagining their individual self and identity, but also by alluding to the communities they identify or associate themselves with (2005, pp. 233-234). They reveal the politics of self-representation. While Satrapi represents herself with a sense of dark humour and Niu a sense of satire, Xing Danwen represents herself with a sense of parody.

Popular culture, film and visual art can be regarded as useful means and platforms for creating self-representations to reach a wider audience than the traditional means. New understanding concerning the production and consumption of self-representations should be considered here. The autobiographical nature of these self-representations indeed makes the narratives more appealing to the audiences from different contexts, as I am. The unprecedented Hong Kong box office earnings of the Taiwanese Giddens Ko's autobiographical film *You Are the Apple of My Eye* (2011), in which he directed a real-life youth romance film about his high school years in Taiwan, has exceeded sixty million HKD, and proves the appeal of nostalgia and self-representations in new media to the audiences of different contexts.

Compared with the pure anthropological approach or the traditional memoir type of narrative, these three creative self-representations are embedded with critical self-interpretations and self-reflections. The narratives are by no means as complete as standardised memoirs. Nevertheless, they portray key moments or concepts about self-exploration that therefore constitutes their value. In light of the limited number of self-representations in new media, it is likely that they are confined by different media technologies. Since digital images can be altered and changed, their authenticity is already being undermined or challenged. To a certain extent, audiences nowadays have grown cautious and skeptical about the visual images, especially autobiographical ones. Issues such as copyright and privacy infringement, or the risk of disclosing the secret of another person need to be taken into consideration when creating any kind of self-representations, especially in new media.

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## **Innovation under imbalance: China's conversion to sound film (1931-1936)**

Yongchun Fu

This essay explores how the Chinese film industry responded to Hollywood's dominance by examining the process of China's conversion from silent to sound film in the 1930s. Hollywood's conversion to sound in the early 1930s provided a great opportunity and inspiration for the domestic industry. Nonetheless, compared with the dominance of Hollywood in sound film technology, the Chinese film industry suffered two prominent difficulties: a shortage of funds and technical information. Under this imbalanced power structure, the 1930s witnessed the Chinese film industry actively responding to Hollywood by producing sound-on-disc films, leasing and purchasing American apparatus, and imitating Hollywood sound machines. My argument is that China's conversion to sound film in the 1930s can be seen as a process of national culture industry actively responding to Hollywood in an extremely imbalanced power structure.

This essay starts with an overview of the adoption of American sound film in China. Three stages of this process are examined; the initialisation, importation, and imitation stages. The initial stage was when Chinese studios began utilising sound-on-disc technology while taking advantage of the gap in the silent film market left by Hollywood. In the importation stage, big studios in China gradually equipped themselves with American-imported sound machines. The imported sound machines provided opportunities for Chinese imitation. In the third stage of China's conversion, I explore how Chinese engineers produced their own sound machines, largely by imitation. The imitated and imported sound machines together contributed to the final accomplishment of China's conversion in 1936. This essay concludes with a summary of the role of American influence in China's conversion to sound.

### **The coming of Hollywood talkies and their reception, 1929-1930**

Like its American counterpart, silent film in China had not been watched in silence because films in premium theatres were accompanied by live music (Millard, 1995; Feng, 2001:269). Chinese, particularly Shanghai people, were aware of new sound film experiments in the United States from the 1910s to the 1930s, thanks to improved communications between Shanghai and the outside world. Just one year after Edison invented the acoustic Kinetoscope in 1913, Shanghai audiences experienced this technology at the city's Victoria Theatre (維多利亞) (Cheng et al. 1980:156). In December 1926, the Pantheon Theatre (百星) imported several short films made by Lee De Forest's Phonofilm. The poster said, "The management of this theatre gladly announces that, through considerable expense, we have secured the right of first screening of De Forest Phonofilm in Shanghai" (Hu, 1984:557). After the screening, a technician from America had shown the film projector, short films, and loudspeakers, to clarify that the sound did come from film reels, rather than from the phonograph (Hu, 1984:558).

The first venue to install sound apparatus was the Embassy Theatre (夏令配克) in January 1929. Its owner, Saville G. Hertzberg, decided to adopt RCA's (Radio Corporation of America's) Photophone sound equipment. China started its talkie experiment with the premier of *Captain Swagger* (dir. Edward H. Griffith, 1928). After the Embassy, there was a growing trend towards installing sound equipment. By 1930, at least 12 theatres in Shanghai had installed sound machines and most first-class theatres showed sound pictures exclusively (Way, 1930:5). By 1931, 22 Shanghai theatres had installed sound film equipment, when only 55 cinemas nationwide had done so. Outside of Shanghai, urban cities like Hong Kong, Canton, Tianjin, Beijing, and Nanjing had also installed sound equipment (Way, 1930:5). One major reason for installing this equipment was Hollywood's shift to sound film. With the maturing of sound film technology, major Hollywood studios stopped their silent production in 1932 (Gomery, 1985:25-36). In 1931, China had imported 546 sound films out of 823 in total (Anonymous, 1932). By 1933, from January to May, 121 films were reviewed by film officials; only three of which were silent films (Anonymous, 1933). This means that if a theatre had not installed sound film equipment by 1933, it had to say farewell to Hollywood's latest movies.

Although there was a dominant fashion for installing sound machines in Shanghai theatres, it is hard to say whether Hollywood talkies had received the same treatment as its silent films. A pivotal barrier for Hollywood film was language. Although many students would watch Hollywood movies as a means of studying English, people with an English listening ability remained few. China's official census reveals that the total population was estimated to be 479,084,651 in 1936, while only around 4% people (18,285,125) were receiving elementary education (Guo, 1981:381-382). In addition, the installation of sound machines beyond Shanghai was slow. "The original expense of installation, the lack of facilities for servicing, and the dangers and difficulties of transportation to interior places" stood as barriers for the cinemas in interior cities for installing sound equipment (Way, 1930:5).

Consequently, with the introduction of sound into motion pictures, the number of Hollywood motion pictures exported into China decreased rather than increased in 1930. One of the indicators for motion picture business is the linear feet of the United States exports of motion-picture film to China. In 1929, China imported 4,456,906 linear feet of motion-pictures from the United States, including 3,484,265 feet of positives (a positives motion-picture is usually for exhibition). However, in the first four months of 1930, imported motion-pictures only added up to 1,013,044 feet, around 22% of the total in 1929. The amount for imported positive motion pictures was 927,461 feet, including 678,816 feet of sound positives, and 248,645 feet of silent positives. This only accounts for 27% of the number in 1929 (Way, 1930:3).

### **The initial period: Introducing sound-on-disc technology, 1930-1931**

In the beginning, Hollywood talkies did not perform well at the box office. However, by 1931, it was clear that sound film not only represented the future of the motion picture industry, it was also beginning to inspire its Chinese

counterparts. China started producing its own sound films in the early 1930s. It is interesting that China's first sound films did not depend on American movie companies. Instead, they sought support from its prosperous recording industry.

The first Chinese sound film in 1931 utilised sound-on-disc technology. The film *The Singing Peony* (歌女紅牡丹, dir. Zhang Shichuan, 1931) was released by a joint company created by Mingxing (明星, a.k.a. Star Motion Pictures Corporation, hereafter Mingxing) and Pathe Orient Corporation. Mingxing commenced its sound film experiments in 1930. In its initial effort to produce sound film, Mingxing had contacted the representatives of West Electric and RCA in Shanghai, two moguls on producing sound machines. These two corporations employed similar policies in the United States, that is, studios producing sound film had to pay bond and about 8% royalty fees. However, due to their low profits, Chinese film corporations could not pay for productions like their Hollywood counterparts. Fortunately, Mingxing had found another supporter-Pathe Orient Corporation, the leader of the record industry in China. The final cooperation was that Mingxing took responsibility for projecting and editing, while Pathe was in charge of recording and other sound technology. At a cost of 100,000 yuan (100 yuan was equal to around 21.123 U.S. dollars in 1931) and after six months' hard work, *the Singing Peony* hit the market in March 1931.

*The Singing Peony* had great success at the box office despite its immature sound technology. On 15 March 1931 when *Singing Peony* premiered at Strand Theatre (新光), patrons were so fascinated with the first Chinese talkie that the showing lasted one week and after that another two theatres carried the torch. Moreover, Mingxing sold its copies to Philippines for 18,000 yuan and Indonesia for 16,000 yuan, a much higher price than usual (Xu, 1957:58). However, it also proved that sound-on-disc technology was still far from perfect.

Synchronisation was a major problem. A slight mistake would easily ruin performance due to the use of post-recording techniques. In addition, distortion due to slow rotation speeds affected everything except the actors' voices (Xu, 1957:59). After one more effort, Mingxing terminated sound-on-disc film production.

Small and midsize studios like Youlian (友聯) did not lag behind the big studios in the sound film experiment. In June 1930, the owner of Youlian improved his sound device and finally found support from the Great China Phonograph Manufacturing Company (大中華唱片), another record mogul in China. After considerable expense, they finally recorded five discs of dialogue and song. It is noted that the discs were in the 10-inch format designed for regular phonographs. In order to achieve synchronisation, unlike the *Singing Peony*, Youlian employed pre-recording, that is, recording discs with song and dialogue first, with performance following the soundtrack. However, visible stiffness was still an issue. Their first sound film, *The Beauty* (虞美人, dir.

Chen Kengran, 1931) premiered on 24 May 1931, just two months after the *Singing Peony* (Xu, 1957:60).

During the first stage of China's conversion to sound, American support did not show much influence. One reason is that the attraction of sound-on-disc technology had diminished considerably in the United States when China was beginning to engage in her sound film experiment. Unfortunately, sound-on-film technology was too complicated and expensive for the nascent Chinese film industry, and Chinese practitioners struggled to obtain useful technological support from America. It was instead the prosperity of the record industry which helped China's sound film experiment, and technological considerations were also involved in the choice of the record industry collaborators, because the sound-on-disc film technology shared similarities with record production technology. As *Singing Peony* showed, the difference between sound-on-disc and record were the width of disc and the speed of rotation. In the case of *The Beauty*, the disc used was identical to the common sound record.

### **The Importation Period, Sound-on-film Technology and the First Wave of Competition on Sound, 1931-1932**

If one can say that China's realisation of sound-on-disc technology depended on self-invention and the prosperity of the phonograph industry in China, sound-on-film technology had to rely greatly on American resources. The reason is clear. No one knew how to produce sound-on-film apparatus at that time, and Hollywood was the only one object for learning. A small-studio named Huaguang Sound-on-film Motion Picture Corporation (華光) was the first explorer of sound-on-film technology. The film *Reconciliation* (雨過天青, dir. Xia Chifeng, 1931), made by Huaguang, became the first sound-on-film talkie in Chinese film history. Scholars noticed that Huaguang dispatched casts to Japan and leased Japanese sound-on-film devices (Cheng et al, 1980:164-165). However, commercials of this movie provided another story: the sound equipment was shipped from the United States by K. Henry, the record technician in *Reconciliation*. Huaguang then leased this equipment from Henry rather than from Japanese studios. In order to reduce cost and examine equipment quality, Huaguang decided to dispatch the cast to Japan, rather than shipping the equipment to Shanghai (Shen Bao, 9 June 1931). However, film critics in the 1930s, driven by nationalism, attacked this film as a Japanese film, not a Chinese film. The movie was released on 1 July 1931 at Strand Theatre, two months before the Manchurian Incident, when Japanese troops occupied Northeast China and caused a nationwide upsurge of hostility towards Japan. A riot occurred during screening due to nationalists firing fireworks (Xu, 1932: 4). Nonetheless, audiences seemed to enjoy this movie and Strand continued its exhibition for five days. In addition, the distributors had applied for another two licenses for *Reconciliation* in March 1935.

Although *Reconciliation* is seen as China's first talkie picture with sound-on-film technology, Huaguang did not continue its talkie production, possibly because of the high cost of sound equipment. However, the sound-on-film technology had become a fashion for talkie productions. Therefore, big

studios with better financial situations, including Tianyi and Mingxing, had shifted their attention to the new technology-sound-on-film technology. Similarly to Huaguang, an American machine was the only approach for installation.

Tianyi (天一, a.k.a. Unique Film Production Co., Ltd, hereafter Tianyi) started its first sound film projection just as Mingxing was projecting its second sound-on-disc film in 1931. Considering the disadvantages of sound-on-disc technology, Tianyi did not join the wave of sound-on-disc talkie pictures and engaged in sound-on-film technology directly. In August 1931, Tianyi leased Fox's Movietone equipment and invited foreign experts to supervise the projection of sound film. In order to perfect its first talkie, Tianyi not only adjusted the studio for sound recording, but also sacrificed its production speed to perfect this talkie, despite Tianyi relying on its production speed to survive. According to the advertisement of *A Singer's Story* (歌場春色, dir. Li Pingqian, 1931) – Tianyi's first sound film – it could only shoot four or five scenes in one day, compared with ten scenes in the silent film era (Shen Bao, 4 September 1931). After a three-month promotion campaign in newspapers, *A Singer's Story* finally premiered at Strand Theatre on 29 October 1931. This blockbuster with a 20,000 yuan budget proved to be a hit. It showed in Shanghai theatres for two weeks and extended its exhibition until 2 December 1931.

Tianyi's acquirement of sound-on-film technology was a big blow to its major rival, Mingxing. The executives of Mingxing realised that the future of talking pictures was sound-on-film, rather than sound-on-disc. Therefore, it became necessary to import sound-on-film technology in order to maintain its leading position in the Chinese film industry (Shanghai Municipal Archive, Y9-1-461). Consequently, at the same time as producing its second sound-on-disc film, Mingxing's executives had dispatched Hong Shen (洪深)-a well-known script writer-to the United States to purchase sound machines. On 21 August 1931, after one month's observation, Hong returned from the United States, together with sound equipment, as well as more than ten American technicians. It cost Mingxing around 20,000 yuan for leasing and purchasing the sound equipment. Furthermore, it brought a huge deficit of 47,320.62 yuan for Mingxing in 1932, comparing with 25,505.93 yuan's profit in 1930 (Fan, 1936).

Nevertheless, Hong's journey was significant for the Chinese film industry. It not only helped Mingxing to equip itself with sound technology, but also benefited the outcome of the first run of competition in producing talkie pictures, contributed by Mingxing and Tianyi. Studios understood well the importance of profitability of sound films. Once equipped with sound apparatus, they spared no effort to take advantage of sound film equipment. After Tianyi and Mingxing armed themselves with sound-on-film apparatus, the film market in 1932 became the battlefield of the two rivals and each studio projected eight sound films in 1932. It is noted that Mingxing and Tianyi applied for more exhibition permits for sound productions than silent ones. Although there was no fixed relationship between exhibition permits and box office, more exhibition permits could mean greater market expectations for producers and distributors. Statistically, the average number of licenses for

sound films underwent a tremendous increase comparing with silent films in 1930s China. Tianyi only applied 1.9 licenses for its silent film, while applying for 4.43 licenses for talkie productions. Mingxing was similar. The average licenses for silent films were 3.86, while sound productions were 7.55 (Anonymous, 1932).

Despite the first wave of sound film productions, not all the studios sought to stay and wait outside of this wave. As aforementioned, Hollywood terminated its silent productions by 1932, but Chinese patrons did not show much fondness to Hollywood talkies than silent films. Therefore, Hollywood, intentionally or unintentionally, created a market gap for China's industry in the silent stage. Studios like Lianhua (聯華, a.k.a. the United Photoplay Services Co., Limited, hereafter Lianhua) continued to produce silent films, in spite of the wave of Mingxing and Tianyi's sound production. At the beginning, waiting was a sensible policy. When referring to the rationale of waiting, Gomery mentioned, "a more cautious firm choosing to wait can gather valuable data concerning potential revenues by observing the actions of the innovator, and new information concerning costs from the inventory" (Gomery, 2005:83). With regard to the case of the Chinese film industry, Lianhua's wait helped it avoid the huge expense of producing sound films and the resultant financial crisis like that experienced by Mingxing.

The strategy of waiting was decided on by Lianhua's executives based on analysis of the situation of Lianhua and the whole industry. As mentioned above, the number of Hollywood films exported to China decreased in the early 1930s due to its shift to sound. Lianhua's executives surely realised that this was a commercial opportunity. Luo Mingyou (羅明佑), the president of Lianhua, predicted that Chinese theatres could face film shortages after Hollywood stopped its silent productions, because most of the theatres could not afford the cost of installing sound machines (Luo, 1929). As a matter of fact, this stands as one reason why Luo became involved in the film production business and set up Lianhua in late 1930. A major concern for Lianhua was that it was newer than other big studios and it had no intention of changing its profitable production style. Lianhua was formed by several small and midsize studios in 1930. Luo and his employers produced several significant silent films between 1930 and 1931. These silent films not only changed the production direction of Chinese films to social realism, but also brought profits to Lianhua. From July 1931 to June 1932, the profit of Lianhua was 32,226.95 yuan (SMA, Q275-1-1949). Therefore, it is reasonable that Lianhua preferred remaining with this profitable production style rather than taking the risk of making sound films. The evidence of profits showed this was the right decision for Lianhua. From July 1932 to June 1933, Lianhua still earned 15,911.44 yuan, while Mingxing made a loss of 47,320.62 yuan due to purchasing sound machines (SMA, Q275-1-1949).

As a matter of fact, Lianhua was not alone in producing silent films. Although other big studios like Mingxing and Tianyi had procured sound film technology, the majority of their productions from 1931 to 1934 were silent films. Apart from taking advantage of the market gap left by Hollywood talkies, three other reasons explained why Chinese filmmakers persevered with silent

film. First is the language barrier. China's national language policies dated back to 1912 (Tse, 1981:33). Up to the 1930s, the Republic government had issued 20 laws on national language enforcement. However, the national language-Mandarin or *guoyu* (國語)-had not spread markedly before the 1930s. Low literacy was a big reason. In the 1930s, the literacy in inner provinces was around 16%, and with regard to peasants, the figure was only around 10% (Wang, 2000). Without considerable literacy, the national language could not be enforced smoothly. However, film censorship committees did not allow any other dialects than Mandarin in films. Therefore, talkie pictures with Mandarin would either mean losing the market in Guangdong or breaking the law. The second reason for persevering was the perceived cost to exhibitors. The considerable expense of installing sound-projecting equipment was not only a barrier for Hollywood films, but for Chinese ones as well. One needs to bear in mind that the Chinese screen industry was a disparate business in development. Not all theatres could install sound equipment like those of Shanghai. Taking Nanjing, the capital of China then, for instance, only 4 out of 31 cinemas had sound projectors in 1934. No doubt, the limitation of sound theatres would be a large handicap for expanding talkie pictures business. The third reason is the economic factor. For studios, the cost of producing talkie pictures was much higher than for silent films. It was reported that the cost for producing a Chinese silent ranged from 2,000 to 8,000 yuan, while a sound film would cost at least 8,000 to 17,000 yuan (Lowenthal, 1936:90). The high cost prevented a number of small studios from becoming involved with sound film productions.

### **The Imitation period: Pioneers and many tones, 1933-1936**

If studios could continue to produce silent films in the early 1930s, conditions changed gradually after 1934. Until 1934, studios gradually realised that talkie pictures were more profitable than silent films since audiences were in the habit of watching talkies thanks to Hollywood and Chinese sound films (Yamin, 1934). The great potential for talkie pictures was not only a passion for the current studios, but also an attraction for engineers. In order to produce sound film, the engineers formed their own studios or sought to cooperate with other studios. These cheap devices facilitated the final accomplishment of converting to sound film in Chinese film history. It is noted that most of the sound machines made by Chinese engineers were made largely by imitation.

China's attempt to produce sound equipment could be dated back to 1930. In this year, Huawei (華威, a.k.a. Wha Whei Trading Co., hereafter Huawei) had produced sound reproducing equipment, named Startone. Startone was a sound reproduction device which allowed the photographic sound record to be converted into electrical current and then reconverted into sound wave via exciter lamp. Startone was cheaper than an imported apparatus. Therefore, at least 4 second- and third- class theatres had adopted Startone apparatus in 1934 (SMA, Q275-1-1949). However, it is thought that Startone was only an apparatus assembled, rather than produced by Huawei, because most of the mechanical materials which the production department used relied on importation from Europe and America (SMA, Q275-1-1949).

With regard to sound recording equipment, China's experiment can be traced to *Stone*, produced by Shi Shipan (石世磐). Shi received education in the United States and worked in a company producing arc lights in sound film equipment. After returning to China, Shi worked as a producer and cameraman for Mingxing (Cheng, 1927). Shi became fascinated with sound film and finally invented Stone by using equipment in the Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica. Unfortunately, Stone had not found any customers in the film studios and ended its life with several short films like *Prime Minister Will* and *Song of Kuomintang*.

The first sound recording equipment adopted by studios is Qingxian Shi, named after its inventor Zhu Qingxian (竺清閒). Zhu signed a three year contract with Eastern Golden Lion Motion Picture Corporation (大東金獅) in 1932 (Xu, 1932:1). In order to perfect the first sound film, Eastern Golden Lion had spent considerable money on casting and invited many famous actors. After ten months' hard work and spending 30,000 yuan, the talkie movie *Fallen Angel* (春風楊柳, dir. Wang Fuqing, 1933) finally premiered at Peking Theatre in Shanghai.

After recording *Fallen Angel*, for reasons which are unclear, Zhu halted the contract with Eastern Golden Lion Co. and cooperated with another studio, Jinan Company (暨南). On 2 March 1934, the final print of *Glories for Motherland* (為國爭光, dir. Jiang Qifeng and Yang Tianle, 1934) premiered at Golden Gate Theatre (金門). It seems that *Glories for Motherland* was a hit. Therefore, Jinan applied for another seven screen licenses (in August 1933 and October 1936 separately), compared with its normal one or two licenses for each movie. It was reported that Zhu had also contacted Lianhua to talk about sound film producing. However, the cooperation with Lianhua failed since Luo Mingyou had little confidence in Zhu's device (Minzhi, 1934). After recording two movies in Shanghai, Zhu shifted his business to Hong Kong in the late 1930s. Zhu founded the Nanyue Motion Pictures Corporation in Hong Kong, dealing with distribution business in 1934.

Unlike Shi Shipan and Zhu Qingxian, another inventor, Yan Heming (顏鶴鳴), sought to organise his own company to utilise his sound equipment. Inspired by Hollywood sound film, Yan decided to start his sound experiment from the radio industry (Lin, 1933). Cooperating with Su Zuguo (蘇祖國), the founder of the first Chinese radio factory, Yan invented his own sound device, named Yansutone in 1931. A year later, an updated device named Hemingtone had come out, since Yan had improved his technology. Yan sought to cooperate with the Mingxing Studio, but the plan was aborted due to the strong objections of Hong Shen, the scripter who was in charge of purchasing sound film equipment for Mingxing in 1931. Hong did not trust Yan's device because Yan was a person without an international education background (Yungong, 1935). In 1932, Yan gave up persuading a studio to install his device and turned to forming his own company. He organised a corporation named Hengsheng Motion Picture Co. (亨生) and found support from director Cai



Chusheng (蔡楚生) and some famous actors including Wang Renmei (王人美). Its first production, *Spring Tide* (春潮, dir. Zheng Yingshi, 1933) was finally completed in 1933. Although Yan spent enormous effort, the quality of sound recording and the resulting box office were not satisfactory. Patrons complained that the dialogue was far from clear, and it sounded like bird's twittering (Zhao, 2011). Therefore, *Spring Tide* became the only production for the Hengsheng Company. In 1936, the updated Hemingtone device was installed in the China Central Studio, where Yan served as the general secretary of cinematography.

Sanyou Record was invented by three engineers-Gong Yuke (龔玉珂), Ma Dejian (馬德建), and Situ Yimin (司徒逸民)-all with an American educational background, who formed Diantong (電通, a.k.a. the Denton Sound Studio, hereafter Diantong) in order to market their sound device in 1933. Sanyou Record was employed by the Diantong studio in 1933. In its short life, Diantong had produced and released 4 films. Among the productions of Diantong, *Children of Trouble Time* (風雲兒女, dir. Xu Xingzhi, 1935) had a specific meaning because its song, *March of the Volunteers*, was later adopted as the national anthem of the People's Republic after 1949. In addition, Diansheng had used *Sanyou* to record one film for a studio in Hong Kong and two significant films for Lianhua studio, *Big Road* (大路, dir. Sun Yu, 1934) and *Song of Fisherman* (漁光曲, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934). Recording the *Song of Fisherman* was significant in Chinese film history, not only because *Song of Fisherman* was the first Chinese cinema that obtained international awards, but also because its success at the box office encouraged greater focus on songs in subsequent films (Mingguang, 1935).

Chinatone was a sound recording machine which was the most widely used before 1949. In 1933, Tao Shengbai (陶勝百) and Jin Jian (金堅), founders of the Research Institute of China Radio, asserted that they had invented a variable area sound-on-film device, namely Chinatone. It was believed that Chinatone was so popular and cheap that at least six big and medium-size studios equipped themselves with Chinatone in 1934 (China Educational Film Commission, 1934/2008:102). In addition, a source showed that Chinatone was even exported to Nanyang as sound recording machine in 1941 (Dan, 1941).

The first movie which employed Chinatone was *The Legend of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (紅羊豪俠傳, dir. Yang Xiaozhong, 1935). It was adapted from a profitable opera performed on Zhang Shankun's (張善琨) stage. Jin Jian (金堅), the founder of Chinatone helped Zhang Shankun to add some film clips in this performance (Zuo, 2001:35). Therefore, it attracted the interest of Zhang Shankun in the film business. With the endorsement of Jin, Zhang agreed to invest in the film *The Legend of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* and employed Chinatone. In 1935, *The Legend of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* premiered at the Grand Theatre (大光明), where Chinese films were seldom shown, and proved to be profitable (Zuo, 2001:43). After that, Zhang shifted its focus to the film business and grew to be a film baron, particularly in the period of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Not surprisingly, Chinatone

continued to record Xinhua's productions, including *New Peach Blossom Fan* (新桃花扇, dir. Ouyang Yuqian, 1935), *Singing at Midnight* (夜半歌聲, dir. Maxu Weibao, 1937), and *Diaochan* (貂蟬, dir. Bu Wancang, 1938) (Zhang, 1995:42; Zuo, 2001:42). However, Chinatone was certainly not perfect. According to Ouyang Yuqian (歐陽予倩), the director of *New Peach Blossom Fan*, *Chinatone* only had one 5-pound-weight microphone, connected by a fish-pole with the recording machine. The polar pattern of the microphone was so poor that only one direction could be recorded and adjusting for distance or angle would collapse the sound recording (Ouyang, 1962:58).

## Conclusion

From the 1970s onward, cultural imperialism had become a buzzword in culture studies by assuming, "economic and political relations of dependency between first and third world create vast inequities-cultural among others-between nations" (Kraidy, 2005:22). Cultural imperialism also asserts that globalisation will lead to "the consequence of a swamping of all other cultures under the advance of the West" (Tomlinson, 1999:96). In the realm of motion pictures, Hollywood has become synonymous with "Americanisation" or "hegemony". However, by the 1990s, cultural imperialism gradually lost "much of its critical bite and historic validity" due to empirical research that challenged its assumptions (Kraidy, 2005:27).

With respect to the case of China's conversion to sound, cultural imperialism fails to note several facts. First is the contribution of Hollywood to the birth of the Chinese sound film. In the history of China's conversion, America served three functions; as a competitor, equipment supplier, and technique educator. As a competitor, Hollywood's sound films fed Chinese audiences and inspired or attracted the Chinese film industry to produce sound films. As equipment suppliers, big studios like Mingxing and Tianyi received sound film equipment from the United States. These sound machines not only assisted the studio's conversion to sound film, but also Chinese technology imitators. Last but not least, American experts, together with the American education system, provided technical and educational support for the Chinese film industry-whether intentionally or not. China's own recording technicians were educated by secretly inviting foreign experts into China. Moreover, most of the recording engineers including Shi Shipan, Gong Yuke, Ma Dejian, and Situ Yimin had American educations.

Secondly, cultural imperialism fails to notice the active response from the Chinese film industry. In the 1930s, the Chinese film industry has constructed a basic capitalistic structure in the wake of industrial development (Curtin, 2012:183). Film practitioners could not just wait to be colonised by Hollywood. Instead, innovation was natural since competitive pressures forced firms to "create, seek out, and promote innovation" (Baumol, 2002:15). As shown in this essay, Chinese film practitioners inspired by Hollywood sound films started their own sound-on-disc film experiments. Under the pressure of Tianyi's sound-on-film apparatus, Mingxing spent enormous expense to send Hong Shen to the United States to purchasing sound machines. Also, when facing the competition brought on by the upsurge in sound film production, silent film producers had to spare no effort in perfecting film content in order to

attract audiences. Arguably, this contributed to the golden age of Chinese film in the 1930s.

However, it is unfair to reject cultural imperialism wholesale. As Kraidy (2005:29) suggests, the most important facet of cultural imperialism is how “power pervades [the] international communication process.” Therefore, one needs to take extra care when analysing the technology power relationship between Hollywood and China. Although Hollywood did not bring the death of the Chinese film industry, America still maintained an absolute technological dominance. As shown in the history of China’s conversion to sound, the sound machines made by Chinese engineers had little influence outside of China.. While even inside China, large studios like Mingxing, Tianyi, and Lianhua preferred American sound machines to their Chinese equivalents. Broadly speaking, most film materials including cameras and film reels were imported from the United States (Anonymous, 1936). Therefore, one cannot overestimate the power of American technology within the Chinese film industry.

Yet, China’s conversion to sound film is still a remarkable accomplishment. In 1935, 41 out of 55 movies were sound films. In 1936, only one film was silent. Japan, China’s counterpart in Asia, had started its sound film experiment in 1931, the same year as the release of *Singing Peony*, China’s first sound-on-disc film. However, in 1937, when China finished its conversion, around one third of Japanese films were still silent (Freiberg, 1987:76-80). Given the financial limitations in the film industry, it is no exaggeration to say that the conversion to sound in the 1930s is one of the most important accomplishments in Chinese film history.

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## Part Eight: Marketing 'The East'

### Paratextual conflict across borders: A marketing case study of Jet Li's *Unleashed/Danny the Dog* (2005)

Munib Rezaie

"In the beginning I told [Hollywood studios] I was going to do an action movie and they showed the money right away-they showed me the check. When I gave them the script to read they took back the check! So we went to Europe to make it and came back to show it to American studios."

-Jet Li on the production of 2005's *Unleashed/Danny the Dog*

"wtf is Unleashed? THIS IS DANNY THE DOG!"

-YouTube user comment on U.S. trailer for *Unleashed*

Marketing campaigns are charged with generating attention and excitement for a particular product. In the world of film, the promotion and hype comes at audiences from a variety of media and forms, including official reviews, trailers, posters, TV ads, merchandising, and tie-ins, as well as a multitude of 'unofficial' sources, most often found on the internet, that include user-created products such as fan-videos and fan fictions as well as various discussion forums. In *Show Sold Separately*, Jonathan Gray takes a critical look at this often-ignored world of texts that surrounds a particular film and gives them a name: *paratexts*. Paratexts "are the greeters, gatekeepers, and cheerleaders for and of the media, filters through which we must pass on our way to "the text itself" (Gray, 2010, p. 6).

One of the most fascinating things about paratexts lies in their power to create a narrative before we see the actual narrative being promoted. As such, the possibility exists for one movie to be marketed and framed in multiple ways according to the goals and needs of the responsible studio/marketing firm. These differences can be attributed to, for example, targeting different demographics for the same film, or in the case I'll be discussing, to national and cultural differences. The differences in the American and French marketing campaigns for the 2005 Jet Li film *Unleashed (Danny the Dog)* in France and much of Europe) can reveal a great deal about the power of paratexts, the assumptions industries have about audiences, and the way elements of Asian popular culture are adapted for different audiences.

Martial arts superstar Jet Li made his Hollywood debut with 1998's blockbuster hit, *Lethal Weapon 4*. Since then, Li has gone on to star in a number of moderately successful English-language films in addition to maintaining a continued presence in Chinese-language films in his home

country. Many of his English-language films have faced harsh criticism from fans, critics, and academics alike for a variety of reasons. For one, the long history of Asian stereotypes in Hollywood still resonates today in the limited range of roles that Li is offered. These limitations are most frequently exhibited by racist content frequently passed for humor as well as the inclination to emphasize action at the expense of story and character. *Lethal Weapon 4*, for example, faced criticism from Asian American Groups for the persistent use of stereotypes, gibes, and mocked accents (Fierman, 1998). In addition to his desire to take on more emotionally challenging roles, Li has frequently repeated his wish to more truthfully depict the peaceful philosophies of martial arts as well as his own Buddhist beliefs. When asked for his thoughts on what makes him unique and successful in films across the globe, Li replied:

I think the most important is when I was young, I learnt martial arts, that is my special key. I can use my unique martial arts in the film. But after a few years, I really want to do something different... like using martial arts to talk about Peace. (Li, 2003, p. 3)

This has been a struggle for Li in Hollywood as his films continue to emphasise and even glorify the violence he is able to inflict on others without a connection to a deeper message. Fortunately, Li has found a way around this-as hinted by the opening quote-by taking his projects and talent to Europe and collaborating with writer-director-producer Luc Besson.

Generally speaking, European films have long been associated with narratives that emphasise characters and their psychologies while Hollywood productions are more frequently associated with a focus on genre and plot. "The strength of French cinema abroad," meanwhile, "has traditionally relied on art films and the *auteurist* legacy of the [French] New Wave" (Vanderschelden, 2007, p. 38), which was in itself a response to Hollywood's aesthetic and industrial domination. Luc Besson was among the first of the French filmmakers who went against the cultural specificity of French art films and aspired to make commercial films akin to Hollywood productions. Many of his films have become international and cult hits, including *La Femme Nikita* (1990), *Leon: The Professional* (1994), and *The Fifth Element* (1997). Besson has repeatedly, and even boastfully, stated his lack of desire to pursue the *auteurist* tradition, saying:

I did not have a cinephile mentality, and I still do not have one...I have never set foot in the Cinematheque, I have never been hooked on that sort of cinema. What attracted me, was not 'the films,' but to make them... (quoted in Hayward, 1998, p. 9)

While Luc Besson does not attempt to make avant-garde or art films in any way, it would be disingenuous to describe his films simply as clones of Hollywood productions. Instead, it would be far more productive to see the films he directs, writes, and produces, as a marriage between character-and plot-driven films that combine elements of Hollywood, French, and oftentimes Asian modes of production.



Hollywood films of all genres can be heavily plot driven, but none more so than the action film, which is inevitably the genre in which Besson's marriage of styles is most prominently felt. Indeed, Besson's co-founding of EuropaCorp in 2000 illustrates the move "towards another form of 'transnational' production, linking French funds and personnel with an international cast and hybrid, if formulaic, mainstream genres and form." In addition, the production company "overtly adopts the strengths of the Hollywood major model, whilst retaining various French elements" (Vanderschelden, 2007, p. 43). In other words, Besson shrewdly and sleekly combines the most popular aspects of various cinematic traditions. The conflict between action/Hollywood and character/Europe can be clearly seen in the divergent paths taken by the marketing and promotional materials for *Unleashed* in the U.S. and European markets.

*Unleashed* is widely seen as one of Li's best English-language films. According to movie review aggregator site, Rotten Tomatoes, *Unleashed* is Li's only English-language film that has achieved a "Fresh" rating, meaning at least 60% of the 129 reviews collected are favorable ("Jet Li - Rotten Tomatoes," n.d.). *Unleashed* is directed by French director Louis Leterrier with a script by Luc Besson and produced under Besson's own EuropaCorp. The film tells the story of Danny (Li), a man who has been raised like a dog since childhood by a ruthless gangster named Bart (Bob Hoskins). Danny is conditioned to being controlled with a collar that he wears around his neck. When the collar is removed, he viciously attacks on Bart's command. An accident lands Bart in a coma and allows Danny to run free. While on the run, Danny is befriended by Sam (Morgan Freeman), an elderly blind piano tuner who, along with his stepdaughter Victoria (Kerry Condon), teaches Danny about love, humanity, and the transformative power of music. Things get heated when Bart inevitably awakens and wants his prized possession back. The film is very much against violence and aims to show the negative effects of relying on violence to solve one's problems. It is no coincidence that a primarily French production is responsible for one of Li's finest English performances.

The first difference that stands out between the two countries' handling of the film, which in many ways dictates the ensuing marketing campaigns, lies in the title itself. The original title of the film, which it maintained throughout its release in much of Europe, is *Danny the Dog*. Having no prior knowledge of the film save for this title, one can easily assume that it will be about someone named Danny. In other words, it will be a film about a character. Placing the character's name in the title is a common indicator of a film's emphasis on the titular character and his or her journey as opposed to a particular plot or genre element. The opposing emphasis can be seen in the film's title for the American market: *Unleashed*. This particular title calls to mind the freedom and violence that an animal can inflict once it is no longer held back or constrained by a leash. It is very much a genre indicator, as it places the emphasis on the potential for unstoppable action. Furthermore, the title, along with additional promotional materials such as one-sheets and trailers seem to

position the idea of being unleashed in the context of the film as being a positive thing, when it is very much framed as a negative within the narrative.

Paratexts like one-sheets and posters form the cornerstone of a film's marketing campaign, simultaneously charged with evoking what potential viewers can expect from a film as well as making the film attractive enough to turn those potential viewers into actual ticket buyers-all in one image. Analyzing differences in a film's poster across different markets can reveal a great deal about their industries' understanding and assumptions about their target audience, what they think audiences want to see, and what messages are needed to make them want to see the film being advertised.

*Unleashed/Danny the Dog* provides a great example. The two posters are featured below.



(Right): *Danny the Dog*, French poster

(Left): *Unleashed*, U.S. poster

The poster on the left presents itself with a gritty, intentionally dirtied up aesthetic. Sam, Danny, and Bart are given equal prominence on the image, with their entire bodies in plain view. The font and print of the film title itself gives precedence to the fact that this is indeed a character piece. "Danny" is featured prominently with "the Dog" taking a much smaller amount of space beneath it. The most interesting and important detail in this French poster lies in the film's tagline, which translates to: "Chained by violence. Freed by music." Indeed, music plays a big role in the film in the calming and positive transformative effect it has on Danny. Looking at *Danny the Dog* as a character film, the tagline is a perfect description of Danny's journey and arc. He has been imprisoned by violence since his orphaned childhood and is

given freedom through the music and love shared by Sam and Victoria. It is truly a redemptive film that explores the power of love, the beauty of the human spirit, and the innocence of childhood. The French poster is therefore an accurate representation of a character-driven film.

The American poster on the right places its emphasis on the generic and plot-driven elements of the film in almost every respect. The most noticeable aspect of the poster is Jet Li himself. His face takes up half the image and the expression on it reveals a man ready, and perhaps even *eager*, to fight. The rest of the poster is made up various still images from the film, most of which come from various fight scenes. One of the few images not related to a fight is that of Victoria apparently giving Danny a kiss on the neck with her eyes closed. Out of context, the image hints at a romantic and passionate relationship. The reality, however, is that no such relationship exists in the film. It is merely fabricated for an imagined American audience for whom romantic possibilities are usually expected within mainstream Hollywood fare. Finally, the tagline once again proves to be the most revealing element in the poster. American audiences are dramatically told: "On May 13th, serve no master." Contrary to the French poster's focus on Danny's desire for personal transformation, the American poster repeatedly draws on images of violence and revenge. In many ways, the juxtaposition of images on the American poster is in direct conflict with the film's anti-violence stance. In other words, it brings the Asian popular culture element of martial arts, so intimately connected with Jet Li, to the foreground.

The combination of Jet Li's menacing expression, the implications of the word "unleashed", the various images of Li in the middle of brutal battles, and the tagline "serve no master" work together towards building an expectation in the potential viewer. If the American poster were all the knowledge we had of the film, it would be reasonable to assume that the various fights depicted on the poster are instances of Jet Li's character being *unleashed* and *serving no master*. In other words, the poster implies that Li's character is exercising his freedom by getting into various fights and possibly attaining some form of revenge. It further implies that there is not much else to the film besides the action. Nowhere in the poster is there any indication of what Danny's personal/emotional journey might be. Instead, by virtue of what is included and omitted from the image above, we are told that all we need to care about is the action. Much of the same discrepancies discussed above between the American and French posters are carried on in other forms of promotional materials, including exclusive clips and various trailers.

Many films make a habit of releasing exclusive clips before their release. These usually consist of a partial or complete scene from the movie meant to temporarily satisfy audiences before the official trailer or film is released. Several months before *Danny the Dog's* European release, an exclusive clip appeared on the web. The scene chosen as the audience's first peek into the film continues the French marketing practice of placing the focus on Danny's character. The extended scene shows Victoria teaching Danny how to eat ice cream for the first time in his life. It's a sweet and humorous scene, with a touching and convincing performance from Li. Promotional materials like

exclusive clips and trailers offer “some of a film’s first pleasures, meanings, and ideas” (Gray, 2010, p. 50). Ideally, they communicate enough information to get us excited about the film, but hold on to key elements to surprise us with in the theater. The selection of this scene over a myriad of other possibilities further demonstrates the importance, or perhaps assumed importance, of character for the French movie-going audience.

The French trailer continues the focus on Danny’s arc. In fact, the narrative of the trailer is essentially the entire narrative of his journey boiled down to approximately two and a half minutes: world of violence with Bart, hope and music with Sam and Victoria, return to Bart, conflict between life with Bart and life with Sam. It begins with a montage consisting of bursts of violence. Bits of dialogue are heard describing Bart’s strategy of raising Danny like a dog from a young age. After some clips depicting his violent treatment, we see Danny first meet Sam and bond over a piano. Sam takes Danny home where he meets Victoria, who immediately takes an interest in him. We see quite a bit of their interactions. Danny is clearly drawn to music and we see him transition from no communication with Sam and Victoria to finally being able to introduce himself. Some more clips of his time with Sam and Victoria clearly demonstrate a changed Danny. Sam asks him about his family but Danny doesn’t remember a thing.

At this point in the trailer, Bart returns to take Danny back and is explicitly juxtaposed with Sam. Sam’s voice tells us he thinks of Danny as family over some footage of the two of them sharing a hug while Bart’s voice tells him to not “dwell on the past, but look to the future.” The French marketing campaign’s focus on the effect of music is once again displayed in the trailer. After Bart’s piece of advice, some text is overlaid on an image of sheet music, posing the question: “*La musique peut-elle sauver un homme?*”, “Can music save a man?” (*Danny the Dog* trailer, 2005).

The Francophone trailer lasts for 2 minutes and 17 seconds. The first 44 seconds depict Danny’s violent upbringing. The following minute is devoted entirely to Danny’s time with Sam and Victoria and his relation to music. Sam matter-of-factly tells Victoria “he likes music”, and we see Victoria give Danny a keyboard and share the back-story of her parents’ death in a car accident. The relationship between Danny, Sam, and Victoria goes through a clear growth and development that sets the stage for the final moments of the trailer where Danny is placed in the middle of an emotional struggle between his violent past and potentially loving future. We are even treated to a shot of Jet Li with a tear streaming down his face!

From the 44-second mark through to the end of the trailer, the soundtrack is made up of a lone piano playing a somber and mellow tune. Transitions between most shots are made up of soft fades that add to the emotional ambiance of the piece. Most importantly, the power of music is once again emphasized with “Can music save a man?” presented as the central question of the narrative. This trailer is undeniably selling a character study that explores one man’s emotional journey from violent struggle to freedom through music, with little focus on the Asian popular culture elements.

Generally speaking, the American trailer presents a subtle inversion of the French version's focus on the effect of music and personal transformation and places it on Danny's conflict with Bart and his desire to break free.

The U.S. trailer is 2 minutes and 26 seconds long. Gone are the emotional connections formed between the characters. Instead, we begin with Danny being taken away from Bart, a montage of some time spent with Sam and Victoria which are not entirely clear, Bart's return to take Danny back, and Danny's eventual refusal to obey Bart's orders. The amount of time devoted to Danny's personal relationship with Sam and Victoria is approximately 30 seconds. The rest of the time is devoted to slow-motion snippets of fight scenes with over-saturated colors and Danny's conflict with Bart. The haunting piano track from the French trailer appears for about ten seconds, after which it is replaced with some pumping techno music. As the trailer comes to a crescendo, action shots of fights, car crashes, and explosions alternate with some overlaid text that declares: "Every man must be his own master." With the inclusion of this tagline, the focus of the film is effectively moved from the family-as found in the French paratexts-to the individual. Danny and his freedom are all that matter to Danny who, according to the American paratexts, wants to use that freedom to cause even more violence and destruction (*Unleashed* trailer, 2005).

"Paratexts hold considerable power to direct our initial interpretations, telling us what to expect and establishing genre, gender, style, attitude, and characterization" (Gray, 2010, p. 79). We might also add to this that paratexts reveal a great deal about the particulars of the industry in which they are created, especially in comparative terms with other industries. In the case study explored above, we see several forces and ideologies controlling the marketing strategies for each country. With its long history of 'quality' films that focus on character and psychology, the French industry decided to sell those very qualities to its audience and downplay the other portions that make up the hybrid product. Those who were fans of action films in general, and Jet Li in particular, would be expecting some exciting set pieces. Those unfamiliar with Li would be drawn to a series of seemingly complex human relationships. Hollywood, meanwhile, has thrived for decades on the classical Hollywood cinema model thoroughly elaborated on by scholars like David Bordwell (2008; 1985). The focus on plot, action, genre, and romance take center stage in their campaign, relegating the more nuanced character study and performance to the background. The varying emphases reveal not only the hierarchy of values within the respective industries, but assumptions about their audiences' preferred tastes as well.

The case study of *Unleashed/Danny the Dog* is particularly revealing of Hollywood preferences. As Jet Li's opening quote makes clear, the film would have never been made in the United States, precisely because of the film's emphasis of character and story over action. The same can be said for Li and Besson's previous collaboration, *Kiss of the Dragon* (2001), which, coincidentally-or not-is Li's second-highest-rated English-language starring role according to Rotten Tomatoes. By comparing disparate approaches taken by paratexts, particularly as they correspond to different countries and industries,

we can begin to uncover some of the tensions, beliefs, assumptions, pre-conceptions, conflicts, and ideologies latent within the industries as well as their respective imagined audiences.

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