

ELMHURST COLLEGE

AN APPARITION IN JAPANESE IMPERIALISM:
DISTANCE AND WARTIME TECHNOLOGIES

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO
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A week after the United States adopted the Stimson Doctrine¹ in 1932, American journalist, Floyd Gibbons, visited the Kwantung Army Headquarters in Manchuria. After spending three weeks with the Japanese military, in a radio broadcast from Manchuria, Gibbons remarked, “I ate and slept with the Japanese Army for three weeks prior to its triumphal entry into the Kum region... Having seen the plunder, rape, and insatiable atrocities of rebels I consider it natural that the Japanese Army subjugate them.”² In the first audible broadcast from Manchuria, Gibbons reported that the Japanese army was disciplined and righteous, a remarkable strength in Manchuria. The Kwantung army, using NHK³ equipment, made regular broadcasts defending its right to subjugate Manchuria. Like Gibbons, many military men would go-on to defend the Kwantung army and its role in Manchurian. The Japanese Government had a hefty budget for such stunts; wooing reporters, purchasing advertising space, and broadcasting political propaganda was commonplace in Japan. Wartime Japan was concerned with justifying its position in Manchuria, and boosting its international image. Japanese broadcasts and theatrical productions, including Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki, in the 1930s and 1940s, were used to inculcate viewers and listeners with *Japanese Spirit*. Japanese nationalism, Orientalism, and *spirit* were used in theatre and broadcast, to disseminate the Japanese ethos at home and abroad. Temporality and distance in mass media, likewise, played a pivotal role in dehumanizing the Orient. Asia was described as sleeping, slumbering, and dreaming; each term denotes an increasing level of distance. What follows is an explanation of how distance and temporality were used in theatre and broadcast to dehumanize and *Other* Asia. Moreover, what follows is an explanation of how the

¹ The Stimson Doctrine, adopted by the United States in 1932, enunciated the non-recognition of new international territory in China and Japan.

² Jane, Robbins, “Presenting Japan: the Role of Overseas Broadcasting by Japan during the Manchurian Incident,” *Japan Forum* 13, no. 1 (April 2001): 46.

³ *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, translated Japan Broadcasting Corporation, began broadcasting in March 1925. NHK sent and received overseas broadcasts, in many cases musicals, with Germany, the United States, and Britain. Japan increased broadcasts with Germany following its withdrawal from the League in 1933.

formation of *mass mind* and *media* contributed to the brutalization of Asia. We will begin with the Takarazuka Theatre, and its role in Japanese imperialism.

Takarazuka Theatre & Wartime Revues

Japan's use of the revue theatre as a tool of war, from 1913 to 1945, circulated the Pan-Asiatic belief of sameness or Japanese *dōka*. *Dōka*, literally translated *same-ization*, reflected the Pan-Asiatic belief that the Asian race should unite and overthrow European imperialism. Such visions of co-prosperity, often performed by the popular Takarazuka Revue (an all-female choir) during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, showed Japanese imperialism in Micronesia, Korea, and China as reflective of *dōka*. *The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere* (Dai-tō-a Kyōeiken) circularized the myth of a united and self-sustaining Asia. Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe⁴ envisioned a hierarchy, with Japan, Manchuko, China, and Southeast Asia, working in harmony to disestablish Western colonialism. The Takarazuka Revue, concerned with disseminating wartime propaganda, such as *The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere*, sought to create an Asiatic hierarchy with Japan as head of the Asiatic family. For example, in 1941 the Takarazuka's *Made in Japan*, a montage of Asiatic co-prosperity, in which Japanese expansion into peripheral Asia was celebrated, featured Mongolians and Chinese purchasing Japanese goods such as bicycles, silks, and porcelain ware, products iconically linked to Japaneseness.⁵ *Made in Japan* in this way showed the Japanese economy as expanding globally in unity with other Asiatic cultures.

In broader terms, “most of the wartime revues produced [including *Made in Japan*] were about military policies and exigencies, such as the ‘southward advance,’

⁴ Prince Fumimaro Konoe, born October 12, 1891, served as the 34th, 38th, and 39th Prime Minister of Japan during the Hirohito monarchy.

⁵ Jennifer Robertson, “Mon Japan: The Revue Theater as a Technology of Japanese Imperialism,” *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 4 (November 1995): 970.

immigration to Manchuria, patriotic college students, college students of a military nation, and battlefield casualties.”⁶ The relationship between the revue theatre and state was best described as reciprocated opportunism.⁷ In short, the Japanese public was interested in nationalism, and the theatre was interested in capitalizing on the war fever during the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, Kobayashi Ichizō, the founder of the Takarazuka theatre, served as the Minister of Commerce and Industry on the Konoye Cabinet in 1940. According to Jennifer Robertson in “Takarazuka, Sexual Politics, and Popular Culture in Modern Japan,” this illuminated the purpose of the Takarazuka Revue in wartime Japan.⁸ According to Iizuka Tomoichirō, professor of theatre at Waseda University “war may be destructive, but it also provides an opportunity to forge a national culture, and the state theatre movement is an important part of this process.”⁹

Despite forbidding the use of foreign loanwords in revues, and the Citizens’ Theatre Movement, in which theatres vied to capture the Japanese spirit (*Yamato damashii*), the state allowed opposing viewpoints as a means of controlling the Japanese public.¹⁰ Internal biases, such as Kobayashi’s role as Minister of Commerce in the Konoye Cabinet, and the Revue Administration’s presence in state censorship, predicated Japanese theatre in nationalism and state-building. While theatre, for the most part, was an informal mouthpiece for state government, it did allow for public resistance, as

⁶ Robertson, 972.

⁷ Sepp Linhart and Sabine Frühstück, ed., *Culture of Japan as Seen Through its Leisure* (Albany: University of New York, 1998), 286.

⁸ Theatre and state, according to historians Tomoichirō and Isao, were jointly involved in promoting the Japanese spirit. Despite the writings of these historians, ultranationalist critics argued that theatre in Japan, having roots in France, America, and Germany, posed an ideological threat to Japanese culture. Kobayashi was often accused of favoring Western and European ideas in his revues.

⁹ Iizuka Tomoichirō, “Gekijo kaiho no hitotsu keishikit o shite no shitsunaigeki,” *Fujinkai* 10, (1922): 44.

¹⁰ *Yamato damashii* was a term used to illuminate the differences between Chinese learning and Japanese identity

evidenced in commentary on Japanese politics.¹¹ For example, *Pekin no Yūrei*, performed in 1943, looked at Japanese treatment of Chinese Sinocentrically. In addition, French playwrights, such as Marcel Pagnol and Paul Gradly, wrote Eurocentric plays that included banned loanwords and Eurocentric ideologies. In one instance, Pagnol's *Marius* was banned in Osaka due to its eroticism and sexual overtones. The Revue Administration charged *Marius* with idealizing Western sexuality, and undermining Japanese *Spirit*.

Views of Bungaku-za [a prestigious theatre in Tokyo] are sometimes coloured by what is perceived as its collaborationist attitude during the war, but it is also possible to see part of its attempt to maintain its artistic integrity as a form of minimum resistance to the government's subordination of all artistic enterprise to narrow national goals. (Japan's modern theatre a century of change and continuity.¹²

Allowing for public condemnation of state in theatre neutralized the public's resistance to state exigencies and campaigns. Resistance, as framed in state discourse, was contextually marginalized as one with state. Resistance, in this sense, was contained within a limited and oppressive discourse.

Made in Japan & Mongol

The production *Made in Japan*, beginning with a "money dance" in which the currencies of eight countries graced the set, dramatized the superiority of Japanese currency. Japanese trade, in *Made in Japan*, revitalized lesser nations, infusing their weak markets with Japanese currency. Japanese money became the needle and thread of co-prosperity. Ethnographically speaking, Japanese culture, militarism, and economy were described as being exceptional to the Asiatic Other. The Asiatic Other, be it

¹¹ Sepp Linhart and Sabine Frühstück, ed., 264.

¹² Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre: a Century of Change and Continuity* (London: Japan Library, 2002), 129.

Korean, Chinese, or Mongolian, when represented in a Japanese discourse, such as the Takarazuka Revue, was contextually inferior.

In *Made in Japan*, the Takarazuka choir in its theme song, also called *Made in Japan*, sang “the less advanced will join with us to revive their trade. Our fortune brings fortune to those lacking foreign currency.”¹³ Co-prosperity, as imagined by the Takarazuka in *Made in Japan*, necessitated an Asiatic hierarchy in which Japan would protect all of Asia against European imperialism. In addition, the exotic settings of *Made in Japan* allowed Japanese audiences for the first time to envision peripheral Asia in terms of fantasy and exoticism.¹⁴

Orientalism as propaganda, a page torn from Western scripts, as evidenced in films showing dancing geishas and firewalking monks, was used in Japanese productions such as *Our South Seas* and *Only One Ancestral Land*, as a means of marginalizing Asiatic cultures.¹⁵ According to literary critic Edward Said, Orientalism is a multifaceted approach to subjugating, colonializing, and imperializing non-European/non-White peoples. Said defined Orientalism as a perpetuation of stereotypes about the East used to delineate Western/European identity. Orientalism, according to Said, was the evolution of myth, over time, into a less malleable truth.¹⁶ For example, Western films, such as D.W. Griffith’s¹⁷ *Broken Blossoms* and George Melford’s *The Sheik*, helped crystallize (to an American viewership) the backwardness and exoticism of the Orient. Over time,

¹³ Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: California Press, 1998), 90.

¹⁴ Jennifer Robertson, “Gender and the State in Japan,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 64.4 (1991): 169.

¹⁵ Mr. Ushiwara, as cited in New York Times’ “The Screen in Tokyo” was struck by American propaganda in pictures, as effusing anti-Japanese sentiments in pseudo documentaries and newsreels.

¹⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 4.

¹⁷ D.W. Griffith was the director of *The Birth of a Nation*, a silent film that sympathized with Southern Clans members. *The Birth of a Nation* was based on Thomas Dixon’s *The Clansman*, a re-historization of the American Civil War.

these stereotypes became common knowledge, and were readily perceived as truths. The Orient in American films was portrayed as strange, backwards, and timeless.

“Compositely, Oriental stereotypes fixed typical weaknesses as (amongst others) cowardliness, laziness, untrustworthiness, fickleness, laxity, violence, and lust.”¹⁸

Orientalism, in drawing the Occident/Orient opposition, distinguished between West and East, in terms of male and female. The Orient, in terms of a Western/Eastern dialectic, serves as the penetrated, colonized, and effeminate East, a mirror to the American phallus.

According to Jennifer Robertson, professor of anthropology at Michigan University, “Japanese Orientalism was activated through the wartime mass media and popular entertainment with the catalytic effect of enabling a broad spectrum of Japanese to think they were familiar with, knowledgeable about, and superior to manifold cultures, European and Asian alike.”¹⁹ It was the character of theatre, rooted in Japanese oralism, which brought to stage a particular negative of Asiatic culture. For example, the revue *Mongol* in 1941, called Mongolia a “land of dreams.” Relegated as a land of slumbering naivety, the revue *Mongol* portrayed Mongolian culture as a land of dreams and fantasy. Not only was the opportunism of new conquest captured in the word “dream,” as in to “dream” of or “dream” about, but “dream” evoked images of naivety and slothfulness. Mongolia was a “land of dreams” because it lagged in comparison to Japanese modernism.

Dichotomized in terms of modern and unmodern, Japanese discourse on Asia used “dream” and “sleep” as euphemisms for naivety and backwardness. “Dream” and

¹⁸ John Mcleod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, (Manchester: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 46.

¹⁹ Robertson, 974.

“sleep,” as used in *Mongol*, were insulated in literal meaning, and in this way, distance between actual and intended meaning was problematized. Mongolia was recontextualized in a dangerous metaphor, in which “dreamland” was used to psycho-spatially and syntactically distance viewers from Mongolia.²⁰ Distance and fantasy were terms that caricatured the Mongolian “dreamland.” Proximity of contact in warfare has played an important role in developing war technologies throughout the ages. Take for example the leap from spear to bow-and-arrow or the advancement of stealth warfare in 1944 when Germany developed the Ho 2-29 bomber. There is a movement, catalyzed by technology, which creates a psycho-spatial distance between aggressor and victim. Humanity has moved from hand-to-hand, sword-to-sword, gun-to-gun, to bomb-to-bomb combat, and now, the aggressor sits 8.3 miles above the ground in an F-117 stealth bomber, and presses a button to annihilate his enemies. This same distance, the proximity of aggressor to enemy, was extended in language and metaphor in wartime revues. According to Marshall McLuhan, “socially, it is the accumulation of group pressures and irritations that prompt invention and innovation as counter-irritants. War and the fear of war have always been considered the main incentives to technological extension of our bodies.”²¹ This extension of self into technology, as in telegraphs, revues, and broadcasts dehumanized Mongolia, delineating its spatial insignificance.

Japanese Discourse in Mon Paris

Like *Mongol*, the 1927 revue *Mon Paris*, presented manifold cultures, including Egypt, China, and Ceylon in dream-like montage. *Mon Paris* was the travel log of

²⁰ According to Marshall McLuhan, in “Understanding Media: The Extension of Man,” autoamputation or fragmentation of oneself into mass media outlets, as in broadcasting or writing, is an insular reaction to war. People, during times of war, withdraw into the numb outlets of self called mass media.

²¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 78.

Kushida, a Japanese national making his way to the city Paris. “Several days after visiting China, the travelers arrived at the Temple of the Tooth in the town of Kandy. There lotus-flower vendors danced gracefully before Buddhist sculptures that ‘came alive momentarily to the sounds of swing music.’”²² In this passage, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, pillars of Chinese culture, are seduced by Western song.²³ The Buddhist sculptures, as if wakened by the sounds of swing, came to life in the Temple of the Tooth.

The statue as an idea represented civilization. It was an unmoving testament to artistic, religious, and political solidification. In this vein, The Oxford English Dictionary defined statue “as a type of silence or absence of movement or feeling.”²⁴

Etymologically, a Buddhist statue was the concretization of Buddhism: the manifestation of the *always born Buddha* (nitya-jātam). The statue’s momentary lapse of character in *Mon Paris* was an insult to the stability of Chinese tradition; it portrayed Chinese tradition as easily swayed or involved in Western thought. Moreover, Chinese instability, activated by overseas beliefs, such as Marxism and Communism, led to war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China in 1927.²⁵ The statue’s movement illustrated the fragility of Old China in the swallows of European/Western thought.

“Ultimate proof for this judgment was provided [4 years after *Mon Japan*’s debut], according to popular wisdom, by China’s appeal for League of Nations mediation in the

²² Robertson, 107.

²³ Ling Haicheng, *Buddhism in China* (New York: Chinese Intercontinental Press, 2004), 5.

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.vv. “Statue,” <http://dictionary.oed.com/> (accessed November, 2009).

²⁵ *Mon Japan* was produced during the Chinese Civil War, and to this affect, showed China as sympathetic to Soviet/Western ideology. The Chinese Civil War pitted the Westernized Kuomintang against the Soviet-influenced Communist Party of China. China, in this respect, became a theatre for Western and Soviet influence.

Sino-Japanese dispute.”²⁶ China, like the Buddhist statue, was moved to action by White/European beliefs.

The dichotomy in *Mon Japan* was that of New Japan versus Old China. Not only was Chinese culture slighted by the Buddhist sculpture’s symbolic gesture, but Chinese culture was cast, like Mongolia, into a vacuous land of make-believe. In *Mon Japan* there are dancing lotus-venders, moving sculptures, Egyptian queens, and a Lebanese sorceress, any of which would spice-up the tamest Orientalist fantasy. Moreover, China, Egypt, and Ceylon, countries described as exotic, are presented in a montage, one scene, possibly of China, ambiguously transforming into that of Mongolia.

Amassing what is China, Egypt, and Ceylon together on one stage, Japanese viewers were treated to an Orientalist view of Asia. *Mon Japan* showed countries in an Orientalist schematic, in which eccentricism was used to assimilate and force countries into an Asiatic mold. The countries became inseparably intertwined in the fantasy of Kushida’s journey, and on stage lost their physical borders. Kushida is the uniting thread, through which all events and settings gain semblance of meaning. *Mon Japan* can be interpreted thus; Kushida represented New Japan, and New Japan, surrounded by the mysticism of the Old World, would unite and strengthen Asia.

Kabuki, Nō, & Bunraki

Theatre, as a force in training the Japanese public, was used to create distance, spatially, syntactically, and culturally to legitimize Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Theatre, like film, allowed for mass catharsis, mass mind, and mass propaganda. In addition, theatre was intrinsically grounded in Japanese tradition. For example, Kabuki

²⁶ Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (New York: University of California, 1999), 97.

(classical Japanese theatre, translated “the art and skill of singing”) from 1603 to present day, depicted Japanese folklore and song. Moreover, Kabuki shared a political and cultural place in imperial Japan, having been performed in Imperial courts during the Edo and Meiji periods. Folklore, song, and mythology, as presented in Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki²⁷ relied heavily on Japanese oralism that connected New Japan with its feudal past.²⁸ According to McLuhan, oralism was the emblem of tribal society, and only with written text and mass film, could a culture acquiesce to complex government. McLuhan offered the following example in *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*: “in ancient Rome, however, there was only the light paper manuscript to pierce the opacity, or to reduce the discontinuity, of the tribal villages; and when the paper supplies failed, the roads were vacated, as they were in our own age during gas-rationing. Thus the old city-state returned, and feudalism replaced republicanism.”²⁹ McLuhan showed that without light paper, even Rome regressed to feudalism. The continuity of republicanism was thus disrupted by a backwards shift, from print to oralism, in which Rome returned to its genesis.

The popularity of Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki, during the Taishō and Shōwa periods, linked Japanese culture with its feudal past.³⁰ For example, bushidō (the way of the warrior), Shogunate feudalism, and the imperial dynasty, were reawakened in national drama. Kabuki, in the Meiji period, was used to isolate Japan from (Western) Judeo-Christian beliefs.³¹ Japanese values, translated in song and dance, sheltered Japan from

²⁷ Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki are national forms of drama in Japan.

²⁸ Earle Ernst, *Kabuki Theatre* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 3.

²⁹ Marshall McLuhan, 104.

³⁰ Nō, originally performed in shrines and temples, in many cases, was performed in the houses of feudal lords. Nō troupes often vied for the patronage of clans and feudal lords. Nō, in this way, was identified with Japanese militarism.

³¹ Powell, 10.

Western culture, and the Western drive to imperialize East Asia. Kabuki³² often pertained to the *way of warrior*, or loyalty to state. For example, in Kabuki and Nō, the story of Musashibou Benkei, a warrior monk, was dramatized in terms of loyalty to master. Benkei must dishonor his master Yoshitsune to save his life. In another example, *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*³³ showed the plight of a cowardly samurai who was ordered by his Lord to commit *Seppuku* (suicide). Hagan, the dishonorable samurai had insulted Lord Moronō, and as punishment, was ordered to cut-open his throat. The message of the Bushidō was inextricably tied to Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki, as evidenced in *Benkei* and *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*.

Bushidō (the Way of the Warrior), I have found out, lies in dying. When confronted with two alternatives, life and death, one is to choose death without hesitation. There is nothing particularly difficult; one has only to be resolved and push forward. While some say “Death without gaining one’s end is but a futile death,” such a calculating way of thinking comes from conceited, citified bushidō.³⁴

Revived in Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki, bushidō was disseminated in wartime productions. The public message was return home victorious or return home dead with honor. Hagan was ordered to commit *Seppuku*, rather than live a dishonorable life. The Japanese warrior was reintroduced to modern Japan as a bearer of *Japanese Spirit*, a figure to be emulated and praised. Archetypically speaking, the Japanese samurai was the mirror image of the American cowboy.³⁵ The samurai and the cowboy, as negatives of each other, reinforced Said’s definition of Orientalism. While the cowboy was a man carved

³² Kabuki plays were divided into three categories: dance, history, and song.

³³ *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was a Kabuki based on true events in the 18th century.

³⁴ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Belknap Press, 2002), 103.

³⁵ There was no doubt as to the power of the cowboy in expressing the ethos of 19th and 20th century America. The popularity of the cowboy in film and literature shaped the American identity. The cowboy is lesser known as the Western samurai.

by the American Frontier (an extension of the Tuner thesis), the samurai was feudalism made flesh and blood.

Manifest Identity: Fragmentation of Self in Theatre

Imbued in the *way of the warrior*, Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki transplanted the Muromachi³⁶ samurai into the Meiji period as a symbol feudalism and *Japanese spirit*. Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki manipulated time, as in temporality, to blend the warrior of Old Japan with the militarism of New Japan. The samurai died in the 19th century with the establishment of a national army. The imperial officer, in essence, replaced the samurai; in 19th century Japan, the imperial army was made-up of ex-samurai warriors who volunteered as soldiers. Nonetheless, the samurai, as a presence in Japanese culture, was reworked, repeatedly, in Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki. The samurai, as used in Japanese theatre, moved through time as an apparition, a *trace* of what it always was.

Temporality, to this effect, was used to bridge the distance between Old Japan and New Japan, generating feudalistic sentiments in Japanese culture. In addition, the samurai mythologized Japanese history, and placed its militarism on the subjugation of Japanese colonies. This makes-up the second half of the Old China/New Japan dialectic. The Orient was described by Said as an imaginative construction (of identity) between Occident and Orient, in an imperializing dialectic.

I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such locales, regions, geographical sectors as “Orient” and “Occident” are man-made.³⁷

³⁶ The Muromachi period, also known as the Ashikaga Shogunate monarchy, lasted from 1336 to 1573.

³⁷ Said, 5.

China was mythologized to marginalize and effeminate Chinese identity. In *Othering* China, Taiwan, and Korea, Japan made manifest the Japanese mythos. Japan's identity was wrought in the divine quest for identity. The second half of this dialectic precluded Chinese identity, and instead, glorified *Japanese Spirit* as exceptional, or superior to China. For example, in *Mon Paris*, actors participated in what was called the "train dance," a militaristic formation, in which actors collectively represented a train. The train was a symbol of progress and modernism, and can be interpreted, as Japan moving forward globally.³⁸

Temporality was also used to the effect of creating "parallel temporality" in Japanese media. William O. Gardner in "Literature as Life-Form," discussed the emergence of "parallel temporality" in Japanese Literature and Arts. "From the reader's perspective...the temporality of reading a newspaper novel is not only the time it takes to read each individual installment, but also the time spent in 'everyday life' between installments, leading to 'the illusion that the content of the work is unfolding in parallel to the reader's own life.'"³⁹ The inclusion of current national events, such as the railway bombing in Manchuria and the Kuomintang's occupation of China, reinforced what Ôkuma Nobuyuki⁴⁰ termed "a heightened sense of reality [jitsuzaikan]." *Mon*⁴¹, serialized from March to May in 1910 (in *The Gate*), included the assassination of Itô Hirobumi, the Prime Minister and Resident-General of Korea. In addition, the duration of time in *Mon* is roughly equivalent to its four-month serialization. Moreover, *Mon* and

³⁸ Robertson, 979.

³⁹ William O. Gardner, "Literature as Life-Form," *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no. 2 (2008):337.

⁴⁰ Ôkuma Nobuyuki was an outspoken media critic, who argued for the simplification of Japanese characters. Ôkuma "developed an increasing aversion to the use of Chinese-derived or other 'foreign' expressions in tanka..."

⁴¹ *Mon* was a novel serialized in the Japanese newspaper *The Gate*.

*Sanshirō*⁴² were the first novels “where the seasons depicted in the novels correspond[ed] exactly to those during which the novels were serialized.”⁴³ The emergence of parallel temporality in *Mon* and *Sanshirō*, as in seasonal and political congruency, lead readers to identify with, and accept political reorientation. Parallel temporality provided readers with a sense of intimacy and closeness, that likewise, heightened the immediacy and reality of political events. Readers were forced, word by word, to relive a rehistoricization.

In theatre and print, “parallel temporality” was used to intensify (make immediate) an interpretation or rehistoricization of an event in time. For example, in D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, the American Civil War is reinterpreted and rehistoricized from an anti-Yankee perspective. *The Birth of a Nation*, with its realtime battle scenes, and assertions of historical correctness, created a parallel temporality with its audience, and thus heightened the rhetorical appeal of the film. In Japan, serializations fostered a sense of “parallel temporality,” and in this respect, connected colonial reality and domestic reality with the fiction of reinterpretation. In the above example, the assassination of Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi is reappropriated in *Mon*, and read widely by a domestic audience. Japanese viewers, in such instances, relived historical events. Serialization, as a medium, accomplished the tri-figuration of colony, home, and reinterpretation, in presenting fiction as fact. For example, the serialized novel appeared in newspapers and magazines, and could easily be mistaken for fact. Serializations rehistoricized and romanticized Japanese imperialism, and issued a sense of connectivity never before imagined.

⁴² Natsume Sōseki’s *Sanshirō* was serialized in 1908, and today, is read as a canonical text in Japanese Literature.

⁴³ Gardner, 339.

Gardner explained that reading a novel or listening to a broadcast occupied an actual space in time. The reader's day-to-day life, thus, during a viewing or sitting, coincided with the reality of print. The distance between technological medium and *self* or *selves* was temporally and spatially shortened by a shared space in time. "This type of sociality is closely related to the value of orality that Ôkuma sought in tanka as a form of interlocution or address (taieisei/yobikake). Ôkuma appears to hope, moreover, that this sociality of literature will maintain a close relation to the political and social events and issues of the day and help to sustain public attention to social issues."⁴⁴ In this passage, Gardner remarks on the sociality of literature. Readers of *Mon*, for example, partook in a shared event in time; they connected with readers in thought, and in shared temporality. This connection was more prominent in theatre. For example, in Kabuki, Nō, and Bunraki, *self* was fragmented into *selves*, when an audience assembled in a shared space (the theatre) during a shared time. In literature, readers became a readership, and thus, occupied an imagined space in time. This not only positioned *self* in the pluralistic *selves*, but amplified the immediacy and importance of political fiction.

Ôkuma's criticism of tanka,⁴⁵ as an expression of Japanese language, delineated a movement from Chinese characters to Japanese orality. Ôkuma was concerned with *yamato kotoba*. Translated, original Japanese, *yamato kotoba*, was an ancient form of Japanese, first spoken in the archipelagos. Ôkuma used *yamato kotoba* to distinguish between pure Japanese (emblazoned with *kotodama*, *the spirit of the words*) and impure

⁴⁴ Gardner, 351.

⁴⁵ Tanka is a form of Japanese verse, consisting of 31 moras, written in five metrical phases of five, seven, five, seven, and seven. The tanka is similar to the Japanese haiku, which is written five, seven, and five in three metrical units.

Japanese.⁴⁶ Ôkuma believed that language should express a national consciousness. The use of Chinese characters and foreign loanwords in Japanese script, according to Ôkuma, undermined Japanese language. Moreover, the purpose of tanka, in expressing Japanese colloquialisms, was slighted by a Chinese presence. Modern Japanese was inundated with loanwords and Chinese morphemes and phonemes, and suffered insustainability on its own. To battle this influx, or corrupting of the Japanese language, Ôkuma “...attempted to construct a synthesis of contemporary colloquial spoken language with *yamato kotoba*, the native literary vocabulary and rhythms found in the *waka* tradition going back to the *man'yôshû*.”⁴⁷

Leftist tanka poets, like Ôkuma, were concerned with *returning to Japan*. This movement, in many respects, a movement characterized by the backwards shift of Japanese’ aesthetics (wherein, poetry and literature retrograded) was undoubtedly catalyzed by wartime nationalism. *Return to Japan* was akin to *English only*, or to the preservation of French by the *Académie Française*.⁴⁸ The heterogeneity of Japanese language was alarming to critics who sought to *make pure* or homogenize all of Japan. Homogony was also mythologized in genetic exceptionalism, the belief that Japanese blood was stronger than Asiatic blood. Purity of blood and language were powerful beliefs, infused with *kotodama*, the national *spirit*.

The excessive use (*ran'yô*) of Chinese characters and Chinese-derived words in Japan’s national language has invited a disinterest in and lack of perception of the sound-based elements of words in the national populace. Prose written in a mixture of Chinese characters and kana has created everywhere the phenomenon of Chinese characters whose meaning will be the same no matter how they are

⁴⁶ Ôkuma never used *kotodama* to express his fondness of *yamato kotoba*, but instead, distinguished his motives from those of the *Colloquial Tanka Poets*. While Ôkuma supported the tanka aesthetic of *Japanese purity*, he was critical of tanka poets who regressed to archaic verse.

⁴⁷ Gardner, 347.

⁴⁸ The Académie Française has, for over four centuries, preserved the purity of the French language.

read aloud, and it appears that so long as there is no misunderstanding in the meaning, the way of reading aloud can be left up to the reader. This gives rise in turn to the condition whereby the written characters that should represent words actually dominate the reader's consciousness, and the living words as sound seem, on the contrary, to be something fleeting and trivial. This strange psychological condition has spread throughout citizens of every age and social class. . . . [Thus] the question of the establishment of radio literature . . . is not only a global issue, but also a domestic issue, insofar as it pertains to the question of national language in this country.⁴⁹

While this passage reasserted Ôkuma's distinctiveness in motive, it also accentuated Ôkuma's concern for the orality of Japanese language. In addition, Ôkuma outlined for his readers the trend towards language purification, especially in new mediums, such as broadcasts, teleplays, and newsreels. "When we consider that radio, including 'radio literature,' became a prominent medium of propaganda during the wartime period, the dimensions of the questions of radio, orality, and 'national language' become clearer."⁵⁰ Radio, film, and theatre saw to fruition the mass mediatization of orality, a task ill-suited for Japanese script⁵¹.

Return to Japan, made animate in wartime revues and tankas, *jumped ship* to the more pervasive and phonological short-wave broadcast. The backwards movement of a culture into its past, according to McLuhan, is an insular reaction to war. The culture climbs into the cocoon of its past and regresses. In McLuhan's words, the culture experiences "...the closure of displacement..."⁵² Again, we stumble into the problematic of distance. As Japan revisited its oral past in radio and film, it popularized ancient forms such as the *man'yôshû* and the *chōka*.⁵³ Revisiting archaic forms, as a means of stirring-up nationalism and *Japanese Spirit*, became popular amongst intellectuals in the 20s and

⁴⁹ Gardner, 343.

⁵⁰ Gardner, 345.

⁵¹ The Japanese graphic system relied heavily on Chinese morphemes and characters.

⁵² McLuhan, 55.

⁵³ *Chōka* was a form of Japanese verse. Waka, translated Japanese poem, encompassed *tanka*, *chōka*, and *sedōka*.

30s. For the tanka poets, an integration of modern colloquialisms with *yamato kotoba*, *pure language*, was a means of ownership; this, unlike anything else, was Japanese! The past reawakened in radio, was an apparition, passing ghostly in the airs above Japan; it was the *Japanese spirit*.

NHK's Short-Wave Propaganda War

Japanese short-wave radio was a far-reaching instrument of war, used during the 1930s and 1940s, to disseminate Japanese culture overseas. Jane Robbins, in "Presenting Japan," argued that overseas broadcasting by Japan was used to the effect of "improving Japan's international image."⁵⁴ As an isolationist country, Japan progressively used radio to partake in international discussions on Manchuria. NHK's international broadcasting, during the Manchurian/China incidents, played a pivotal role in disseminating wartime propaganda. Moreover, on March 27, 1933, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, and in its absence, used radio as an international mouthpiece.⁵⁵

...the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 changed the course of overseas radio development in Japan. Japan became increasingly isolated, particularly after the League of Nations adopted the Lytton Report on Manchuria and urged Japan to withdraw her troops. Japan withdrew from the League, thus increasing her diplomatic isolation. The Japanese government now turned to overseas radio as a means to present the Japanese case in the absence of a recognized international voice in the League.⁵⁶

Before Japan's withdrawal from the League in 1933, radio broadcasts were sent to Japanese colonies such as, Korea, Taiwan, and Southern Manchuria; following its withdrawal, Japan broadcasted in the United States, Germany, and Britain.

Robbins argued that Japan's diplomatic isolationism necessitated its international broadcasts, and thus, shifted the tide of Japanese radio. In broadcasts such as

⁵⁴Robbins, 46.

⁵⁵ Robbins, 43.

⁵⁶ Robbins, 41.

Manchurian Night, Current Topics, and Observations and Studies of the Fatherland, NHK indoctrinated its domestic and overseas listeners, justifying the construction of the puppet state Manchuko, and exalting the *Japanese Spirit*. *Manchurian Night* celebrated the establishment of Manchuko, and included "...exchange broadcasts between Tokyo and Hsinking."⁵⁷ *Current Topics and Observations and Studies of the Fatherland*, condemned the *Lytton Report*, and supported Japanese intermediation in China. Louise Young in *Japan's Total Empire*, notes that "...NHK busied itself making radio an indispensable partner to the imperial pageantry of the Manchurian Incident."⁵⁸ Experimental NHK broadcasts, such as live coverage of military send-offs and funerals, became popular in the 30s. NHK's first live broadcast, on November 11, 1931, documented an air-defense drill in Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. As technology encouraged experimental broadcasts, NHK expanded its live programming to include weekly live coverage. As Young noted, NHK capitalized on the spectacle of military, and in this way, aligned itself with the Japanese Government.⁵⁹ In addition, NHK assisted the Kwantung Army during the Manchurian incident, providing staff and transmission equipment.

NHK staff and broadcast equipment was used to complete broadcast exchanges between Hsinking⁶⁰ and Tokyo during the Manchurian incident. These broadcasts sought to instill Japaneseness or nationalism at home, and validate the Kwantung's occupation of Manchuria. "Equally important were broadcasts from Hsinking to the United States, Europe, China, and the Soviet Union, which defended Japan's presence in Manchuria."⁶¹ Following the Manchurian incident in 1931, NHK broadcasted over 279 lectures on the

⁵⁷ Robbins, 44.

⁵⁸ Young, 67.

⁵⁹ Young argued that NHK's pro-military stance was necessitated by public interest, and not by government mandates, such as the jurisdiction of Japanese radio broadcasts. Monitored by the Ministry of Communications, and later by the Cabinet Information Committee, all transcripts were subject to Government scrutiny.

⁶⁰ Hsinking was the capital of Manchukuo.

⁶¹ Robbins, 43.

occupation of Manchuria, and the necessity of Manchukuo.⁶² In December 1931, NHK featured 40 lectures from military persons on the occupation Manchuria. Moreover, NHK broadcasts sought to transplant culture to the United States, Germany, the Soviet Union, and China. For example, in 1934 NHK celebrated the emperor's birthday in an ambitious broadcast to San Francisco, Bandung, Bangkok, Hsinking, Tokyo, and Manilla. Cultural exchanges were also used to increase the prospects of trade; for example, in 1934 NHK participated in a Christmas exchange with Britain, wherein a Japanese reporter stated, "we expect and hope Britain to export capital goods to Manchurian cities, which are developing rapidly."⁶³ The purpose of this broadcast was to legitimize Manchukuo, and to improve diplomatic ties with Britain. Similar exchanges included Japanese broadcasts to the American Pacific, China, and fascist Italy.⁶⁴ "Thereafter, exchanges with Japan's Axis partners were increasingly encouraged."⁶⁵

Government censorship was a pervasive aspect of Japanese broadcasting, beginning in 1925 with the inception of NHK, and continuing during the Manchurian and China incidents, and World War II. The Ministry of Communications and Cabinet Information Committee monitored all NHK broadcasts, and reviewed all transcripts, seven days before transmission. The Communications Department mandated a monthly report on NHK international broadcasting. In addition, "from December 1926, NHK's domestic transmitting stations had been equipped with circuit breakers which allowed Ministry of Communication censors to interrupt a program for as long as material strayed from the approved script..."⁶⁶ For example, *Breakthrough Wireless*, a drama about the Ministry of Communications, was censored because it revealed the Japanese first line of

⁶² Young, 82.

⁶³ Robbins, 45.

⁶⁴ Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the making of modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2000), 557.

⁶⁵ Robbins, 44.

⁶⁶ Robbins, 46.

defense. The Ministry of Communications exercised control of NHK broadcasts in a number of ways, one of which involved a direct phone line from Atagoyama, Tokyo to the Ministry building. Government censorship had the ultimate affect of curbing anti-Japanese sentiments, and transplanting Japanese culture in Europe, China, and the United States. The Japanese used short-wave radio as a tool of war, broadcasting first to China, Korea, and Tawain, and than to Britain, Germany, and the United States. Japanese broadcasts became highly politicized following the Manchurian and China incidents in 1931 and Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933.

Radio as a medium allowed for, what McLuhan called, the *Narcissus syndrome*. According to McLuhan, man's fixation with self, was equally a fixation with technology. For example, in the story of *Narcissus*, man was not fixated on himself, but on his image in the sheen of the lake. McLuhan notes that Narcissus, derived from the Greek *Narkissos*, was a plant known for its numbing effect. Man's extension into technology, whether it be in a sheen or in a radio broadcast, was an extension of self into numbness. "The principle of numbness comes into play with electric technology, as with any other. We have to numb our central nervous system when it is extended and exposed, or we will die. Thus the age of anxiety and of electric media is also the age of the unconscious and of apathy."⁶⁷ This same phenomenon played-out, in Japanese theatre, when *self* or *selves* became *audience*, in literature, when *readers* became *readership*, and in film, when *viewers* became *viewership*. In short, *minds* became *mass mind*. Mass media made clear the holistic *us*, and with this, imbibed the Japanese public with a gang-like mentality. Japan's brutalization of Asia was legitimized by a mass public.

⁶⁷ McLuhan, 91.

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