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Ethics Unbound: Traversing Memory, Narratives, and Borders in the Aftermath of the Chongqing Heavy Bombing

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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University of California, Riverside, June 2024
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This interdisciplinary project adopts a critical humanist methodology to revive the overlooked narrative of the Chongqing Heavy Bombing. Through an examination of documentaries crafted by Chinese-American women, a Chinese novel addressing the bombing, and an English novel, along with a Japanese animated film depicting the Japanese experience of WWII, this study explores diverse perspectives that transcend national and cultural boundaries.

Drawing upon the insights of eminent scholars such as Emanuel Levinas, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Kandice Chuh, Judith Butler, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Lacan, and others, and

navigating a spectrum of mediums and narrative forms, this research endeavors to think within and beyond Area Studies, connecting it with Asian American Studies to help extricate the field from the trap of self-referentiality. Most importantly, this inquiry seeks to actively contribute to the recovery of obscured historical accounts and advocates for an ethical framework unrestrained by the inherent limitations of human perception and imagination. By doing so, it aspires to cultivate ethical responsibility within the global context shared by humanity.

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> [E]thics is an optics. But it is a "vision" without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision, a relation or an intentionality of a wholly different type.
>
> —— Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality And Infinity*

Introduction

Emmanuel Levinas writes in the preface to *Totality and Infinity* that in war, morality vanishes, and the ethical being, who thinks, exists, and is responsible for the other, is reduced to a conduit for forces that exert influence over them without their awareness. The meaning of the individual being in war is thus "fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy."[1] The idea of totality seeks to integrate the other, subordinating "the relations between beings to the structures of being"—i.e., to understand the particular through the knowledge of the universal.[2] It seeks power and control over everything, encompassing even the other, by absorbing all things into its power system. John Wild trenchantly points out in the introduction to the book that human individuals and groups often exhibit a pronounced inclination to uphold this self-centered attitude, thinking of the other either as extensions of the self or as alien objects to be manipulated for the benefit of the individual or the collective.[3] The idea of totality is overwhelming, yet it is egocentric, unethical, and unjust. Hence, throughout

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[1] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, 1969, p. 21.

[2] Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-Of-The-Other*, trans. by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 5.

[3] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 12.

human history, ongoing conflicts and wars have resulted from human desires to either integrate others or fight against total integration.

As I write this introduction, the war between Russia and Ukraine has been ongoing for more than a year and a half. Just a week ago, Palestinian militant groups, led by Hamas, launched a surprise attack against Israel, prompting Israel to declare total war on Hamas. The Gaza-Israel conflict has been ongoing since 2006, and now people in the region are suffering even more due to the armed conflict. Unfortunately, history does not end, and humanity has not reached "the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government," as Francis Fukuyama argues following the conclusion of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.[4] There is no end to history, no triumphant side in conflict, only a troubled world cohabited and threatened by human actions resulting from their limited capacity to understand the perspectives of others.

Elaine Scarry states in "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People" that our actions towards others are mainly defined by our perception of them. Specifically she argues, "*the human capacity to injure other people is very great precisely because our capacity to imagine other people is very small*."[5] The flaw of humanity, or in Viet Thanh Nguyen's

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[4] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18, p. 4.
[5] Elaine Scarry, "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People," in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, edited by Martha C. Nussbaum et al., Beacon Press, 1996, p. 103. Italics in original.

words, our "inhumanity," is nurtured because we are all, more or less, heirs to the Western tradition of thought spawned in the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment. This tradition celebrates the triumph of the terrestrial over the celestial and the agency of human beings to make the world a better place.[6]

The liberal argument of humanism, which falls into the category of Humanism II according to Didier Fassin's assortment of meanings of the term "humanism" at different historical moments, justifies conquest and oppression in colonial and imperial contexts, as well as the exportation of democracy in the contemporary discourse of human rights. It is deemed to be "a Western form of symbolic domination" that pursues moral and political universalism "including through warfare or lawfare."[7] Hence, humanism has been vehemently criticized and challenged by postmodern and poststuctualist thinkers due to its universal concepts of human nature, norms, and values that are not only anthropocentric but also repress difference and essentialize the notion of identity. Posthumanism is even eager to declare and certify the death of humanism.

However, Fassin stresses that "humanism" is an elusive word. Even its most prominent opponent, Michel Foucault, proposes understanding humanism according to the varying contexts in which it is developed in his essay "What Is Enlightenment?"

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[6] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, Harvard University Press, 2016.
[7] Didier Fassin, "Humanism: A Critical Reappraisal," *Critical Times*, April, 2019, p. 33.

> "In the seventeenth century, there was a humanism that presented itself as a critique of Christianity, or religion in general; there was a Christian humanism opposed to an ascetic and much more theocentric humanism. In the nineteenth century, there was a suspicious humanism, hostile and critical toward science, and another that, to the contrary, placed its hope in the same science. Marxism has been a humanism; so have existentialism and personalism; there was a time when people supported the humanistic values represented National Socialism, and when the Stalinists themselves said they were humanists."[8]

Foucault eventually even embraced various aspects of humanism by dedicating "his last three series of lectures at the Collège de France and his last two books to ancient Greek and Roman thinkers," by honoring Kant's influential essay on the Enlightenment, and by developing "a hermeneutics of the subject based on the care of the self and others," all of which have connections to certain aspects of humanism in one way or another.[9]

It seems that there is no chance to completely turn away from humanism despite anti/post-humanist criticism, as elaborated by Fassin: "much of what happens to human beings and to the world that they inhabit is the result of human actions and therefore involves human responsibility—notwithstanding the ambiguity of the word *human*" and that "post-humanism has little to say about forms of domination and oppression as well as of resistance and emancipation—phenomena that are human."[10]

In the preface to *Orientalism*, Edward Said also emphasizes that humanism is the *only* and *final* resistance of human beings against the inhuman practices and injustices

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[8] Fassin, "Humanism: A Critical Reappraisal," pp. 9-38, pp. 31-32.
[9] Fassin, "Humanism: A Critical Reappraisal," p. 37.
[10] Fassin, "Humanism: A Critical Reappraisal," pp. 36-37. Italics in original.

that disfigure human history.[11] Despite "the scornful dismissal of the term" by post-modern and poststructural critics, Said adamantly refers to what he does as "humanism," based on acknowledging the fact that human agency is subject to investigation and analysis. He thus urges us "to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together," instead of focusing on "the manufactured clash of civilizations."[12]

Said's vision of a humanist world requires our understanding of being as, in Levinas' words, "the dramatic event of being-in-the-world."[13] Levinas argues in both *Totality And Infinity* and *Entre Nous: On Thinking-Of-The-Other* that the primal relationship originating from our lived experience is between "me" and "the other." Departing from the Western tradition of thinking about the essential subject of "I" and the totality of seeking to integrate the other, Levinas proposes the idea of infinity, which maintains a separation between the self and the other while understanding "being" as "a process of being, an event of being, an adventure of being."[14] Thus the relation between one and the other, for Levinas, is to speak back and forth with the other—an encounter/an invocation—rather than to know, to understand, and to represent the other, which imply the negation of the other and the violence of possession of the other. The face-to-face

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[11] Edward Said, *Orientalism.* Penguin Books, 2003, p. xxii. Italics mine.
[12] Said, *Orientalism*, p. xxii.
[13] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, p. 3. Italic mine.
[14] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, pp. xii-5.

encounter does not integrate the self and other into a totality, nor does it integrate the self and other into each other. This engagement—a prolonged staying in discourse—also opens up meanings and possibilities for the formation of the self, as affirmation originates from the other and serves as the foundation of experience.[15] Levinas believes that the idea of infinity is moral because to have the idea of infinity is to have already welcomed the other, and justice begins with the other.[16]

Drawing on the Levinasian encounter and ethics, I would rather call the humanist approach that Said insists on "critical humanism," which rejects the myth of the universal man, embraces multiplicity, and apprehends the dialectics of subjecthood and subjection. What remains unvaried is, in Said's words, "[t]he human, and humanistic, desire for enlightenment and emancipation."[17]

Critical humanism is thus critical of all kinds of inhumanities and dedicated to bringing to light all forms of domination and oppression. It concerns different lives of different people in different places in the world, not in spite of our differences but rather through our differences. It challenges the essentialist, teleological understanding of humanity and history. It decenters the sovereign subject to subject positions in the dispersed networks of power, institutions, and events yet never completely denies subjectivity. Here subjectivity, as defined by Levinas, is not apprehended at the level of

[15] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 93.
[16] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 72, p. 93.
[17] Said, *Orientalism*, p. xxii.

the "egoist protestation" of humans to resist total integration into the system, but is founded in the idea of infinity.[18] It highlights the intersubjective and dialogic quality of human beings and thus advocates inclusive caring (universal love) and non-aggression—the central tenet of ancient Chinese Mohist philosophy composed as early as during the Warring States period (453-221 B.C.E.).

Critical humanism becomes imperative if human beings aim to redeem themselves and take responsibility for their actions, contributing to the creation of a world cohabited by every individual, each intrinsically heterogeneous and plural, into a better place. In her recent book, *What World Is This?*, Judith Butler sheds light on the essential condition of being. Butler argues that "the one who touches is also touched and also touches oneself" because the tangible world serves as both the condition and object for being a sensate being.[19] Thus, the unchosen relations between one and the other—the intersubjective or, in other words, interlacing/overlapping relations in bodies, senses, and actions—constitute "the more active version of" the self.[20] This forms the basis for Butler's advocacy of a "common world," cohabited by unchosen individuals connected intersubjectively and, thus, interdependantly. It is not "a simple affirmation of interdependency," which can lead to forms of exploitation, imprisonment, dispossession,

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[18] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 26.
[19] Judith Butler, *What World Is This? A Pandemic Phenomenology*. Columbia University Press, 2022, pp. 77-78.
[20] Butler, *What World Is This?*, p. 78.

or domination.[21] According to Butler, interdependency defines "a condition of life awkwardly and necessarily shared."[22] It is this essential condition of being that imposes a collective responsibility—an ethical obligation—for our common world. This ethical obligation for the common world, I argue, is a critical humanist pursuit of the realm of infinity—i.e., to ethically think of and speak to oneself and the other.

The world has continued to witness conflicts and struggles even after the end of WWII and the Cold War. These include ethnic conflicts, regional disputes, civil wars, and ideological tensions that challenge the idea of a "final" endpoint in history. To achieve reconciliation and make our common world a better place, we must adopt a critical humanist approach. This involves not only ethically thinking of and speaking to ourselves and others to avoid future conflicts and wars—which are concrete suspension of the ethical—but also ethically remembering past wars, as they hold valuable lessons that can serve as a deterrent against repeating the mistakes of the past. In fact, to engage in an ethical remembrance of past wars is equally important.

In *Nothing Ever Dies*, Nguyen examines the drastically opposite ways in which the Vietnam War is commemorated in both the United States and Vietnam to remind readers that "all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in

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[21] Butler, *What World Is This?*, p. 85.
[22] Butler, *What World Is This?*, p. 99.

memory."[23] For the United States and many Western countries, it is the Vietnam War. However, for Communist Vietnam and some other parts of the world, it is the American War. The Americans narrates the war from the perspective of their involvement in Vietnam, where the majority of the fighting and significant historical events occurred. Hence, Vietnam becomes a syndrome, a quagmire, a war for Americans to remember the enemy and obsess over their wounded and lost soldiers. The Vietnamese shift the focus to the role of the U.S. in the conflict, empathizing the impact of U.S. involvement on Vietnam and the suffering experienced by Vietnamese women and civilians. However, both sides exhibit a lack of willingness to acknowledge the southern Vietnamese, marked by feelings of defeat, melancholy, bitterness, and anger.[24]

Nguyen thus argues for "a complex ethics of memory, a just memory that strives both to remember one's own and others."[25] Nguyen's just memory is dialectic and inclusive, incorporating the experiences of not only the self, generally seen as the hero or the perpetual innocent, but also those of others who are often viewed as weak or the enemy. Most importantly, ethical remembrance of the self and others requires a recognition of not only the humanity of ourselves and that of others but also the inhumanity that inhabits humans. Nguyen argues that "[a]ny project of the humanities, such as this one, should thus also be a project of the inhumanities, of how civilizations

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[23] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 4.
[24] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 9.
[25] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 12.

are built on forgotten barbarism toward others, of how the heart of darkness beats within."[26] Drawing from Levinas, Nguyen's ethics of recognition "both affirms the importance of infinity and justice, the way we want the world to be, and which also demands a confrontation with totality, the way the world was or is."[27]

In fact, Nguyen acknowledges the complex challenge of ethically contemplating both humanity and inhumanity, present within oneself as well as in others. He admits his own struggle to fully escape the confines of self-interest and the influence of discursive powers, recognizing these challenges as intrinsic human conditions. This realization aligns with Scarry's perspective that humans are inherently limited in their capacity to perceive and imagine the experiences of both themselves and others, highlighting the importance of confronting these limitations. Despite understanding the "limits of solving real-world otherness through literary representation alone" and acknowledging the unequal distribution of resources within the memory industry, Nguyen and Scarry persist in their engagement with literature and narrative art. They argue that these mediums enable us to ethically and aesthetically explore the concepts of self and other, directly confronting the "totality, collectiveness, enormousness, sublimity, and inhumanity" associated with the war machine. According to them, literature and narrative art serve as vital tools to overcome our perceptual limitations, encourage compassion, dismantle

[26] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 19.
[27] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 100.

divisions, and foster reconciliation.[28] Nguyen further posits that artists bear a crucial role and responsibility in transcending the confines of national citizenship, advocating for "a citizenship of the imagination." This imaginative capacity allows artists to construct visions of utopias and cautionary dystopias, offer paradigms for ethical conduct, expose human cruelty, and stimulate introspective thought. Ultimately, their creative endeavors provide refuge from the harsh realities of history, such as war and violence, offering solace.[29]

Nguyen utilizes the contradistinctive memories of the Vietnam War from different sides to argue for an ethical memory that transcends sides. This work, following Nguyen's call, continues to advocate for a critical humanist approach to history and memory, pursuing the goal of justice by ethically recalling both our own and the other. It also turns to literature or, in Nguyen's words, "narrative art," to seek even the slightest hope for an ethical memory of the past and the ethical obligation of inclusive caring for our common world.

Despite knowing about human weakness for egocentrism and its tendency to be absorbed into the totality of power, it is still worth trying and not completely infeasible, because the intersubjective relation between one and the other is, after all, not a matter of choice. Moreover, as the ancient Chinese philosopher Mozi clarified in the Mohist

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[28] Scarry, "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People," pp. 102-104; Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, pp. 264-265, pp. 267-268, p. 286, p. 292.
[29] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 264, p. 286.

writings, the call for inclusive caring depends not on the goodness of human nature, which is unrealistic, but on the benefit one can gain from executing inclusive caring. "To care for each other inclusively and to benefit each other mutually (兼相爱，交相利)" is the Mohist teaching.[30] Mozi acknowledged that "embracing inclusiveness" is undeniably beneficial. However, he also recognized it as the most challenging endeavor in existence.[31] He thus indicated that the basis for replacing "exclusiveness" with "inclusiveness" is when people treat the other state the same way they treat their own. "Assume that people treat someone else's state as they treat their own state. Who would then mobilize his own state to attack someone else's state? They would treat the others as they treat themselves."[32] The Mohist inclusive caring resonates with Nguyen's point that when we see the other as we see ourselves, recognizing the simultaneous humanity and inhumanity of both sides, we would be more likely to understand the other and make peace.

Nguyen's scholarly inquiry delves into the phenomenon of disremembering within the context of the Vietnam War. As articulated by Nguyen, disremembering transcends mere forgetfulness; it represents an unethical and paradoxical mode of forgetfulness coexisting with remembrance. The act of disremembering, driven by self-interest, is

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[30] Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, Brill, 2013, p. 52.
[31] Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, *The Mozi as an Evolving Text*, p. 52.
[32] Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, *The Mozi as an Evolving Text*, pp. 53-54.

posited by Nguyen as a nuanced form of remembering marked by distortion and oblivion. Diverging from Nguyen's thematic exploration, the present study scrutinizes a historical event—the Chongqing Heavy Bombing—occurred during World War II, an event that has substantially lapsed into obscurity within the broader public consciousness, with only scant remnants documented in literature and cinematic representations.

Heavy Bombing of Chongqing

What facets of World War II still endure in your recollection? When referencing the war, individuals, inclusive of a majority of the Chinese, tend to selectively recall pivotal engagements such as Dunkirk and Normandy or events perceived as most grievous—the bombardment of London, Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, and Tokyo; the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Rape of Nanjing, and others. Nevertheless, predating the bombing of London in 1940, during a relatively tranquil period in Europe, Chongqing had already been turned into an inferno due to the systematic and protracted air raids by militarist Japan from 1938 to 1943. This period could be seen as a precursor to the military practice of strategic/area bombing, eventually culminating in the bombardment of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki.

In the eyes of the Western world, the Far East is the second theater of World War II. Yet, this secondary battleground unfurled its narrative as early as July 1937 when the Japanese attempted to conquer China. China, standing virtually alone, resisted for four

years until Pearl Harbor in 1941, when the Allies simultaneously engaged in combat on two fronts. Three months after the Marco Polo Bridge incident (七七卢沟桥事变), the Nationalist government of China could no longer defend the existing capital of Nanjing and decided in October 1937 to relocate the capital to Chongqing—a city in Southwestern China endowed with natural protections of formidable mountains and gorges, along with challenging routes and thick fog in the winter.[33] Chongqing quickly became the focal point of national and international politics, transforming from a poorly-equipped marginal city with a burgeoning population of more than a million at the onset of Japanese bombing. The city saw the rapid construction of bamboo and wooden houses on the mountain ridges to accommodate thousands of refugees from Northern China.[34] Among the multitude of agencies and individuals that relocated to Chongqing were major universities, newspapers, literary and cultural figures, as well as foreign embassies.

By the spring of 1939, the Japanese Army had effectively occupied all of North China. Owing to the inherent geographical advantages of Chongqing, the city assumed a pivotal role as the focal point of "free China," constituting the last natural and spiritual

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[33] Tang poet Li Bo wrote a famous poem about the challenging journey in the region, and its most renowned line is "The daunting route to the region of Shu (Sichuan area, including Chongqing) is more formidable than scaling the blue sky. (蜀道之难，难于上青天)."

[34] Tetsuo Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," in *Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth-Century History*, edited by Marilyn B. Young and Yuki Tanaka, The New Press, 2009, p. 145.

fortress against Japanese invasion. Designated as the "great rear (大后方)," Chongqing became a destination for migration as the Nationalist government and Chinese populace relocated from the northern regions. It was mutually acknowledged by both the Chiang Kai-shek government and the Japanese militarists that the capitulation of Chongqing would symbolize the overarching collapse of China. Consequently, the conquest of China would open avenues for Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, aware of the impracticality of Japanese ground forces approaching the city, Japan resorted to sustained and systematic aerial bombing, which aimed to coerce the surrender of the Chiang Kai-shek regime through a campaign of mass casualties, comprehensive urban devastation, and the erosion of Chinese morale.

For three years, from 1938 to 1941, Chongqing experienced the most intensive bombing, persisting until 1943. According to Maeda Tetsu (前田哲男), the Japanese conducted 218 air attacks using fragmentation and incendiary bombs, resulting in the deaths of 11,885 people, most of whom were civilians.[35] Statistics from the Chongqing Anti-Japanese War Research Group indicate that the great raids endured for six years and ten months, directly causing the death or injury of 32,829 people and indirectly affecting 6,651 people.[36][37] When comparing the aerial bombing of Chongqing with that of Nanjing

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[35] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," p. 141.

[36] "The final appeal of the civilian lawsuit for compensation for the Chongqing Bombing was rejected by the Japanese Supreme Court [重庆大轰炸民间对日索赔上诉被日本高

(1937) and Shanghai (1937), as well as more recent conflicts like the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the first stage of the Iraq War (2003), Maeda argues that the bombing of Chongqing resembled air raids on Baghdad. Unlike Nanjing and Shanghai, where aerial bombing was carried out to clear the path for ground forces' penetrations and occupations, the primary objective of air raids on Chongqing, similar to those in Baghdad, was to induce weariness of war among the local population and break their will to fight. Moreover, in both cases, bombs with delayed fuses were utilized, causing "psychological damage and long term effects."[38]

During the period of "day and night contiguous bombing," as termed by the Japanese military, or "fatigue bombing," as named by the citizens of Chongqing, the wartime routine of rushing to shelters upon seeing the red lantern rise or hearing air-raid sirens (跑警报), and enduring stifling, lightless shelters for days in the Chongqing summer heat, which often exceeded a hundred and four degrees Fahrenheit, was a daily torment for civilians. This continued throughout the year, except for the winter season when thick fog obstructed visibility in the sky. Consequently, three of the most notorious

院终审驳回]," *Sina North America*, 5 June 2020, m.us.sina.com/gb/international/phoenixtv/2020-06-05/detail-ifzwyusm5559004.shtml. Accessed 11 November 2020.

[37] It is important to note that varying statistics from different sources are common due to the challenges in accurately counting casualties during the unprecedented large-scale aerial bombing. This difficulty was exacerbated by the Nationalist government's intention to conceal the actual figures to bolster morale for the resistance.

[38] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," pp. 141-142.

incidents from the numerous air raids transpired during the summer: The Great Bombing of May 3 and May 4, 1939 (五.三、五.四大轰炸), No. 101 Operation in 1940 (百一号作战计划), and The Big Tunnel Massacre of June 5, 1941 (大隧道惨案).

The massive bombing, conducted by seventy-two bombers and 504 pilots with 600 tons of fragmentation and incendiary bombs over the two consecutive days of May 3 and May 4 in 1939, resulted in an unprecedented toll in the history of aerial bombing—4,400 people killed, and thousands more wounded.[39] The No. 101 Operation aimed to obliterate the entire city, including the out-of-town districts, during the longest unbroken period of air raids on the city areas from May 18 to September 4, 1940. Squadron Leader Captain Iwatani Fumio noted during that time: "Starting from the east side, the districts have been designated as Sections A, B, C, and D, and these are being carpet-bombed section by section."[40] The Big Tunnel in the city center, one of the numerous air-raid shelters built by the Nationalist government to protect people from aerial bombing, turned into a nightmare on June 5, 1941. The tragedy unfolded when fifteen thousand people squeezed into the shelter, meant for ten thousand, resulting in the suffocation or trampling to death of at least 2,000 civilians. Each of these bombing inevitably led to an unstoppable fire due to residential housing mainly constructed from bamboo or other

[39] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," pp. 146-148.
[40] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," p. 148.

wooden materials and the frequent disruption of the city's water supply and electric power systems during aerial bombing.

Despite these atrocities, imperial Japan was never charged with a war crime for its heavy bombing of Chongqing after the conclusion of WWII, although it was an overt defiance of the law of war and International Humanitarian Law. This lack of charges has been accepted by the U.S. and U.K., the major victorious nations of the war.

Although Chongqing, located thousands of miles away from Europe and North America in Southwestern China, was known for its miserable situation, the Western world was informed through journalists such as Theodore White, Edgar Snow, and Agnes Smedley reporting from the front lines for major Western newspapers. Additionally, the documentary film *Kukan*, premiered in 1941 and winner of the Academy Award in 1942, featured a seventeen-minute-and-thirty-four-second footage of the Japanese bombing of the city center over two consecutive days in the summer of 1940.

There has been no liquidation for the Japanese war crime of indiscriminate bombing of Chongqing civilians, simply because both the U.S. and U.K. applied the same tactic and committed the same crime during the war. A year after the commencement of Japanese air raids on Chongqing, Germany and Britain engaged in aerial bombing of each other's cities. Approximately six years later, the Americans executed similar attacks in major Japanese cities. In fact, American B-29 bombers took off from China's southwest

command center to raid Japanese cities via Guam, somewhat analogous to retaliation.[41] While the Japanese initiated terror bombing, the Americans perfected it on a much larger scale, resulting in a greater toll in human life in the enemy nation.

Accentuating its victimized status after the war and supported by U.S. Cold War ideology, the Japanese government has never officially admitted imperial Japan's massive bombing of Chongqing. In June 2020, the Japanese Supreme Court (最高裁判所) rejected the request for "apology" (謝罪) and "compensation" (賠償) from the victims of the Chongqing heavy bombing (重慶大爆撃), as demanded by the Chongqing Air Raids Civil Claim Group against Japan (重慶大爆撃被害者と連帯する会/重慶大轟炸民間對日索賠團).[42] Besides the Allied Powers wanting to conceal their own similar crimes, the bombing of Chongqing is not widely remembered globally because the Japanese lost the war and failed to achieve their goal of breaking the citizens' morale and forcing them to surrender. On the Chinese side, the rivalry and civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, culminating in the Communists' final victory, erased the glorious resistance of Chongqing from public memory until the 1980s.

[41] In his monograph, Maeda expounds on the intense sentiments shared by American figures, including generals like Claire Lee Chennault, and non-military individuals such as journalist Theodore H. White. They believed that the air attack on Japanese cities was not only reasonable but even justifiable, especially after witnessing the events unfolding in Chongqing.

[42] "The final appeal of the civilian lawsuit for compensation for the Chongqing Bombing was rejected by the Japanese Supreme Court."

America’s “good war” against fascism concluded with the destruction of Japanese cities and images of mushroom clouds, foreshadowing future air wars capable of swiftly annihilating any adversary and causing countless civilian casualties. Decades after the end of WWII, Chongqing has nearly faded into obscurity in the shadow of more familiar wartime capitals—Washington D.C., London, Paris, and Moscow. This is due to the inadequate understanding of China’s wartime experience, stemming from the failed decolonization and deimperialization of Japan post-war, the Chinese civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists, the subsequent postwar Cold War structure, American hegemony, and the reconfiguration of power structures following the rise of China.

The logic of terror and revenge began with the Japanese bombing of Chongqing. Although the heavy bombing of Chongqing was incomparable to the later bombing of German and Japanese cities in terms of technological advancement and casualty rate, it opened Pandora’s Box for modern air wars, using weapons of mass destruction to systematically, mechanically, invisibly, and insensibly slaughter civilians from the sky. Unfortunately, this cycle of bloodshed eventually caused extensive destruction in major Japanese cities, leading to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Japanese civilians. As imperial Japan’s brutal actions in Chongqing have remained unsettled, the vicious cycle did not stop with the conclusion of

WWII. Its aftermath—indiscriminate aerial bombing—persisted in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Kosovo War, the Iraq War, etc. The United States not only employed this strategy but also broadcasted terror from the sky for the world to witness via live broadcasts. Eventually, it was also adopted by terrorists, culminating in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

We, in fact, live in a world marked by the looming threat of nuclear deterrence, embodying the potential and capacity to annihilate entire civilizations—an apex in the evolution of indiscriminate bombing practices. Consequently, it is imperative for us to engage in a reflective examination and recollection of the historical events surrounding the Heavy Bombing of Chongqing. The ethical revisitation of this obscured historical chapter does not seek retribution or financial restitution. While such a perspective may pose challenges for individuals identifying as victims or their descendants, it is essential to acknowledge that every participant in warfare ultimately assumes the role of a victim.[43]

Ethically recalling forgotten histories serves a multifaceted purpose: firstly, by illuminating oversights or deliberate omissions, it cultivates awareness; secondly, by addressing historical injustices, it contributes to the pursuit of a more equitable global order. Furthermore, this ethical recollection fosters sentiments of benevolence and empathy toward the experiences of others, thereby facilitating the bridging of divides

[43] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 291.

among diverse communities and promoting inclusivity. This endeavor necessitates the adoption of a critical humanist approach to history and memory, embracing the Levinasian conception of "being" as "being-in-the-world." Additionally, it involves recognizing what Viet Thanh Nguyen terms as the coexistence of humanity and inhumanity within both ourselves and the other, confronting the pervasive influence of totality in everyday life, and aspiring towards ideals of infinity and justice through adherence to Mohist principles that advocate inclusive caring and non-aggression.

Chapter Outline

As mentioned earlier, this work employs a critical humanist approach to revive the memory of the Chongqing Heavy Bombing. It does so by examining documentaries produced by two Chinese American women, a Chinese novel directly addressing the bombing, as well as an English novel and an animated film portraying the Japanese experience of WWII. The initial plan for subsequent chapters was to explore narrative art on the topic of the Chongqing bombing from Chinese, English, and Japanese sources. Unfortunately, I was unable to find any Japanese narrative accounts specifically addressing the topic. This absence underscores a notable disregard for the atrocity within Japanese memory. Consequently, the first two chapters focus on the Chongqing Heavy Bombing, while the remainder of the work delves into reflections on Japanese wartime experience.

Chapter 1 delves into two significant works: *Kukan* (1941), the first American feature documentary to win an Academy Award and notably marked as "lost" in the Academy's catalog, and *Finding Kukan* (2016), a documentary that chronicles Chinese American woman producer Robin Lung's search for the elusive *Kukan*. This search also sheds light on Li Ling-Ai, Lung's predecessor and the uncredited producer behind *Kukan*, and explores the lesser-known city of Chongqing. These documentaries serve as focal points for examining the contributions of two global subjects who, through the Asian American narrative of return, transcend personal boundaries to aid in the creation and reimagining of ethical war memories. Furthermore, *Kukan* stands out in a cinematic landscape that was, at the time, predominantly characterized by aerial perspectives from Japanese bombers. It sets itself apart by offering ground-based photography, a perspective that vividly captures civilian responses to bombardment. This distinctive approach not only showcases human and humanistic resilience but also confronts the "gigantic," conceptualized by Martin Heidegger and Rey Chow, through the lens of tangible, on-the-ground resistance.

Chapter 2 delves into the Chinese novel *Under the Sun* (2012), examining not only its form and the author's techniques but also how these elements shape readers' perceptions of both themselves and the protagonist. This analysis aims to interpret the novel as a literary performance that challenges conventional understandings of

subjectivity. It invites readers to engage with ethical history and memory in the pursuit of justice, utilizing a critical humanist approach. This approach is notably attentive to critical humanism's focus on the "other," its questioning of the self's certainty, and the significant emotional and psychological sacrifices it demands. I argue that the author of *Under the Sun* deeply commits to exploring ethical history and memory. This commitment is evident in his utilization of even the subtlest nuances of critical humanism, illuminating both the faint light it casts and the shadows that persistently accompany it.

In Chapter 3, I continue to explore critical humanism, not only as a critical mode but in its dynamic interplay with the concepts of self, others, and the world, as illustrated in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* (1989). Drawing on the theories of Levinas, Butler, Jacques Lacan, and Hannah Arendt, my analysis suggests that Ishiguro confronts a pivotal human dilemma: our perpetual, unfulfilled quest for knowledge and the commonplace nature of evil in a world that is ever-evolving due to our intrinsic limitations in perspective. Ishiguro subtly hints at the concept of an elusive "residuum of hope" as a potential salve for this deep-seated human issue and suggests that the prospect of a better world hinges on our ability to locate ourselves within the world, fostering intersubjective relationships with others and engaging with the world around us. Such transformation, Ishiguro implies, necessitates a shift in thought and a liberation from the shackles of conventional constraints, particularly those enforced by the nation-state.

The final chapter delves into the themes of critical humanism and our ethical responsibilities to our common world, as explored through the story of Horikoshi Jiro in Miyazaki Hayao's animated film *Kaze Tachinu* (The Wind Rises). Rather than examining Horikoshi himself, the analysis centers on how the film skillfully portrays an intersubjective subject in the making, raising poignant questions about maintaining ethical integrity in a turbulent world. It asks how one can remain ethical when "the wind rises" and contemplates one's relationship with the broader world. In this way, Miyazaki's film serves as a literary and philosophical reflection on the self, the other, and the world, framing a discussion on critical humanism and the shared ethical obligations we hold.

Levinas envisions ethics as a vision devoid of imagery, urging us to refrain from objectifying, categorizing, and totalizing the other.[44] Emphasizing the inherent difference between the self and the other, this prompts ethical engagement. Rather than "engulfment," "assimilation," or "killing the other," this engagement involves a "prolonged staying in discourse."[45][46] It unfolds meanings and possibilities, fostering a

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[44] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 23.
[45] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, p. xii.
[46] Levinas elaborates on the concept of "killing the other" in the Western tradition of thinking in *Entre Nous*, p. 9; Osamu Nishitani in his work "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being'" in *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference* edited by Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon, Hong Kong University Press, 2006, delves into the concept of "assimilation;" Denise Ferreira Da Silva explores the concept of "engulfment" in her book *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

continual respect for the difference between oneself and the other. Employing critical humanism as a mode of critique, this work delves into and advocates for ethics derived from Levinasian intersubjective relations and ethical memory—drawing from the recollection of both our own and those of the other.

Rey Chow underscores that while much of work has been done on the modern history of Asia, it predominantly focuses on Asia as "a distinct territory with a distinct history," diverging from the Western subject, rather than about Asian countries' "shared history with other Orientalized cultures."[47] This study aims to address this gap by examining artworks related to the Chongqing Heavy Bombing and the Japanese experience during WWII from English, Chinese, and Japanese sources. Categorized under area studies, particularly East Asian studies, I conceptualize the field as "subjectless" to visualize an unbounded realm—an imageless vision. This approach seeks to extricate area studies from self-referentiality, moving beyond being solely perceived as social documentation and archival details, as often befalls East Asian literature.[48] Drawing inspiration from Asian American Studies, which envisions itself as "subjectless," as advocated by Kandice Chuh, to break boundaries and think of Asian Americans situationally and differentially rather than as a fixed identity, I aim to assist area studies in asserting its subjectivity not by fighting against totality—to claim its

[47] Paul Bowman, *The Rey Chow Reader*, Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 34-35.
[48] Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 9.

specificity—but, instead, by imagine infinity—emphasizing the relationality among its objects of studies.

By analyzing across academic fields and geopolitical areas, this work aims to illustrate the artificial nature of such divisions. Bridging area studies and Asian American studies also opens up possibilities for crucial alliances, facilitating collaboration toward the common goal of understanding power dynamics on a global scale and pursuing justice beyond national borders. The major issues in East Asia today primarily revolve around anti-Japanism and its reverse. These longstanding problems persist since the end of WWII and are characterized by Leo Ching as the "symptom of unsettled historical trauma of the Japanese empire and its legacy."[49] The problems are obviously not limited within national borders. Hence, this transnational research work aspires to contribute to the current scholarship with area studies emphasizing relationality rather than merely providing information for the West to understand Asia. It promotes an ethics derived from considering both ourselves and the other, fostering ethical responsibility for humanity in the shared global context.

[49] Leo Ching, *Anti-Japan: The Politics of Sentiment in Postcolonial East Asia*, Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 2-3.

Kukan and *Finding Kukan*: Ethical Restoration of a Forgotten History

"[T]o do justice, through memories, to an other than the self."

—— Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*

Memory, by its nature, is fallible and operates more as a reconstructive process than a precise record of events. It is shaped by individual perspectives, experiences, and biases, contributing to a complex fabric of recollection. Similarly, collective memories, formed under the influence of societal norms, values, and shared experiences, are prone to manipulation and reinterpretation. This tendency allows for the selective omission or distortion of facts, as individuals and societies often remember events in ways that affirm their preexisting beliefs and biases. Furthermore, governments and powerful institutions have the ability to shape historical narratives to serve their interests. This shaping can manifest in the minimization of certain events, the glorification of others, or even the creation of entirely fabricated stories, all aimed at supporting a particular agenda. As a result, our understanding and interpretation of past events can become significantly distorted, favoring narratives that align with particular interests rather than an objective account of what occurred. Such dynamics underscore the importance of critically evaluating the sources of our historical knowledge and the perspectives from which they emerge.

The unreliability of memory, both individual and collective, is strikingly illustrated by several examples, including the case of the first documentary to win an Academy Award—a title few can recall. Remarkably, this documentary has vanished from the film industry's collective memory, labeled as "lost" in the Academy's catalog. It stands as the only work for which the Academy, as noted by Ed Carter, the Documentary Curator of the Academy Film Archive, possesses neither prints nor a video copy.[1] A similar instance of memory's malleability is observed in Chongqing, where a significant landmark—the monument initially erected in 1945 to celebrate the victory over Japan, known as "kangzhan shengli jigong bei (Monument of the Victory of Anti-Japanese War)"—was renamed in 1950 to "renmin jiefang bei (Monument of People's Liberation)" to honor the Communist takeover. These instances underscore how history and public memory can be so readily forgotten and reshaped. Such insights underscore the importance of our current investigation into ethical history/memory, emphasizing the necessity for a nuanced understanding of the past to foster a more peaceful future.

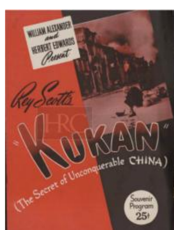

Figure 1.1: *Kukan Brochure*, 1941

Figure 1.2: Monument of People's Liberation, Jiefangbei, Chongqing

[1] Robin Lung, *Finding Kukan: Uncovering the Story of An Asian American Female Producer from the 1940's*. New Day Films, 2016.

This first Oscar-winning feature documentary *Kukan: The Secret of Unconquerable China* (1941) meticulously delineates the urban devastation wrought by aerial bombardment during the initial stage of World War II. Such portrayals were not uncommon later, particularly in European battlegrounds. Rey Scott, an American veteran, embarked on four journeys to war-time China between 1937 and 1940, documenting the Japanese aerial assaults and the resilient resistance of the Chinese. This perilous adventure culminated in a landmark color film featuring seventeen minutes and thirty-four seconds of footage capturing the Japanese bombing of China's wartime capital, Chongqing, over two consecutive days in the summer of 1940.

Kukan premiered in the United States in June, 1941. In 1942, Rey Scott was honored with the Oscar Special Award "for his extraordinary achievement in producing *Kukan*, the film record of China's struggle, including its photography with a 16mm camera under the most difficult and dangerous conditions."[2] The screening of *Kukan* at the White House for President Franklin D. Roosevelt exceeded its scheduled time of 20 minutes. Roosevelt insisted on screening the full movie, deeply moved by the courage, bravery, and tenacity of the citizens of Chongqing presented in the film. After watching the film, he asked vice

[2] "The 14th Academy Awards Memorable Moments." *Oscars.org | Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*, 19 September 2014, www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1942/memorable-moments. Accessed 5 October 2020.

president Henry Wallace to bring a scroll to Chongqing expressing his admiration for its citizens.[3] The words on the scroll are:

> In the name of the people of the United States of America, I present this scroll to the city of Chungking as a symbol of our admiration for its brave men, women and children. Under blasts of terror from the air, even in the days before the world at large had known this horror, Chungking and its people held out firm and unconquered. They proved gloriously that terrorism cannot destroy the spirit of a people determined to be free. Their fidelity to the cause of freedom will inspire the hearts of all future generations.——Franklin D. Roosevelt (May 17th, 1944).

Figure 1.3: Picture Taken at Chongqing Stilwell Museum

However, after the war, when the communists came to power in China, the wartime capital of the Chiang Kai-shek regime, with its people's heroic resistance, became insignificant to both the United States, influenced by its Eurocentric memory of the war and its Cold War mentality, and to the Chinese Communist Party, which asserts its leading role in the fight against the Japanese. Under such circumstances, *Kukan* eventually faded into obscurity, and the monument in Chongqing changed its name for the new era. In the U.S., no one knows the documentary was lost, and in China, no one is aware of the existence of such a film documenting imperial Japan's atrocities in the city of Chongqing. People are even less likely to care about the the mastermind and stories

[3] "Wallace Brings to Chongqing a Scroll Sent by Franklin D. Roosevelt [华莱士携带来渝，罗斯福赠送卷轴]," *Xinhua Daily* [*新华日报*]，25 Jun. 1944.

behind the film. This reflects the propensity of individuals and nations to conveniently forget aspects of their history when such recollections run counter to their immediate self-interest.

Kukan is often associated with Rey Scott, given that he received the Academy Award for it. However, Scott had emphasized on multiple occasions that a Chinese-American woman from Hawaii, Li Ling-Ai, played a pivotal role. Although credited as the "technical supervisor" for the film, she sparked, supported, and fulfilled his position, marking one of the most significant headline-making experiences in the Sino-Japanese War that propelled him to fame.[4] Scott's actions were actually driven by his commitment to Li Ling-Ai, who desired the true story of the struggles of the Chinese—their resistance and courage—to be heard and seen worldwide. Her vision, inspiration, and encouragement made his adventures possible.[5]

Who is Li Ling-Ai, and why does her legacy remain relatively obscure? Beyond the credited role of "technical supervisor," what significant contributions did she make to the production of *Kukan*? Why did the film remain lost for decades, and is there a possibility of discovering a surviving print? These queries motivated filmmaker Robin Lung to explore and document her own investigative journey in *Finding Kukan: Uncovering the Story of an Asian-American Female Producer from the 1940s'* (2016).

Lung has traveled across the continental U.S., Hawaii, and Chongqing to weave together the narrative of two fledgling filmmakers, Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott. Together,

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[4] Douglas Allan, *Gamblers with Fate*, R.M. McBride & Co., 1945, p. 124, p. 137.
[5] *Kukan* Brochure, 1941. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

they confronted the challenges of war, prejudice, and poverty to collaboratively produce *Kukan*. Lung adeptly leveraged diverse resources, including archives, microfilms, digital databases, and the surviving correspondence of Li and Scott. Interviews with their friends, relatives, and descendants enriched her exploration. In retracing Scott's journey in China, Lung captured footage of downtown Chongqing from the precise spot where Scott documented the city's bombing in the summer of 1940. As part of her immersive experience, she presented *Kukan* to local scholars who, despite dedicating their academic lives to studying the war, were unfamiliar with the film. This screening provided them with a unique and vivid perspective on their city's wartime history, portraying the devastation caused by aerial bombing in color motion pictures for the first time.

Finding Kukan uncovers the story of a Chinese-American woman producer, notably absent from film studies literature, and illuminates the history of Chongqing, a city that withstood relentless air raids by the Japanese military during WWII. Despite the severity of its suffering, Chongqing's story has been overshadowed in historical discourse by those of more renowned wartime capitals in the West. This chapter delves into the narratives presented in two documentaries, *Kukan* and *Finding Kukan*, as well as the less familiar history of Chongqing. It examines how these documentaries and the city's experiences contribute to the shaping and reshaping of ethical war memories, focusing on two global subjects who transcend personal boundaries to aid in the creation and reimagining of these memories through the lens of the Asian American narrative of return. In a narrative landscape frequently dominated by the aerial tactics of Japanese bombers, *Kukan* sets itself apart with its ground-level photography, capturing the civilian response

to the bombings. This unique perspective not only offers a rare insight into the human aspect of conflict but also represents a tangible form of human and humanistic resistance against what Martin Heidegger and Rey Chow have conceptualized as the "gigantic"—the overwhelming force of war.

***Kukan*: The Story of the Other**

In *Chinese American Literature without Borders*, King-Kok Cheung outlines three dominant paradigms that have shaped the trajectory of Asian American literary history.[6] Cheung highlights that, in response to the marginalization of Asians in America as "perpetual foreigners"—an emblematic other—Maxine Hong Kingston in the 1970s and 1980s introduced the paradigm of "Claiming America." This approach stresses "American indigeneity" and champions the deliberate avoidance of the hyphen in Asian American self-identification, signaling a direct claim to American identity.[7] However, reflecting on this paradigm from our contemporary perspective, it seems that it has been subsumed into the broader, white-dominated societal and power structures, raising questions about its effectiveness and adaptability over time.

Amidst a substantial increase in Asian new immigrants subsequent to the implementation of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, coupled with a later surge in Asian immigration during the 1980s and 1990s, the second paradigm, denoted as "Claiming Diaspora," emerged. Coined by Jeffrey F. L. Partridge, this paradigm underscores the heterogeneous nature of Asian American identity. It aligns with the

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[6] King-Kok Cheung, *Chinese-American Literature without Borders: Gender, Genre, and Form*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 10.
[7] Cheung, *Chinese-American Literature without Borders*, p. 6.

scholarly entreaties put forth by Lisa Lowe, David Palumbo Liu, and other practitioners. These advocates call for a deconstruction of the prevailing notion of a monolithic Asian Americanness and advocate for active engagement with a transpacific approach within the domain of Asian American literary studies.[8]

Presently, Cheung advocates for the paradigm of "Reclaiming the Hyphen," aligning with the contemporary inclination towards the dismantling linguistic, national, and cultural boundaries. This advocacy is informed by Belinda Kong's proposition to "return to the hyphen" and embrace "bilateral hermeneutics" in the interpretative framework applied to Asian American texts.[9] Notably, Cheung observes that this third phase of Asian American literary history surpasses the antecedent stage of "Claiming Diaspora" in its advancement of a hemispheric, transpacific, and multilingual approach. It is pertinent to note, however, that Cheung herself avoids using a hyphen between "Chinese" and "American" in the title of her book.[10]

I intentionally employ a hyphen between Chinese and American in this work in response to the third phase of Asian American literary history proposed by Cheung. This deliberate linguistic choice is motivated by the lives and works of both Li Ling-Ai and Robin Lung, emblematic of a hyphenated consciousness that challenges prevailing constraints for women of color, particularly when confronted with the hindrances of racism and sexism that impede the narrative telling of their stories. Furthermore, this linguistic strategy aligns with Kandice Chuh's advocacy for conceiving Asian American

[8] Cheung, *Chinese-American Literature without Borders*, p. 8.
[9] Cheung, *Chinese-American Literature without Borders*, pp. 9–10.
[10] Cheung, *Chinese-American Literature without Borders*, p. 21.

studies as a subjectless discourse.[11] The deliberate use of the hyphen serves to underscore the situational distinctions between Chinese and American, refraining from designating one as the core and the other as an adjective to qualify the core noun. By accentuating the transnational as a critical framework, I adopt a deconstructive approach to identity, acknowledging its inherent undecidability. This critical framework assumes a pivotal role in the formulation and application of alternative paradigms that extend beyond conventional nationalistic constructs, thereby contributing to the construction of an Asian American studies framework explicitly oriented toward challenging racial essentialism.

Most importantly, I use the hyphen also to respond to Emmanuel Levinas' urge to transcend totality and engage with the infinite responsibility that arises from acknowledging and respecting the absolute alterity of the other. The notion of subjectlessness in Asian American Studies, in fact, echoes this sentiment by rejecting the imposition of a singular, overarching subject or identity. Instead, it acknowledges the multitude of experiences, histories, and perspectives within the Asian American community. This approach aligns with the ethical imperative to respect and honor the diverse and often divergent narratives within the Asian American experience, fostering a more nuanced understanding that transcends attempts to essentialize or totalize a unified subject. A hyphenated Chinese-American nomenclature, as employed herein, conveys a dual gesture—toward both ethical contemplation and simultaneous recognition of the self as other and the other as the self.

[11] Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*, p. 9.

The endeavor for women and minorities in Hollywood to articulate and share their narratives remains a formidable challenge, even in contemporary times. This difficulty was notably exacerbated for figures like Li Ling-Ai during the 1930s and 1940s, epochs marked by pervasive discrimination and racism towards minority groups, with a particular emphasis on anti-Chinese sentiments. The landscape was further complicated by exclusionary legislation, exemplified by the Chinese Exclusion Act and anti-miscegenation laws, as well as discriminatory practices that curtailed their access to educational, occupational, and social avenues. Prevailing stereotypes regarding the capabilities and interests of Chinese-Americans fostered biased evaluations of their potential. The absence of conspicuous Chinese-American role models across various professions, including the arts, compounded the challenge for aspirants in envisioning a viable career trajectory. Additionally, limited representation might have led to feelings of isolation and discouragement.

Li Ling-Ai, however, emerged as a noteworthy figure who triumphed against formidable odds during a challenging historical period. During World War II, Li's indispensable support played a crucial role in facilitating Rey Scott access to wartime China on four occasions between 1937 and 1940. Her endeavor in producing *Kukan* served to connect her with her cultural heritage while simultaneously expressing her dedication to both the United States and China. This cinematic project held significant import as it aimed to document the wartime experiences of civilians, particularly in the beleaguered city of Chongqing. Overcoming barriers required resilience, determination,

and wisdom. Li's remarkable achievement underscores her strength and tenacity in challenging exclusionary practices.

Born into and raised in a Chinese immigrant family in Hawaii in 1908, Li Ling-Ai was a versatile artist trained in both Western and Chinese education. She attended the prestigious Punahou School while learning the Chinese language, dance, and music at Mun Lun, the Chinese language school that her father helped found and that still exists today. She graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1930 with a B.A. degree in theater. Upon graduation, Li traveled to Beijing to study Chinese classical theater and dance. Later, she directed and wrote plays for the Fine Arts Institute of China before her return to Hawaii due to the Japanese invasion.

In addition to her proficiency in theater and performance, Li Ling-Ai exhibited a literary prowess evidenced by the publication of four poems (1928-1931), three plays (1928-1932), a novel (1944), and a memoir (1972), predominantly featured in *The Hawaii Quill Magazine*.[12] Despite her commendable achievements in the realms of literature and the arts, her recognition remained rather obscure in both the American and Chinese contexts, primarily attributed to her status as a Chinese-American woman. The Chinese perceived her primarily as an American, while conversely, Americans viewed her through the lens of her Chinese heritage. Moreover, during wartime periods, exemplary figures are frequently construed as male, embodying qualities of heroism, while females

[12] A comprehensive list of all Li Ling-Ai's works can be referenced in Guiyou Huang, *Asian American Autobiographers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, Greenwood Press, 2001 and Seiwoong Oh, *Encyclopedia of Asian-American Literature*, 2nd edition, Facts On File, 2013. Other than these two book, there are limited mentions of her name in books introducing Asian American authors.

are predominantly assigned the societal role of remaining within domestic spheres, offering support to the valorous male counterparts. Li, nonetheless, emerged as the very antithesis of the stereotypical Chinese-American woman, living life to its fullest in a nation that exhibited limited receptivity towards her presence.

"Kukan (苦幹)" constitutes a Chinese term denoting the exertion of maximal effort in performing a task and persevering diligently under challenging conditions. Li Ling-Ai construed this term as embodying the concept of "heroic courage under bitter suffering."[13] In her interpretation, it served as a thematic representation not only of her own life but also of her immigrant parents, who grappled with discrimination and racism, and of the broader Chinese community across the Pacific contending with the Japanese invasion. Li aspired for an American audience to comprehend, value, and endorse this Chinese ethos of "kukan," leading to the conceptualization of a film illustrating the Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression amidst adversity. The endeavor to film and disseminate *Kukan* inherently demanded this spirit, a commitment ardently embraced by both Li and Scott in practice.

In *Gamblers with Fate*, Scott recollects his initial encounter with Li Ling-Ai when he worked as deskman in the Honolulu *Advertiser*. He was assigned to interview a Chinese aviatrix named Li Ling-Ai, who had just returned to Honolulu from Shanghai, where she had a career in theater before the Japanese invasion and had subsequently been assisting the Chinese war effort.[14] During the interview focused on Li's activities in

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[13] Li Ling-Ai, *Life Is for a Long Time: A Chinese Hawaiian Memoir*, Hastings House, 1972, p. 330.

[14] Li Ling-Ai began learning and obtained her aviation license in the year Amelia

China, she is recounted to have figuratively “crushed [Scott’s] Yankee pride,” “fired him with the desire to go to China,” and “agreed to arrange for the necessary finances and, through her own contacts and those of her relatives in China, to make it possible for [him] to go wherever he wished and to meet anyone who might be helpful to him, including Chiang Kai-shek.”[15] Scott departed for China within a mere two days of the interview.

In the documentary *Finding Kukan*, footage features Li Ling-Ai recounting this episode from a 1993 Turner Broadcasting Station interview. Here, she humorously recalls how she playfully quelled Scott’s initial reluctance about the prospect of traveling to China by remarking, “I may be yellow outside, but you’re yellow inside.”[16] This episode underscores the intricate dynamics of their collaboration and the spirited determination that characterized Li’s role in facilitating Scott’s journey to China.

When Scott risked his life in China, Li pawned her family jewelry to support his adventure. Li’s crafted persona was well-received by the public, and only close friends and relatives were aware of her financial struggles. When *Kukan* needed publicity, both Scott and Li posed for the press, with Scott making it to newspaper headlines while Li’s name only appeared in the woman’s section or gossip column of newspapers. In an effort to attract attention, Li claimed in one report that the Chinese invented the striptease. This assertion prompts questions in Robin Lung’s documentary film about whether Li was irresponsible in making that statement, especially considering her role in battling

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Earhart’s plane disappeared over the central Pacific Ocean. She decided to pursue aviation with the intention of possibly flying medical supplies to support China’s war effort if the need arose—Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

[15] Allan, *Gamblers with Fate*, p. 124, pp. 126-27.

[16] Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

stereotype images as the Chinese-American woman role model that Lung initially sought to credit in the beginning of her project.

However, Li's flamboyant performance in public starkly contradicted her concealed private struggles with poverty, a reality known solely to her intimate circle of friends and family. This incongruity is further exemplified by her act of dedicating her entire book—her memoir—to her parents, a gesture reflective of her modesty. Within this 343-page tribute to her parents, there exists only one succinct paragraph that touches upon her own experiences:

> Japan bombed Shanghai in 1937. Third sister Ling Ai decided that the story of the people of China must be told. With the American photographer Rey Scott, she planned the story and sent him directly to Nanking, "to be on the spot" with Dr. Keng Seng, second sister, so that she could help him see with her eyes the China of our mother and father. Ling Ai called her story "KuKan"—Heroic Courage Under Bitter Suffering—the battle cry of the people of China—the story even of the life of her own father and mother as she had known it.[17]

On a personal level, Li displayed remarkable humility. Nevertheless, in pursuit of her objective to convey China's wartime challenges to a global audience, she found herself perpetually navigating the duality of her identity.

She maintained a public persona that necessitated accommodation to prevalent stereotypes and biases about Chinese-American women within mainstream society to some degree. These stereotypes, shaped by racial biases, cultural misunderstandings, and discriminatory ideologies, included depictions such as the devious/dangerous dragon lady

[17] Li, *Life Is for a Long Time*, p. 330.

or the passive and exoticized lotus blossom. The purpose of this public image was to secure acceptance and attention. In stark contrast, her private self, characterized by humility and economic challenges, grappled with the spirit of "kukan." Her uninhibited and playful American persona was instrumental in capturing the necessary attention for her film and drawing awareness to the plight of the Chinese. Simultaneously, her Chinese self preserved a sense of modesty and patience, guided by Confucian teachings emphasizing the transformative impact of changing the world one by one.[18]

In the 1993 interview, Li expressed that "the two sides of [her] are very handy."[19] She deliberately ceded control of the film to Scott, opting to bestow upon him the spotlight. This decision was crucial as it aimed at ensuring the film's nationwide release and subsequent success, concurrently advancing her agenda of promoting the United China Relief and influencing American policy and sentiment. The rationale behind this choice lay in the absence of filmmaking experience or pertinent connections on the part of both Li and Scott, rendering the realization of a theatrical screening challenging. In the meantime, Li sensed that some people were ready to claim the film as their own. Additionally, there loomed the imminent risk of the film being categorized as Chinese propaganda, a circumstance that would likely result in rejection by major theaters if

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[18] In the 1993 Turner Broadcasting Station interview, as quoted by Robin Lung in *Finding Kukan*, Li Ling-Ai stated, "Confucius said long ago that you cannot change the world by a big idea, but you can change it one by one. And I'm gonna change it one by one because the other side of me is Chinese."

[19] Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

associated with her name.[20] As a result of Li Ling-Ai's rationality, discernment, and wisdom, *Kukan* became a Rey Scott film, prominently featuring his name at the film's inception.

Li strategically assumed a stage persona characterized by vivacity, loquaciousness, flamboyance, and occasional scandal. Leveraging the attention garnered through this calculated persona, she adeptly advanced her cause of activism. In essence, her accomplishments exemplify not only her cinematic prowess but also her astute navigation of societal expectations, geopolitical challenges, and discriminatory practices prevalent during her era. The intersection of her personal journey with the broader historical context elucidates the complexities faced by individuals, particularly women and minorities, striving for agency and recognition in the realm of both art and activism.

Li adeptly advanced her immediate advocacy for China, yet she didn't possess a copy of her own film. Her story of making *Kukan* gradually faded with the film's post-war disappearance, a period during which efforts to produce such films became obsolete amid shifting social and political circumstances. *Kukan*, delineating the Chinese race's resistance against Fascist invasion, materialized on screen not only due to Li Ling-Ai's discernment but also because its portrayal of the determination and courage demonstrated by Chinese civilians in enduring hardships, embracing sacrifice, and persevering to the end. This portrayal fortuitously corresponds with the prevailing

[20] Lung, *Finding Kukan.*

positive depictions of the Asian race projected by the dominant society as a result of what Frank Chin terms "racist love," bearing resemblance to the American self.[21]

However, this sentiment could readily shift to "racist hate," projecting stereotypes such as evil Fu Manchu, dragon ladies, treacherous spies, enemy nationals, and IP thieves. This transformation follows the fluctuating dynamics of America's relations with other nations, reflecting perceptions of Asian unassimilability. Naomi Greene terms this phenomenon as "pendulum swings" between the most positive and negative poles, illustrating the division between the American self and the other. These oscillations are significantly shaped by historical contingencies.[22] Furthermore, the constant swings of the pendulum, oscillating between fear, fascination, encouragement, and suppression, also underscore the self's attempt to comprehend the other by assimilating them into its totality. Therefore, it is unsurprising that, as U.S.-China relations intensified, particularly during the Cold War and the era of anti-Communism, a film produced by an "other," specifically a Chinese-American woman, about another race, lost its significance and easily faded from view.

Li Ling-Ai had scant evidence to substantiate her role in the efforts, and the narrative she later recounted about *Kukan* appeared almost surreal. No one, including Li's

[21] Frank Chin and Jefferey Paul Chan, "Racist Love," in *Seeing Through Shuck*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz, Ballantine Books, 1972, pp. 65-79.
[22] Naomi Greene, *From Fu Manchu to Kung Fu Panda: Images of China in American Film*, University of Hawaii Press, 2014, p. 3.

family and friends, had ever laid eyes on *Kukan* post-war. Therefore, it is unsurprising that when queried about Li Ling-Ai and *Kukan* in *Finding Kukan*, Li's nephew Andrew immediately responded with skepticism, questioning,"Was that true or b.s.?"[23] His recollection is dominated by the notion that Li was excessively talkative, casting doubt on the very existence of the film.

Similarly, during a 1993 interview for a special on the life of Robert Ripley, the eighty-five-year-old Li Ling-Ai was asked to discuss her associate.[24] However, she veered into a discussion predominantly centered on her own life and the production of *Kukan* with fervor for two hours. Surprisingly, the special show utilized only thirty seconds of the footage. Robin Lung discovered a two-hour raw tape of the interview, stored in a Kansas salt mine by the post-production manager. Lung was informed by the staff that they had little knowledge about *Kukan* and believed Li had gone astray during the interview.[25] The elusive nature of *Kukan*, never having been seen by anyone after war, makes it challenging for people to comprehend and appreciate Li's formidable efforts against all odds in its creation.

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[23] Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

[24] In 1942, Robert Ripley hired Li Ling-Ai to head the Far Eastern Department of his enterprises. She also served as a co-host on the Ripley's *Believe It Or Not* TV show.

[25] Kathryn G. Menu, "Robin Lung Restores History in *Finding Kukan*," *Sag Harbor Express*, 17 Nov. 2016, sagharborexpress.com/robin-lung-restores-history-finding-kukan/. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.

Even during the previously mentioned screening event of *Kukan* at the White House in January 1942, attended by both Li and Scott according to Li's account, newspaper headlines and Eleanor Roosevelt's newspaper column exclusively highlighted Scott's screening and conversation with the President. In her documentary, Lung expresses regret that without the secretary's note she discovered, which mentions Li's presence at the White House with Scott, even she would harbor skepticism about the event.[26]

Jenny Cho points out in *Finding Kukan* that "[a] producer finds the subject material, secures the financing, supervises pre-production, production, and post-production, the release, and the publicity" and "Li Ling-Ai did all of these things on *Kukan*."[27] Nevertheless, she was not recognized, celebrated, or remembered as an artist and cultural producer, despite her contribution to providing cultural authenticity and inspiration for the film. *Kukan* not only centers around but inherently embodies a narrative of the other.

Finding Kukan: Ethical Reconstruction of History and Memory

Robin Lung, a Hawaii-born Chinese-American filmmaker as well, possesses a sixteen-year track record dedicated to narrating the experiences of minority and female subjects through documentary film-making. Notably, her works include portrayals of two influential women from Hawaii: Queen Lili'uokalani, the final sovereign monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and Patsy Mink, the inaugural woman of color elected to the United

[26] Lung, *Finding Kukan*.
[27] Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

States Congress.[28] Lung's inaugural feature documentary, *Finding Kukan*, emanates from her resolute commitment to bringing the story of a resilient Chinese-American woman from Hawaii to the cinematic forefront. This undertaking seeks to address the pervasive underrepresentation of women and minorities within the film industry. Beyond redressing this imbalance, Lung aspires to guide aspiring minority filmmakers in navigating the challenges presented by the prevailing white, male-dominated mainstream society and film industry. Intrigued and motivated by the life of Li Ling-Ai, Lung meticulously documents her eight-year odyssey in unearthing and reconstructing Li's story, along with the untold story behind the elusive documentary film, *Kukan*.

Centering on Li Ling-Ai, *Finding Kukan* weaves three narrative strands: the life of Li Ling-Ai, the life of Rey Scott, and the enigma of the missing *Kukan*. Lung adeptly emphasizes the narrative of women of color by affording Li Ling-Ai the spotlight. This is not to diminish Scott's adventurous spirit or the significance of his role. Scott received due acknowledgment through the Academy Award, and his exploits were covered as hard news. The *Kukan* souvenir brochure attests to his acclaim, noting that "[h]is pictures and signed articles have appeared in more than 500 newspapers and magazines throughout the world, including *The New York Times*, *London Tattler*, *Asia*, *Life*, and *Look*."[29] His adventurous journey is also chronicled in the book *Gamblers with Fate*, a resource still

[28] "Robin Lung Bio." *New Day Films*, www.newday.com/filmmaker/278. Accessed 27 Dec. 2020.
[29] *Kukan* Brochure, 1941.

accessible for perusal. In stark contrast, Li Ling-Ai received only the credit of "technical supervisor" for *Kukan*, despite fulfilling all producer duties. Her visibility in newspapers was confined to the women's section or gossip columns, even as she diligently worked to promote *Kukan* and advocate for the cause of United China Relief.[30]

Lung's documentary unfolds as a detective story, where she assumes the role of the investigator narrating her quest. This journey takes her from Honolulu to New York, Georgia, Los Angeles, and Chongqing, engaging in interviews with old friends, relatives, descendants of Li and Scott, as well as scholars specializing in cinema and World War II. Lung conscientiously communicates to the audience that each piece of evidence, whether an interview, newspaper clipping, archival file, or old letter, is filtered through her own interpretation. Simultaneously, she endeavors to present comprehensive information about Li Ling-Ai, both positive and negative, steadfastly refusing to withhold negative judgments to maintain an impartial account. Despite her commitment to impartiality, Lung explicitly expresses her aspiration to discover an American heroine in the vein of cinematic narratives—a woman who stands alongside men, contributing equally, and whose undeniable presence challenges conventional norms.[31]

This task proves exceedingly challenging for a female minority filmmaker. In addition to the enduring biases and stereotypes that influence the perception of women,

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30 Lung, *Finding Kukan*.
31 Lung, *Finding Kukan*.

especially those from minority backgrounds, and dictate the types of stories they are expected to tell—thus limiting their creative expression—the film industry's restricted access to financial support poses a significant obstacle to bringing film projects to fruition. Nevertheless, the most formidable challenge that Lung faces, simultaneously rendering her efforts crucial and meaningful in unearthing extraordinary individuals and valuable narratives buried in history, lies in visualizing a story primarily derived from written documents, especially when both protagonists have passed away, and the film itself has been lost.[32]

To address this challenge, Lung conceives the notion of employing shadow theater performances as a means to articulate her nuanced argument concerning the pioneering woman filmmaker, a highlight of the documentary film. To facilitate this, a stage featuring a large fifteen feet by thirty feet screen and specially designed lights is created in collaboration with the experienced crew of San Francisco Bay Area theatrical company ShadowLight Productions.[33] Taiwanese dancer/choreographer Wan-Chao Chang, trained in both Western modern and traditional Asian dance akin to Li Ling-Ai, and Bay Area actor Clay David portray shadows of Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott, reenacting pivotal moments from the characters' legendary lives in the making of *Kukan* through silhouette

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[32] Menu, "Robin Lung Restores History in *Finding Kukan.*"

[33] "America Reframed Unfiltered: Creating Shadow Theater Re-enactments For *Finding Kukan*," *America Reframed*, 9 May 2018, archive.pov.org/blog/america-reframed-unfiltered/2018/05/america-reframed-unfiltered-creating-shadow-theater-re-enactments-for-finding-kukan/. Accessed 5 Jan. 2021.

performances. History is thus reconstructed in an imaginative and blurred manner, employing a visual apparatus that not only manipulates light but also memory. The techniques of shadow theater assist Lung in animating hitherto absent fragments of history. Nevertheless, the inherently shadowy quality of this approach mirrors the nature of both personal and historical memory, which is inherently selective and imaginative.

Without the persistent effort of Lung, *Kukan*, the first color film spotlighting the Chinese resistance against Japanese aggression, would have been lost to history. Lung, fueled by the spirit of "kukan," dedicated eight years to the relentless pursuit of this film. In the national archive, she discovered a VHS copy containing the initial thirty-five minutes of the original eighty-five-minute film. Additionally, in the basement of Raymond Scott, one of Rey Scott's sons, she uncovered a rusted but complete copy. Regrettably, despite more than a year of efforts by the Academy, the entire film could not be restored to a quality suitable for public screening due to the severe degradation of Raymond's copy. Until Lung's intervention, the film remained unknown in China. Lung's initiative to bring *Kukan* to China serves not only as a connection to her heritage but also as a commemoration of a pioneering Chinese-American woman filmmaker.

With Lung's facilitation, *Kukan* made a poignant return to Chongqing after a lapse of seventy-five years since its original filming. The screening of the film for local scholars evoked emotional responses as they witnessed their city undergoing devastation

through aerial bombardment. *Kukan*, thereby, emerges as a significant archival resource for local researchers and historians investigating the sociohistorical landscape of the "Great Rear (大后方)" during the wartime period. The acquisition of the copyright of *Kukan* by the Research Center of the Great Rear During the Sino-Japanese War (中国抗战大后方研究中心) facilitated broader access for the Chinese audience to the rare and invaluable footage within the film. Zhou Yong, the director of the center, lauded *Kukan* as the most accurate, complete, and objective record of the bombing of Chongqing, capturing substantial and shocking frames filmed by a Westerner. He noted that other images and footage of the bombing, seen previously, were through the lenses of Japanese bombers targeting the city. *Kukan* stands out as the singular record focusing on the nuanced reactions of citizens. He equated the rediscovery of *Kukan*'s footage with the historical significance akin to the unveiling of the diaries of German businessman John Rabe and the seminal work "The Rape of Nanking" by Chinese-American Iris Shun-Ru Chang.[34]

Lung's tribute to Li Ling-Ai marks a pivotal moment in acknowledging Li's indispensable role in co-producing *Kukan* with Scott. While Scott took the forefront, risking his life to realize the film and uphold his commitment to Li, she assumed a backstage role. Li orchestrated fundraising activities, contributed to post-production

[34] Zhou Yong, "Soft Power: The Secret of Unconquerable China—Analysis of the Oscar Winning Documentary *Kukan* [软实力：中国不可战胜的秘密—对美国奥斯卡获奖纪录片<苦干>的解析]," *Cultural Soft Power* [*文化软实力*], 2016, no. 3, p. 91.

efforts, oversaw the film's release, and managed its publicity. The collaborative efforts of these novice filmmakers, each playing distinctive yet integral roles, not only engraved a significant chapter in cinematic history but also merit due acknowledgment, celebration, and enduring remembrance. In facilitating the film's return to its birthplace, Lung contributes to confirming Rana Mitter's argument that China, as a forgotten ally, made a tremendous contribution in the World Anti-fascist War.[35] Much like London, Chongqing endured intensive bombing, albeit for a more prolonged duration. Nevertheless, its history remains relatively unknown in the West, primarily recognized as a popular travel destination for the Chinese. The city's history, even as the provisional capital of Nationalist China, merits recounting and remembrance.

In her blog post after screening *Kukan* for Chongqing scholars, Lung expressed that the most profound and motivating aspect of creating *Finding Kukan* is "knowing that a piece of work can have an impact beyond one's lifetime."[36] Additionally, she conveyed her aspiration to acquire proficiency in the language of her cultural heritage, aiming to foster more effective communication with individuals and her audience in China.

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[35] "Oscar Winning *Kukan* Returns to Chongqing: True Representation of the Bombing of War-Time Chongqing [奥斯卡<苦干>回渝，真实再现战时重庆大轰炸]," *Huaxia* [华夏经纬网], 6 May 2015, www.huaxia.com/mlcq/zqsy/bysk/2015/05/4389674.html. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

[36] Robin Lung, "Year in Review (Part 3—July First Trip to China!)," *Nested Egg Productions Blog*, 2 Dec. 2014, www.nestedeggproductions.com/blog. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

Finding Kukan remains open-ended, posing unanswered questions as characters speculate or engage in discussions regarding the rumored veiled romantic relationship between Li and Scott at a time when Hollywood prohibited miscegenation on the American screen. Despite Lung's unwavering pursuit of clues, conclusive evidence substantiating Li's involvement in Scott's audacious endeavors in China remains elusive, notwithstanding the inclusion of frames featuring Li in *Kukan*. Nonetheless, Li Ling-Ai ultimately surfaces from Lung's exhaustive exploration across continents, epitomizing a forgotten woman filmmaker and an overlooked minority role model.

In essence, the film adeptly presents its audience with two resolute global subjects who not only articulate narratives concerning women of color but also symbolically return to their homelands through their performative expressions on stage. The narratives, whether focusing on Li Ling-Ai redirecting attention towards the suffering of her homeland and dispatching Rey Scott to a realm of suffering and resistance, or Robin Lung positioning herself as a "detective" in search of a Chinese woman role model and serving as a cultural intermediary to restore an unknown documentary film to its filming location, not only link the personal with the historical and political, transcending boundaries of time, space, culture, and ideology, but also contemporize immigrant stories beyond conventional themes of alienation and assimilation. These narratives thus vividly

construct global subjects that delineate both ends of Chinese-American connectedness, defined by the hyphen.

The Human and Humanistic Resistance to the "Gigantic"

The climax of *Kukan* is the seventeen-minute-thirty-four-second footage capturing the Japanese bombing of China's wartime capital, Chongqing. Rey Scott filmed the destruction of the city center at the risk of his life:

> The Japs had announced on the radio that they would bomb this inland capital for seven straight days...For two days [August 19th and 20th, 1940], the enemy sent 350 planes a day over Chungking and dropped 200 tons of bombs with the most devastating results...Out of a blue sky roared the dreaded Jap bombers, unloading their packages of death upon the defenseless riverside city. Then, huge yellow flames shot high into the heavens, completing the dreadful havoc as little men battled valiantly to check them...I was standing on the lawn of the American Embassy...But it wasn't till afterwards that I learned that everyone else, the Ambassador and all the other Americans, had been lying on the ground during the bombing. The Japs were letting their bombs loose right above the Embassy...I wasn't aware of how close I had come till afterwards. Everyone else had had sense enough to lie flat on the ground...I was too busy to turn around and look at the others. If I'd once seen them there, I'd have dropped down myself. Luckily I didn't see them, for if I had, I'd have failed to get one of the most exciting and most horrible pictures of the war in China.[37]

In *Finding Kukan*, Robin Lung captures present-day downtown Chongqing on the same spot where Rey Scott once documented the city. The area is now replete with high-rises, tracing the transformation of Chongqing from the wartime scars documented by Scott to its present state of peace and prosperity as a modern city.

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[37] Allan, *Gamblers with Fate*, pp. 132-34.

When asked about her perception while standing in front of the old American Embassy building and facing the new Chongqing across the river, Lung responds:

> I was amazed at what a big, bustling, affluent city Chongqing had become with all the tall skyscrapers replacing the small huts and wooden buildings that were burning in Rey Scott's footage. I felt a sense of pride and empathy for all the people (both Chinese and American and other nationalities) who had suffered during WWII yet persevered to begin their lives again and build something better for future generations. It felt good to know that Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott played a small part in the survival of the city. I also felt lucky to be standing on the river bank with a plane flying overhead that only carried passengers and tourists instead of bombs.[38]

Lung's articulation encapsulates a pivotal critical humanist tenet concerning the ethical commemoration of the past—acknowledging the collective suffering experienced by both our own community and others. It also underscores the ethical construction of a future wherein humanity averts war through contemplation and a cultivation of mutual affection. This is particularly noteworthy in the contemporary era characterized by "the world picture" and "the world target," wherein human-made representations extend beyond the verbal and literal to encompass the visual and virtual realms.

Figure 1.4: Downtown Chongqing, *Kukan*, 1941

Figure 1.5: Downtown Chongqing, *Finding Kukan*, 2016

[38] My conversation with filmmaker Robing Lung, 2 Mar. 2021.

Heidegger, in his essay "The Age of the World Picture," asserted that "[t]he fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture."[39] He clarified that the term "picture" denotes a "structured image" or "representation" crafted by humankind. In essence, "world picture" is not to be construed as a mere depiction of the world; rather, it signifies the world conceived and apprehended as a picture, established by humans who represent and articulate it.[40] According to Heidegger, there exists no inherent picture of the world; the world only manifests when it is objectified and represented—incorporated into totality, either as "nature" (subject to calculation of its future trajectory) or "history" (subject to calculation and verification as past).[41] Nature and history are essentially beings in objectivity, evolving into "science" only when "truth has been transformed into the certainty of representation."[42]

In Heidegger's view, seeing serves the purpose of knowing and grasping. Building upon this perspective, Chow expounds on the concept that "seeing is destroying."[43] She posits that in aerial bombing, the world is not merely conceived as a picture but also as a target slated for destruction. In her words, "once you can see the target, you can expect to

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[39] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, Harper Perennial, 1997, p. 134.
[40] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," pp. 130-134.
[41] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," pp. 126-127.
[42] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture."
[43] Rey Chow, *The Age of The World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 27.

destroy it."[44] World War II stands as the epitome of implementing aerial bombing, vividly illustrating Chow's assertion that maximal visibility guarantees efficient destruction.[45]

Chow aligns with Heidegger in affirming that "the gigantic presses forward in a form that actually seems to make it disappear"—vanishing into "the mundane, the effortless, and the intangible."[46] The airplane distances the pilot from the target, just as the TV/Computer screen distances spectators from foreign and remote worlds. Modern technology facilitates easy and insensible destruction, requiring only a flick of the hand as soon as a target comes into view, akin to using a remote control for our daily electronic devices. Chow laments that few recognize the affinity between our daily operations and military actions often occurring in distant places. The boundaries between war and peace are increasingly blurred as the "gigantic" fades into the everyday, with the enormous toll in human life reduced to cold numbers, and the preservation of an actual physical warring state maintained by the "terrorism of so-called 'deterrent' weaponry."[47] As we virtualize the world and wars, assimilating them more into the fabric of our daily activities, Chow warns us to confront the affinity between war and peace and to face the terror embedded in our everyday lives.[48]

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[44] Chow, *The Age of The World Target,* 31.
[45] Chow, *The Age of The World Target*.
[46] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," pp. 30.
[47] Chow, *The Age of The World Target*, p. 31.
[48] Chow, *The Age of The World Target*, p. 30.

Heidegger and Chow explicate the potent and pervasive influence of totality, a force that aspires to systematize, comprehend, and unify all aspects of existence. Despite this overarching tendency, the human and humanistic struggle for resistance and emancipation is discernible in the lens of Rey Scott's camera as depicted in *Kukan*. In one of history's darkest moments, both Rey Scott and Japanese bombers directed their focus towards civilians—Scott through the discerning eye of his camera, and the Japanese bombers through their target sights. During the Japanese announcement and execution of their strategy to erase Chongqing from the map and extinguish the citizens' resistance from a bird's-eye perspective, Scott meticulously recorded the unfolding events. This comprehensive documentation encompassed the alerting of the appearance and approach of Japanese bombers in formation, the futile resistance of several Chinese fighters, the ensuing terror wrought by Japanese bombers, and the subsequent aftermath of fire, flames, smoke, and the ensuing rescue efforts—all meticulously captured from an eye-level perspective.

Among the myriad responses to aerial bombing, perhaps the most poignant and impressive was the composed and orderly reaction exhibited by civilians. Individuals dedicated both day and night to the construction of air-raid shelters. Children displayed a cheerful resilience, engaging in swimming activities within the expansive craters left by Japanese bombings. Small businesses demonstrated a remarkable commitment by

remaining operational until the final warning, contributing to the sustenance of ordinary life. Civilians, in a composed and orderly manner, transported their belongings, forming disciplined queues at the entrances of dugouts. As the Japanese bombers withdrew and the city center succumbed to flames, collaborative efforts between rescue teams and civilians were strenuously employed to suppress the fires. Following the cessation signaled by the all-clear siren, an expeditious collective endeavor ensued as individuals mobilized their resources to expeditiously rebuild both their homes and the city infrastructure.[49]

Exceeding Heidegger's assertion regarding its capacity for apprehension and surpassing Chow's contention regarding its potential for destruction, the visual apparatus manifests an extraordinary ability to record, illuminate, unveil, and reconstruct the obscured and forgetful facets inherent in historical narratives. This capability finds tangible manifestation in collaborative endeavors, such as those undertaken by Scott and Li, and Lung in conjunction with ShadowLight Productions.

While Japanese fighter pilots, employing their bomber sights, were confined to a perception limited to the utter annihilation of cities, Scott's camera facilitated the introduction of an unfamiliar city and its people to the Western consciousness, hitherto fixated on European theaters of conflict. Scott not only fulfilled his commitment to Li

[49] Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott, *Kukan: The Battle Cry of China*, 1941. Copyright acquired by The Research and Collaborative Innovation Center of Chongqing, 2015.

Ling-Ai by delivering footage and photographs that accentuated the fortitude of the Chinese people, ranging from the Chiang Kai-shek couple to ordinary citizens but also underscored the exceptional exertions and palpable human and humanistic resistance against the "gigantic." This resistance starkly contrasts with the proposition advanced by Heidegger and Chow, wherein the "gigantic" is asserted to dissolve into the "mundane, effortless, and intangible" dimensions of everyday existence.[50]

Kukan effectively fulfilled its objective of influencing American sentiment toward the war, from grassroots to the White House, by portraying the human resistance against totality. Following its premiere in June 1941, *The New York Times* remarked on the film's depiction of the bombing of Chongqing, noting that the "wanton violence appears even more horrible than the scenes we have witnessed of London's destruction."[51] In August of the same year, another article in *The New York Times* reviewed *Kukan*, drawing a parallel between the aerial bombings of London and Chongqing. The review underscored that while Americans readily empathize with the fortitude and bravery of the British in the face of destruction, the shared traditions, way of life, and standard of living between Americans and the British contribute to this empathetic response. However, the article highlighted a prevailing tendency to overlook the protracted devastation in China. The

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[50] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 135; Chow, *The Age of The World Target,* 30.

[51] Bosley Crowther, "'Kukan', a Vivid Fact Film About Modern China and Its Myriad Peoples, Is Seen at the World," *New York Times*, 24 June 1941, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*: *The New York Times*, p. 17.

film's climactic portrayal—the bombing of Chongqing—emerges as a pivotal juncture for Americans, fostering the realization that "the struggle for freedom knows no geographic boundaries and has no ethnic frontier."[52]

In the 1930s and 1940s, Li Ling-Ai demonstrated remarkable foresight by harnessing the nascent film media to champion her cause. This era marked the infancy of the film industry, where prevalent racism and sexism presented formidable challenges. Despite these hurdles, Li skillfully navigated the turbulent waters, utilizing the emerging medium to advocate for her mission. Fast forward to the present, and Robin Lung faces a distinct set of obstacles as she endeavors to use film media to honor an unsung hero and resurrect forgotten histories. The persistent underrepresentation of Asian Americans in both U.S. and Chinese mainstream media adds an additional layer of complexity, with racism and sexism persisting and creating formidable barriers for Lung as she seeks to bring her narratives to a broader audience.

However, both Li and Lung navigate the intricate landscape of the film industry buoyed by the indomitable spirit of "kukan"—a heroic courage forged in the crucible of adversity. Their collective mission transcends mere storytelling; it involves unearthing obscured histories, challenging ingrained prejudices, and confronting the systemic silencing of voices. In their unwavering commitment to transpacific causes, both Li and

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[52] "Review of 'Kukan'," *New York Times*, 15 Aug. 1941. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*, p. C16.

Lung extend beyond mere narrative exposition, engaging in a performative endeavor that encapsulates the reclamation of the hyphen. This reappropriation is expressed not only through their poignant storytelling on stage but also through symbolic returns to their respective homelands. These performative expressions underscore a profound dedication to bridging cultural divides and reshaping narratives that have historically been marginalized. Li and Lung's intentional and symbolic actions contribute to a broader discourse on transcultural representation and the transformative potential of performative interventions in historical storytelling.

The importance of ethical remembrance of the past is woven into the fabric of their narratives. By delving into forgotten histories, Li and Lung shine a light on the ethical imperative of remembering. Their efforts transcend personal narratives, aiming to rectify historical injustices and promote a more inclusive understanding of the past. In a world where historical accounts can be biased or forgotten, ethical remembering becomes a powerful tool for challenging systemic inequalities and fostering a more just and equitable future.

Where There Is Sunshine, There Are Shadows:
The Exorbitant Price of Ethical Memory

"Do not all human beliefs emerge from dim lights and shallow streams?" (人类的全部信仰，不都建立在微弱的光亮和清浅的溪流之上吗？)

——Luo Weizhang, *Under the Sun* (my translation)

"The fact that contemporary human beings provide multiple explanations for everything is emblematic of their maturity. In their unique ways, a knife possesses its softness just as silk possesses its edge." (现代人成熟的标志，是对每一种事物都不止给出一种解释，刀子也有刀子的柔软，丝绸也有丝绸的锋芒。)

——Luo Weizhang, *Under the Sun* (my translation)

"It is fashionable among foreigners to say that 'the Japanese' have sanitized the past and failed to acknowledge their wartime aggression and atrocities."[1] John Dower underscores this trend in *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering.* Beyond a pervasive sense of victim consciousness, Dower delves into a complex array of attitudes and opinions that have shaped popular recollections and public histories of Japan's war—the Asia-Pacific war spanning from 1937 to 1945. These include denial, evocations of moral (or immoral) equivalence, binational (U.S.-Japan) efforts to sanitize Japanese war crimes, and popular discourses acknowledging guilt and responsibility.[2] Despite being both aggressor and defeated in the war, Japan's postwar victim consciousness is notably pronounced, anchored in the memory of a tremendous civilian death toll and the

[1] John W. Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World*, The New Press, 2012, p. 105.
[2] Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, p. 112.

destruction of sixty-six cities in air raids, culminating in the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "There could be no heroes for the losing side," according to Dower, making it prevalent to discuss the death, victims, and sacrifices themselves.[3]

I align myself with Dower's endorsement of a plurality of truths, despite being Chinese and hailing from Chongqing, China's wartime capital during WWII, which endured extensive air raids by imperial Japan for over five years. However, I must acknowledge that my mind went blank when I entered the glass-walled hall of the Yushukan Museum (遊就館) behind the Yasukuni Shrine. Here, a Zero fighter aircraft is exhibited prominently, accompanied by a detailed written introduction with pictures proudly proclaiming the unprecedented victory of Zeros in their inaugural performance in Chongqing in September 1940, wherein they downed nearly every fighter on the Chinese side with no Japanese losses.[4] There were also moments when I struggled to comprehend that history, listening to a granny narrate her memories of Japanese suffering in the atomic bombing with tears and sentiment at the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima (広島平和記念資料館). Born decades after the war's conclusion and without ancestors who personally experienced the Chongqing heavy bombing, I still grapple with moments of hesitation and bewilderment. What about those who harbor traumatic personal or

[3] Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, p. 119.

[4] Before the establishment of the First American Volunteer Group of the Republic of China Air Force, nicknamed the Flying Tigers, in 1941, China had only a handful of pilots and Russian-made fighters. It lacked an equivalent air power to withstand Japanese fighters.

family memories of the war? Can they ethically recall and appraise what transpired? And what constitutes ethical history and memory after all?

The Chinese novel *Under the Sun* (2012,《太阳底下》) precisely explores these doubts and questions through its nuanced representation of history. The novel provocatively urges readers to approach a painful historical period with fresh eyes and to empathize with its protagonist during his agonizing moments of interrogating his own humanity. Anchored in historical research on Chongqing heavy bombing (重慶暴擊), author Luo Weizhang (罗伟章) challenges the notion of history as a received text with a fixed meaning. He accomplishes this by utilizing the literary genre of historiographic metafiction (Linda Hutcheon 1998) and achieves his transgenerational return to the past through the techniques of "counter-memory" (George Lipsitz 1990) and "postmemory" (Marianne Hirsch 2012), all while addressing the challenges inherent in individual memories.[5]

Focusing on its form, as well as the technique and agency of its author in shaping readers' perceptions of both themselves and the protagonist, my analysis of *Under the Sun* aims to interpret the text as a literary performance that challenges the conventional understanding of subjectivity. It prompts readers to explore ethical history and memory and pursue justice through a critical humanist approach—specifically, ethically recalling

[5] *Under the Sun* includes a bibliography that cites historical research works referenced by the author.

both our own and those of the other. Mindful of critical humanism's inclination towards the other, disrupting the certainty of the self, and acknowledging its call for a humanity that requires significant emotional and psychological sacrifices, the author of *Under the Sun* persistently advocates for the pursuit of ethical history and memory, building upon even the faintest glimmer of critical humanist light and the shadows that inevitably and constantly follow.

Coping with the "Gigantic": Human and Humanistic Responses

Only eleven years after the Wright brothers' successful powered flight in 1903, aerial bombing was employed by both the Germans and the Allies on battlefields by the end of 1914 and has been utilized throughout the twentieth century up until now. World War II expanded its usage from the so-called "accurate bombing" to "strategic bombing"/ "area bombing"/ "terror bombing."[6] Regardless of accurate or strategic, aerial bombing indiscriminately transforms defenseless cities into targets for destruction, causing immense harm to civilians and undermining their will to resist. The culmination of aerial bombing was the use nuclear bombs by the United States to end the war. Upon reflection, however, the world now grapples with the horror of the devastation inflicted on Japanese cities by atomic explosions and the iconic images of mushroom clouds, which underscore the terrifying potential of future aerial warfare to claim countless lives with the mere push

[6] Different nations use distinct terms to refer to aerial bombing. Americans call it "strategic bombing," the British term it "area bombing," the Japanese refer to it as "key area bombing," and the Germans label it as "terror bombing."

of a button in an instant. However, even now, very few know and remember the indiscriminate bombing of the city of Chongqing from 1938 to 1943 led by the imperial Japanese military. This campaign could be seen as the inception of strategic bombing/area bombing that eventually led to the bombing of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki.[7]

Japanese scholar and journalist Maeda Tetsuo (前田哲男) argues in his monograph *Strategic Bombing: Tracing From Guernica and Chongqing to Hiroshima* (「戰略暴撃の思想——ゲルニカ-重慶-広島への軌跡」, 2006), as well as in his English article, that Japan was the first to designate aerial bombing operations as "strategic bombing" and systematically implement this strategy in its bombings of Chongqing.[8] This military practice bestowed modern wars with features exclusive to the industrial era: one side mechanistically, systematically, and imperceptibly slaughtering the other from above the sky; the city and its civilians below becoming mere targets for utter destruction; the boundaries between combatants and noncombatants erased—victims unable to discern any aggressors, and vise versa.[9] The horror of strategic bombing ultimately

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[7] Japanese scholar Maeda Tetsuo (前田哲男) elaborates this point in his monograph *Strategic Bombing: Tracing From Guernica and Chongqing to Hiroshima* [戰略暴撃の思想——ゲルニカ-重慶-広島への軌跡]，gaifusha [凱風社], 2006.

[8] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," p. 138.

[9] Maeda Tetsuo, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima: The Road of Strategic Bombing during World War II* [从重庆通往伦敦、东京、广岛的道路——二战时期的战略大轰炸], trans. Wang Xiliang [王希亮译], Chongqing Publishing Group [重庆出版社], 2015 edition [2015 年版], p. 12；Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," pp. 151-152.

"boomeranged" back to Japanese cities in the most extreme and devastating form of atomic bombing, leaving an indelible mark on history.[10]

Maeda interprets the bombing of Chongqing as "Hiroshima before Hiroshima" because the Japanese military used bombs that are now classified as weapons of mass destruction.[11] He contends that the cycle of bloodshed persisted even after the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as the United States subsequently employed the strategy of indiscriminate bombing in most of its wars overseas. Consequently, he highlights that the bombing of Chongqing marked the starting point of the military practice of strategic bombing, yet it is remains a forgotten node in the history of twentieth-century air wars, particularly unknown to most people, especially Westerners. He warns correspondingly that without comprehensive knowledge of what Chongqing endured, we cannot fully comprehend the significance of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We cannot understand how these bombings influenced the U.S. practice and refinement of its own military strategy of strategic bombing, and we can hardly recognize the logic of terror and revenge with the escalation of weapons of mass destruction.[12]

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[10] Maeda, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*, p. 3; Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," p. 141.
[11] Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces," p. 142.
[12] Maeda, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*; Maeda, "Strategic Bombing of Chongqing by Imperial Japanese Army and Naval Forces."

I wholeheartedly comprehend and support Maeda's call to revisit the starting point, aiming for a broader perspective that allows a deeper understanding of WWII and strategic bombing. The question at hand is how to approach this history and from whose perspective? Should our focus be on the macroscopic theory of war and the history of data? In an era where we not only verbalize but also visualize and virtualize the world and war, particularly in the age of the "world picture" and "world target," and especially considering air wars that endow combatants with maximum visibility from a bird's-eye view and remote control capabilities enabling instant killing and destruction from afar, there is a risk of fixating solely on the devastation and brutality of war.

This emphasis on the coldness of mechanical slaughtering in the modern age can reinforce dichotomies such as the target/others and the eye/self, potentially hindering efforts towards peace and reconciliation. We would thus agree that WWII was the epitome of implementing aerial bombing which best illustrates Chow's point that maximal visibility guarantees efficient destruction.[13] And we would align ourselves with Heidegger, Chow, and Maeda, asserting that the gigantic advances in a manner that appears to render it inconspicuous—melding into the ordinary, the facile, and the imperceptible.[14] This is also the reason when we now mention WWII, one of the first things that would come into our mind is nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and

[13] Chow, *The Age of The World Target,* p.31.
[14] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 135; Chow, *The Age of The World Target,* 30.

one of the most astounding pictures that we would think of contains mushroom clouds of atomic blasts that hang over the sky of the two Japanese cities for a long time, because metanarratives are easily made from these shocking representations of overgeneralization.

Should we then zoom in to engage with individuals and their war memories instead? If we opt for individual memories over metanarratives, as proposed by Jean François Lyotard, what constitutes ethical memory and justice when personal memories are also deemed unreliable, as indicated by both Paul Ricoeur and Viet Thanh Nguyen? Ricoeur, in his work *Memory, History, Forgetting*, points out that the self's memory is always constituted by the forgetting of others; however, justice is turned toward others.[15] Expanding on Ricoeur's ideas, Nguyen argues in "Just Memory" that "all classes and groups are invested in strategic forgetting for the sake of their own interests."[16]

Chinese author Luo Weizhang attempts to provide an answer with his novel *Under the Sun.* In the novel, he portrays the war as exceedingly cruel, yet it does not signify complete destruction. Sometimes, it is "gripping and heartwarming because of individuals with courage, uprightness, backbone, talent, as well as responsibility."[17]

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[15] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 89.
[16] Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," *American Literary History*, 5 Jan. 2013, pp. 1-20, p. 11.
[17] Luo Weizhang, *Under the Sun* [太阳底下], Zuo Jia Publishing House [作家出版社], 2012 edition [2012 年版], Kindle ed., loc. 3683 of 4342. My translation.

Annihilation or rejuvenation, dead silence or liveliness—all depend on perspectives. This was discussed in the previous chapter, where the Japanese perceived their outcome of total destruction through a bird's-eye view when practicing their strategy to wipe out Chongqing on the map. In contrast, Rey Scott witnessed civilian responses to aerial bombing calmly and orderly through his camera's focus, zooming in to individuals. Like Scott, Luo complements the macroscopic view of Chongqing in ruins from the air, along with the cold data of official history, by incorporating details of individuals who survived air raids in the novel, with its plot turns to the interpretation of literary remains of its protagonist, Huang Xiaoyang (黄晓洋), as they are read by a constructed writer "I," who stands in for both the author and the reader of Xiaoyang's life experience, addressing questions of historical memory and representation. Despite heavy bombing, the text demonstrates:

> Chongqing is expanding from the Yuzhong peninsular to the south bank of the Yangtze River and the north bank of the Jialing River...Barber shops, tailor shops, watch shops, tea houses, restaurants, groceries stores, etc.—everything crucial to people's daily life—is proliferating like mushrooms after rain...Chongqing is evolving from an inland mountain city and distribution port of agricultural products into an internationally renowned industrial and commercial hub (重庆在向江北和南岸延伸......理发店、裁缝店、钟表店、茶馆、饭馆、副食店......凡与日常生活有关的事物，都在雨后春笋般地生长......重庆由一个农产品集散港埠发展为现代化工商业城市，由一个内陆山城跃身为国际名城，正是在大轰炸时期！)[18]

[18] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 3176 of 4342. My translation.

Zooming in on the mundane everydayness, Luo shows us the extraordinary effort and tangible human and humanistic resistance to the "gigantic" and inquires: "Do not all human beliefs emerge from dim lights and shallow streams?"[19]

Historiographic Metafiction and Transgenerational Return to the Past

Luo Weizhang, in an interview, talks about his own understanding of historical reconstruction:

> "History itself is a labyrinth, akin to Rashomon. Even events that occurred yesterday become blurred and confusing once they transform into memories, not to mention those that transpired more than half a century ago. Distances from truth widen when memories are recounted. Thus, what defines truth? More often than not, representations shape our understanding of truth."[20] (历史本身就是迷宫，就是罗生门；不要说大半个世纪以前的事，就是昨天发生的事，一旦进入记忆，就惝恍迷离，记忆被叙述，就会更加偏离真相。但究竟什么是真相？许多时候，被叙述才构成真相。)

Based on his recognition of representational history and his respect for such acknowledgement, Luo states that he chose to structure and narrate the story in a labyrinthine way. Utilizing historiographic metafiction, complemented by the strategic deployment of "counter-memory" and "postmemory" techniques, Luo intricately navigate the intricacies of historical representation.

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[19] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 3644 of 4342. My translation.

[20] Zhou Yi, "The Greatest Book is the Book of Fate: Considerations with Luo Weizhang[最伟大的书是命运之书——对话罗伟章]," in *Research on Frontier Issues in Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* [中国现当代文学前沿问题研究], edted by Chen Siguang, Sichuan University Press [四川大学出版社], 2018, p. 199. My translation.

Luo crafts a narrative through the voice of a writer, who narrates his encounters with the protagonist Huang Xiaoyang's literary remains, as well as with Xiaoyang's ex-wife and acquaintances. Engaging with primary sources and standing in for both the author and the reader, the writer-narrator not only interprets and speculates on Xiaoyang's life and the unknown history but also comments on the process of his writing and interpreting the past.

Historian Huang Xiaoyang was relentlessly searching for truth regarding his great-grandmother's death during the Rape of Nanjing, where she was shot on the street by a Japanese soldier. It was said that the soldier not only shot the old lady but also stamped on her back. It was also said that the soldier called her "grandma" before firing. Xiaoyang delved into an exploration to determine which version of the two accounts concerning the details of the murder was authentic. His quest led him to confront and gradually untangle puzzles involving vulnerable individuals in war across three families over a period of sixty years, connecting areas of Nanjing, Chongqing, and Hiroshima. However, just as everything was about to come to light, Xiaoyang tragically committed suicide, unable to face a certain "truth" that he initially sought to uncover.

A young and successful specialist in WWII, Xiaoyang was a professor of history at Yuzhou University of Arts and Sciences in his thirties. He had already published a book on the Rape of Nanjing and recently shifted his research focus to heavy bombing of

Chongqing. With a promising career ahead, he was expected to make significant contributions to his field. However, no one could comprehend his suicide nor did they fully grasp the significance of his investigation into his great-grandmother's death, as the murder itself was the most prominent "fact" to them. Filled with sorrow, perplexities, and guilt, Du Yunqiu (杜云秋), Xiaoyang's ex-wife, approached a writer to help her "see through (看透)" the deep, entangled, and elusive heart of Xiaoyang by reading his scripts and writing about him.[21] Yunqiu explained to the writer that Xiaoyang's deep entanglement with the past ultimately led to their separation because it became suffocating for her.

The narrator thus not only pieces together the essence of Xiaoyang's story by examining and reorganizing materials in the leather suitcase provided by Yunqiu, which mainly consist of Xiaoyang's journals and letters to and from his relatives, but also writes and comments on the process of his compilation. On one hand, he emphasizes Xiaoyang's authorship of the words, confessing that the best way to help Yunqiu "see through" Xiaoyang is "to publish his literary remains in the suitcase intact (最好的办法，就是把这箱子里的文字原封不动地发表出去)."[22] Meanwhile, he intersperses letters to Xiaoyang from relatives, scripts of his interviews with Yunqiu, conversations with Xiaoyang's acquaintances, and an unpublished magazine interview of Xiaoyang's

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[21] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 78 of 4342.
[22] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 113 of 4342. My translation.

colleague sporadically and alternately with Xiaoyang's writing. This provides different perspectives on the same figures/events and interrupts the progressive timeline of the History of significant events with nonlinear narration of the histories of individual persons.

At times, the narrator intrudes into his own narration to remind readers that there is someone who constantly filters the seemingly real documents. Questioning his own credibility, he tells readers that even he has had difficulty organizing and editing Xiaoyang's writing because Xiaoyang, unexpectedly for a historian, didn't take time seriously. The narrator concedes that he constantly "falls and climbs out of the trap (我不停地掉进陷阱，然后又从陷阱里爬出来)" of Xiaoyang's words, as every piece is not clearly dated, including Xiaoyang's diary, which indicates only days and leaves out months and years.[23] Engaging with available personal materials sympathetically but imaginatively, the narrator therefore performs the same role and shoulders the same responsibility as that of Chinese-American filmmaker Robin Lung, uncovering histories while illustrating the blurred nature of history in the previous chapter.

Through a constructed writer, author Luo Weizhang artfully structures the novel in the form of historiographic metafiction, which, according to Linda Hutcheon, incorporates literature, history, and theory by "its theoretical self-awareness of history

[23] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 126 of 4342. My translation.

and fiction as human constructs." This foregrounds the complexities of textual creation.[24] Hutcheon also points out that, although historiographic metafiction appears to privilege either multiple points of view or an overtly controlling narrator, it problematizes the notions of subjectivity and historical transcendence. In neither case, do readers find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with certainty.[25] Historiographic metafiction, therefore, suggests a distinction between "events," which have no meaning in themselves, and "facts," which are given meaning by human beings who are epistemologically limited in their ability to know.[26] Well aware of this distinction and of history as representation, Luo chooses to empathize with the emotions and choices of individuals over cold statistics of historical events in order to effectively "make dead history alive under the sun (让历史在太阳底下活起来)."[27] He thus arranges multiple points of view under the control of a narrator who is not omniscient as well, performing textually double roles of each individual as both the spectator/reader and actor/writer in the historical process. This prevents history/fiction from being conclusive and teleological.

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[24] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge, 2004, p. 5.
[25] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, pp. 117-118.
[26] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.122.
[27] "Stepping Out of the 'Underclass Narrative': Luo Weizhang Comes to *Under the Sun* [走出底层叙事，罗伟章来到太阳底下]," *Sina Entertainment* [新浪娱乐] (reprinted from *Sichuan News Network-Chengdu Daily* [转载四川新闻网-成都日报]), 3 Nov. 2011. ent.sina.com.cn/x/2011-11-03/05103467803.shtml. Accessed 14 Nov. 2020. My translation.

Born in the late 60s in the Sichuan area, Luo's recollection and reconstruction of the war memories can be seen as his transgenerational return to the unknown past and to the trauma of his grandparent's generation.[28] Building upon and questioning scholarly research on history, including Maeda's, and engaging in the recovery of forgotten memories, Luo's transgenerational return to history is an exercise in both what George Lipsitz calls "counter-memory" and "postmemory," as defined by Marianne Hirsch.[29] "Counter-memory," according to Lipsitz, revises existing histories by supplying new perspectives on the personal, the particular, and the specific histories hidden or excluded from dominant narratives.[30] According to Hirsch, "postmemory" connects traumatic experiences through "an imaginative investment, projection, and creation" because the post-trauma generation lacks individual traumatic experiences and always needs some sort of mediation to engage with past events.[31] Hence, the "post" in "postmemory," according to Hirsch, "signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath" but "reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture."[32]

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[28] The Sichuan area, including Chongqing, was referred to as the Great Rear in China's war against Japan and faced heavy bombing during the conflict.

[29] Luo Weizhang cites the Chinese translation of Maeda Tetsuo's monograph on the Chongqing heavy bombing, titled *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*, at the end of the novel.

[30] George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 213.

[31] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, 2012, p. 5.

[32] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, pp. 5-6.

Luo, in fact, skillfully leverages the techniques of counter-memory and postmemory while avoiding problems pointed out by Nguyen that, like memory, they "might lead one to be concerned only with the suffering of one's own."[33] Luo thus creates a constructed writer who sympathetically but imaginatively engages with available personal materials to interrupt the linear narrative timeline, as mentioned earlier, deconstructing History temporally. Spatially, he sometimes juxtaposes and sometimes overlaps or obfuscates national boundaries intentionally in his narration of events in Nanjing, Chongqing, and Hiroshima. Hence, the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in the novel is described as "heavy bombing which sounds both like and not like Chongqing heavy bombing (虽是大轰炸，可越听越不像重庆大轰炸）" through reenactments of a traumatized Japanese woman who went through both.[34] In doing so, the narrator fulfills the task assigned by its author: connecting people in different places who were suffering and struggling, humanizing both the Chinese and the Japanese in war, exploring the complicated human nature, and pursuing ethical memory and justice through a critical humanist approach.

The genre of historiographic metafiction, along with the techniques of counter-memory and postmemory, enables the author to explore and dramatize the complexity of historical representations. It allows him to memorialize the past in a personally meaningful way that questions official narratives, using his empathy and

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[33] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 268.
[34] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 3413 of 4342. My translation.

imagination to animate his historical research and convey intellectual retrospection and reflection. Additionally, it provides a platform for him to comment on his own process of reading, writing, and interpreting history.

Critical Humanism: Literature as a Microscope of Humanity

Beyond using the genre of historiographic metafiction and employing the techniques of counter-memory and postmemory to deconstruct official history and problematize subjectivity textually, temporally, and spatially, the author is dedicated to exploring the inner struggles of human beings in times of atrocity and in the face of the multiplicity of historical truths. He entrusts his protagonist—a historian—with a literary and critical humanist heart, engaging readers to contemplate questions such as whether literature and history are two thoroughly distinctive genres, as well as what historians can and should do in processing and understanding history, along with the narrator.

As mentioned earlier, Xiaoyang despised the so-called "facts" of history that historians would like to select to form a systematic narrative and make their argument in the old way of doing historical research, which requires historians to have a certain predisposition to understand the general human condition. Instead, he intended to bring individual mindsets, especially the complicated human heart, to light through the long, dark tunnel of history, much like his dedication to understanding the inner world of the Japanese soldier who killed his great-grandmother. Answering people's doubts, he

explained in one of the letters to his father that his research aims to care for and enlighten individual human beings rather than to perpetuate hostility by taking a side.[35]

Refusing the humanist terror that pursues moral and political universalism and rationalizes the exclusion of other possibilities, the author's critical humanist approach to history/memory in *Under the Sun* presents us with Xiaoyang's constant search for and confrontation of a multiplicity of truths. It rejects fixity and conclusiveness while retaining the unchanging human and humanistic desire for enlightenment and emancipation, as proposed by Edward Said in his humanist proclamation in the preface to *Orientalism*.[36] The critical humanist pursuit of a multiplicity of truths opens up possibilities for ethical memory and justice, which are ethical because of their open-endedness and their orientation towards the other. The Levinasian ethical subject thus emerges as someone who avoids objectifying, categorizing, and totalizing the other. They acknowledge the difference and unintelligibility of the other and are always thinking, existing, and being responsible for the other.

However, no one, including Xiaoyang's ex-wife Yunqiu, understands him. His obsession with an answer, which doesn't matter to anyone, not only ruined his marriage but also made him the target of open ridicule by his peers at an academic conference. His search for the details of his great-grandmother's death—the inward world of that

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[35] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 2980 of 4342.
[36] Said, *Orientalism*, p. xxii.

Japanese soldier who killed her—is, of course, deemed useless in the eyes of other Chinese historians. This is because, in their view,

> If the battlefield were moved to Tokyo and a skinny old Japanese lady were trudging on the street, they, as soldiers of the warring country, would shoot her without hesitation. [They] would then stamp on her back not only once, but twice, thrice, or many more times once they saw her, simply because she was an enemy alien (如果把战场推进到日本，在东京街头有一个枯瘦如柴艰难行走的老太婆，像王先生这样的人，照样会朝她开枪，开枪之后再踩她一脚，踩一脚不够，就踩两脚、三脚、无数脚。没有别的原因，只因为她是敌国人).[37]

By contemplating this shift in location, the author employs his imagination as a precise tool, akin to a scalpel, to dissect official history and war memories. In doing so, he exposes the underlying elements of nationalism and patriotism, which often fixate on one's own perspective, neglect the other, and emphasize one's humanity and the other's inhumanity while disregarding the inhumanity of oneself and the humaneness of the other. This exploration serves as a reminder that both ourselves and others are merely humans, capable of both benevolence and malevolence. Ethical memory requires the recognition of, in Nguyen's words, "the stereoscopic simultaneity of human and inhuman" in both ourselves and others.[38]

Unfortunately, it was only in hindsight that Yunqiu, at the very end of the novel when she and the narrator reviewed all materials about Xiaoyang, realized that "it was effortless to condescend towards someone when our self-centeredness prevails, especially if that individual's spiritual level surpasses ours. Consequently, we might feel

[37] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 4030 of 4342. My translation and italics mine.
[38] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 100.

undeserving of forging a close connection with that person (要看轻一个人是容易的，如果我们心里只有自己，如果那人的精神层面高于我们，而我们又不配去接近) ."[39] This realization is most probably the real reason she chose to divorce Xiaoyang.

Xiaoyang's Suicide and Ethical Memory

Reading Freud, Nguyen argues that ethically remembering both our own experiences and those of others represents the most challenging yet most rewarding method of working through the past. Otherwise, we will be "condemned to act out" because of what might be overlooked.[40] Many of Xiaoyang's relatives and family friends experienced historical traumas during both the Rape of Nanjing and the heavy bombing of Chongqing, yet they remained silent. Without "working-through," they let the pain linger and were sometimes compelled to "act out."[41] Huang Bodao (黄伯道)—Xiaoyang's uncle, Li Bensen (李本森)—professor of natural science at Central University (中央大学), and an old friend/neighbor of Xiaoyang's great grandparents, as well as An Jing/An Zhiwei (安靖/安志薇)—Bodao's ex-lover and professor Li's current wife—were "condemned to act out" after their forcible migration to Chongqing, escaping Japanese occupation in northern China. The war brought Bodao and Anjing together in Chongqing but also caused their separation for the rest of their lives. After the war, Bodao returned to Nanjing and never married. Knowing his nephew Xiaoyang moved to Chongqing, he immediately

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39 Luo Weizhang, *Under the Sun* [太阳底下], 2012 ed., Zuo Jia Publishing House [作家出版社], p. 305.
40 Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," p. 17.
41 Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," trans. Joan Riviere, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12 (1950), pp. 145-157.

asked Xiaoyang to help look for An Jing. However, he himself never had the courage to go to Chongqing and meet An Jing.

An Jing, however, changed her name to An Zhiwei and married Professor Li, whose first wife and their son died in a Japanese bombing. His second wife divorced him because she couldn't bear his horrible behavior of sleeping with two snakes placed in a basket—a big one and a small one—that had once attacked her from a tree branch in the courtyard. Li Xiaonan (李小楠), Professor Li's daughter with his second wife, shared this information. The narrator not only includes the script of his conversation with Xiaonan in his compilation but also connects the two snakes to the deaths of Professor Li's first wife and their son in the street during Japanese bombing. The son was stabbed by a tree branch, and the mother died under the tree in the posture of climbing and trying to get her son. However, the narrator maintains a balanced role as both an observer/reader and the creator. He invites readers to join his speculation while simultaneously reminding them that Professor Li's "act out" belongs to his imagination: "If I were writing a novel, I would definitely make and develop this connection. However, I am just documenting my conversation with Li Xiaonan. Therefore, I can't write like this, as she didn't say so (如果我是在写小说，我会发挥这种联想的，然而我是在实录，不是在写小说。因此，李小楠没那样说，我也就不能那样写)."[42]

Different from all his relatives, Xiaoyang nonetheless chose to investigate personal histories and try to unravel questions that had haunted him his whole life, even though he had never experienced the historical trauma himself. In this sense, Xiaoyang's search

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[42] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 2407 of 4342. My translation.

could also be seen as a textual performance of the author's transgenerational return to the past via counter-memory and postmemory. Xiaoyang went to Chongqing for the very first time in the scorching summer. His purpose was to visit Professor Li and ask if he knew about his great-grandmother's death. However, his request was rejected because Professor Li's wife, An Zhiwei, was sick at the time and would behave in a peculiar manner each year around mid-August. From a distance, Xiaoyang observed Zhiwei's strange behavior—talking to herself incessantly and burning letters everyday. He immediately sensed that Zhiwei had secrets, much like his uncle Huang Bodao, who had endured tribulations in Chongqing yet remained forever silent about the bombing of Chongqing and all his suffering. In his diary, Xiaoyang wrote: "I wish she does have secrets that are unknown to others but would eventually be fathomed by me (但愿她身上真有一些为人所不知、却最终为我所知的......秘密......)."[43]

At first, Xiaoyang did want to get to know An Zhiwei, and he gradually became an important person to Zhiwei and Professor Li after his frequent visits as the descendant of a family friend. This connection strengthened after Zhiwei recovered from her delirium later that summer. Xiaoyang even began to address her as "auntie" after learning about the love between his uncle and her. Xiaoyang appeared more concerned for the Li family than for his own, leading his ex, Yunqiu, to believe that he had become "a slave" to the past, preventing himself from recovering from the pain. However, what truly bothered Xiaoyang, affected their relationship, and eventually precipitated his death was not his commitment to searching the past, but rather his inability to confront certain truths—or,

[43] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 391-399 of 4342. My translation.

we should say, his inability to confront a part of himself. This internal struggle, rather than the act of searching itself, played a significant role in shaping his destiny.

Reading alongside the narrator, readers discover that Xiaoyang had opportunities to resolve all his doubts about the Li family, particularly Auntie An Zhiwei. However, he deliberately refused to do so during the course of his search for truth. By combining Xiaoyang's writings and the script of the unpublished tape-recording interview with Xiaoyang's colleague, Yang Shengquan (杨胜全), the narrator reaches this conclusion. Additionally, he speculates and invites readers to join in the speculation about Xiaoyang's suicide, acknowledging that we all approach these primary sources as readers.

According to Shengquan, two factors led to Xiaoyang's death: first, his confrontation with other historians in an academic conference, and second, the unexpected revelation of An Zhiwei's life experience, which shattered his deliberate refusal to know. As per the script compiled by the narrator based on Shengquan's interview, Xiaoyang presented his critical humanist approach to history/memory at a history studies conference. He passionately argued that history consists not only of massive data in the plural form but also of memories from singular individuals. While data is cold, individual memories possess warmth. The plural form of data is complacent, whereas singular individuals are humble and sincere.[44] Xiaoyang hoped that his approach would be accepted and embraced by other scholars in the field. However, not only did the scholars disagree, but they also ridiculed him, suggesting that he should focus on writing literary works due to his extraordinary literary skills. Entrusting historian Xiaoyang with

[44] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 3981-3988 of 4342. My translation.

a literary and critical humanist perspective, the author invites readers to contemplate alongside the narrator: Are history and literature two distinctive genres? What can and should historians do? The answers to these questions are both provocative and complex.

Reading Xiaoyang's story alongside the narrator, readers can clearly discern the epistemological constraints that humans face in their ability to comprehend the past. The notion of subjectivity is continuously unraveled through the textual performances of both the narrator and the protagonist, Huang Xiaoyang, as they search and uncover the past in the form of historiographic metafiction. This unraveling is further exemplified by critical humanism's orientation towards the other. Regardless of whether we are historians or novelists, our capacity to reconstruct the past is limited to traces and relics. As pointed out by Hutcheon, "historiography is as structured, coherent, and teleological as any narrative fiction" and "both historians and novelists constitute their subjects as possible objects of narrative representation."[45] In this sense, history and literature are not as different as they may seem. They share porous qualities in terms of their narrative structure and language as a signifying system. Historians, like novelists, take a stance to create historical representation from surviving remnants of the past, introducing meaning or responding existentially to the human situation in its totality. Thus, past things or events become a semiotics of history, signifying the attempts and intentions of historians who selectively created it.

Xiaoyang differs from his colleagues who take sides in their historical research, as he is conscious of representational history. He critiques the limited perception of

[45] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 111.

historians in their efforts to uncover history, including his own, noting that "every disclosure involves some sort of veiling (每一种揭示，不都意味着遮蔽吗)."[46] Xiaoyang believed that personal histories can revise official history or, at the very least, provide alternative possibilities. In contrast, other scholars embraced the mission of serving the government or, in other words, aligning with the side of victory. Hence, the warmth and softness emphasized by Xiaoyang in his approach to historical research, along with his meticulous search for the details of his great-grandmother's death, were considered useless and even ridiculous in the eyes of his colleagues. Their dismissive attitude during the conference had already deeply wounded Xiaoyang. The final blow, however, occurred when he discovered the true identity of his auntie An Jing/An Zhiwei during a visit from a Japanese Anti-war delegation—something he might have already suspected but refused to verify, following the reconstructed narrative crafted by the narrator.

Oyama Shimizu (小山清水), a Japanese scholar and the head of the delegation, had been researching the bombing of Chongqing. He asked Xiaoyang if he knew a Japanese woman named Inoue Yasuko (井上安子). Yasuko was born in Hiroshima and came to China with her family for their beer business. She adopted the Chinese name An Jing when she learned to speak Chinese. Just before the fall of Nanjing, her family closed their business and returned to Hiroshima. However, An Jing ran away from her family, stayed in China, and migrated with Chinese student refugees to Chongqing out of curiosity and adventurous spirit. Her original plan was to explore China before Japanese imperial

[46] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 200 of 4342. My translation.

troops could occupy the provisional capital, and she could then find a way to reunite with her family in Japan. The Japanese ground force didn't arrive as she expected. Yet, surprisingly one day, she witnessed Japanese fighters raining firebombs from the sky.

Japanese air raids on Chongqing lasted for five-and-a-half years. An Jing learned to empathize with the Chinese during that time, transcending national boundaries both spiritually and morally. She joined the ambulance corps, bravely saving victims. Ashamed by the catastrophe created by Japanese intensive bombing, she once ran towards a firebomb, expressing her defiance towards the Japanese air force and seeking atonement for her country's crimes against the Chinese. Surviving the incident, An Jing was reborn as a warrior who protested Japanese atrocities alongside her Chinese lover, Huang Bodao. She worked tirelessly to rescue injured civilians, even though she still longed for her country and hometown where her kinfolks were.

An Jing almost went crazy when she heard the news of Hiroshima being razed to ruins by America's nuclear bomb on August 6th, 1945. On the same day, Bodao cheerfully asked her to celebrate this great news. Right at that moment, her love for Bodao "vanished, just like the annihilation of her hometown in the nuclear blast."[47] Yang Shengquan described that moment in the interview, as he had the chance to read An Jing's posthumous papers, which she tried to give to Xiaoyang but was rejected. Shengquan recalled:

> Her heart was consumed by grief and indignation. The nuclear bomb was dropped by the United States, which was on the other side of the earth. Huang Bodao, however, was present with her. She thus vented all her grief and indignation by yelling at him that she was Japanese and her hometown was

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[47] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 4137 of 4342. My translation.

> Hiroshima (她心里已没有任何别的感情了，只剩下悲愤。原子弹是美国投放的，但美国在地球的那一边，而黄伯道近在眼前，于是她把悲愤全都发泄到黄伯道身上).[48]

After this confrontation, An Jing returned to Japan, and Bodao went back to Nanjing. Bodao lived alone for the rest of his life. An Jing took ten years in Japan to recover from the trauma of losing every family member, including distant relatives, in the nuclear bombing.

Gradually, An Jing started to miss her life in China, especially in Chongqing, and decided to come back to the place where she had spent the best and most important years of her life, now that she had no family in her hometown. Subsequently, An Jing settled down in Chongqing as An Zhiwei and initiated the new and third phase of her life's journey. An Zhiwei was introduced to Professor Li, and readers are informed that Professor Li was constantly writing notes in his used books while Zhiwei took care of him. After Professor Li died, Zhiwei attempted to bequeath all those books to Xiaoyang. However, Xiaoyang refused to accept them but suggested she donate them to the university library. As Zhiwei reached the end of her life, she again tried to share her last words with Xiaoyang, but once again, Xiaoyang rejected her. Just as when he rejected Professor Li's books, this time he had a reasonable excuse as well.

Readers are kept in suspense until the very end to learn that Professor Li wrote his memoir on his used books, and An Zhiwei recounted her life experience in her posthumous papers. The narrator introduces Yang Shengquan's appraisal of Xiaoyang in the last few pages, aiming to create suspense and prompting readers to reflect on

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[48] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 4137 of 4342. My translation.

Xiaoyang's constant search as a journey for self-discovery rather than the pursuit of certain truths. In the process of searching for his family history, Xiaoyang encountered a part of himself that he was unable to accept. On one hand, Xiaoyang aspired to ethically recall historical trauma, humanize Japanese soldiers in war, and connect the sufferings of Chinese civilians with those of the Japanese. On the other hand, he grappled with inner struggles, akin to my experiences in the Yushukan Museum in Tokyo and in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. However, Xiaoyang must have felt much more pain and entrapment than I did, given that he had family members from two generations who died or were psychologically wounded because of the war.

The Price of Ethical Remembering

It takes an enormous emotional and psychological toll to ethically recall the history/memory of both one's own and others. The Japanese woman, Yasuko, navigated this process through three phases of her life under three different names. In contrast, Xiaoyang's uncle, Huang Bodao, failed in this endeavor, lacking the courage to reunite with his love. This hesitation may have stemmed from shame regarding his initial delight upon hearing the news of the nuclear bombing of Japan or an inability to accept the fact that his beloved was a national of the invading country, whose soldiers had killed his grandparents and numerous Chinese civilians. Huang Xiaoyang dedicated his entire life to uncovering ethical history/memory but tragically committed suicide during a moment of revelation.

What exactly led to his suicide? Most likely, it was the part of himself still bound to discursive powers and incorporated into totality, despite his lifelong dedication to

breaking free from them. Xiaoyang's colleague, Shengquan, expressed, and the narrator transcribed: "Human beings are unable to bear too many truths. The mission of historians is not to show us all the truths but, instead, to point out the truth that we, as human beings, can endure (人类根本就没有能力承受太多的真实。史学家的使命，不是把真实指给我们看，而是把人类能够承受的那一点真实指给我们看)."[49] What we, as humans, often cannot endure, and what we are prone to forget – a factor that contributed to Xiaoyang's suicide – is our inhumanity and the humanity of the other.

In the postscript, the narrator records the completion of his work on Xiaoyang, coinciding with Yunqiu's exhibition of paintings centered on the theme of the Chongqing Heavy Bombing. Yunqiu insisted that all her paintings be exhibited in a public square instead of art museums because she hoped the general public could see them and remember the past. On all these paintings, Yunqiu drew broken faces, each with different expressions. Regardless of how severely damaged they appear, they all have eyes—"some with just one eye, others with three, five, or even eight eyes (至少有一只眼睛，有的长了三只眼睛、五只眼睛、八只眼睛、满脸的眼睛)."[50] Yunqiu, the artist, seems to use these eyes to finally "see through (看透)" her ex-husband and herself. Simultaneously, these eyes serve as a reminder for those attending the exhibition and us as readers to always consider not only ourselves but also the other—everyone, both Chinese and Japanese, who suffered from bombings and the war. Levinas writes in *Totality and*

[49] Luo, *Under the Sun*, Kindle ed., loc. 3740-3748 of 4342. My translation.
[50] Luo Weizhang, *Under the Sun*, p. 310.

Infinity that "Ethics is an optics."[51] We need to imagine with the eyes of our minds about the other and welcome the other.

In the form of historiographic metafiction, and through a constructed writer who interprets primary materials and imaginatively reconstructs the past, *Under the Sun* achieves its textual performance of problematizing subjectivity. It reveals that we are inevitably impeded from accessing a transcendent history due to our dual roles as both reader/spectator and writer/actor of the past. Consequently, we can only inscribe a problematized subjectivity into history. Focusing on individual responses to war and atrocity, author Luo Weizhang not only showcases the strong-willed human and humanistic resistance of individual persons—insignificant in metanarratives—against the "gigantic," along with their desire for enlightenment and emancipation, but also articulates a nuanced argument. He contends that a critical humanist pursuit of alternative or a plurality of truths opens up possibilities for ethical history/memory and justice, urging us to recall both our own experiences and those of the other.

Nevertheless, Huang Xiaoyang's death also serves as a poignant reminder of the tremendous emotional and psychological cost associated with ethical memory and justice. As implied by the novel's title: wherever there is sunshine, there are shadows—shadows not only of forgetting others but also of the self's subjection to discursive powers. Despite the exorbitant price, a critical humanist approach has the capacity to deconstruct official history and challenge the certainty of the subject. It can also embody humanistic care and warmth, transcend national boundaries, and, as a result, deserves our trials. As

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[51] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 23.

Luo Weizhang expresses in an interview, by unveiling the past to the present, he hopes that "readers can eventually find and confront themselves in the process of searching for the stories of their ancestors (我希望读小说的人和小说的主人公一样，在寻找祖先的过程中，最终看到的是自己)."[52]

[52] "Stepping Out of the 'Underclass Narrative': Luo Weizhang Comes to *Under the Sun.*" My translation.

A Critical Humanist Redemption of the Fateful Human Condition In Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*

"There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie."

——Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

"I cannot recall any colleague who could paint a self-portrait with absolute honesty; however accurately one may fill in the surface details of one's mirror reflection, the personality represented rarely comes near the truth as others would see it."

——Masuji Ono, *An Artist of the Floating World*

In the previous chapter, I argue that Chinese author Luo Weizhang bestows his protagonist—historian Huang Xiaoyang—a critical humanist heart in *Under the Sun* (2012) in order to ethically remember things in the past. And the war memory represented in the novel is ethical because of critical humanism's orientation toward the other as well as its embrace of the multiplicity of truths. I keep my exploration of critical humanism as a mode of critique as well as its interplay of the self, others, and the world in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* (1989) in this chapter.

Timothy Wright, in his article "No Homelike Place: The Lesson of History in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*," closely examines the historical backdrop spanning from October 1948 to June 1950, coinciding with the dated entries in the narrative of the protagonist, Matsuji Ono. This narrative delves into his post- WWII life experiences and his reminiscences of his past, both before and during the war. Wright argues that the novel inspects "the ways in which history has been repressed, hidden, manipulated, normalized, or distorted in order that the present may flourish" and it

"formulates an aesthetic in which history's failure to instruct becomes a form of instruction in its own right."[1] Ishiguro does not explicitly address the historical context of the era. However, readers must immerse themselves in the relevant knowledge to grasp the novel's portrayal of intentional individual and collective ignorance, self-deception, and misinterpretation within the broader social and historical dynamics and to discern the alluded "nightmare world through which human subjects fumble in desperate blindness" depicted in the novel. Wright thus perceives history as "the absent presence" in the novel.[2]

Wright's evaluation is that Ishiguro and his work "resist providing readers with any kind of solution, any political program or utopian vision to which they might cleave."[3] However, they do not carry a defeatist tone, as they provide a space—"a waiting room," in Wright's terms—for readers to envision a more promising world. Wright suggests that there is "some residuum of hope," because this yearning for a better world is "held in stasis rather than foreclosed outright."[4] Nonetheless, he does not elaborate on the source or location of this hope.

I concur with Wright's assessment that history is an unspoken yet ever-present force in *An Artist of the Floating World*, and its failure to instruct becomes a unique form of instruction in itself. After all, this is also the technique employed by the author to use language as a tool that "actually suppresses meaning and tries to hide away meaning

[1] Timothy Wright, "No Homelike Place: The Lesson of History in Kazuo Ishiguro's 'An Artist of the Floating World'," *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 55, no. 1, Spring 2014, p. 61.
[2] Wright, "No Homelike Place."
[3] Wright, "No Homelike Place," p. 86.
[4] Wright, "No Homelike Place," p. 87.

rather than to chase after something beyond the reach of words" in order to craft a textual rendition of this lesson regarding history's elusive but significant influence.[5] In contrast to Wright's emphasis on the historical context, my interpretation of the novel, drawing from the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, and Hannah Arendt, and embracing critical humanism as a mode of critique, posits that Ishiguro not only addresses a fateful human condition—namely, our unfulfilled desire to know and the banality of evil in a constantly changing world due to our inherent limitations in perspective—but also provides subtle indications regarding the nature of that elusive "residuum of hope" as a potential remedy for this profound human predicament.

Critical Humanist Writing of the Ethics

Some may tend to connect/compare Kazuo Ishiguro to Japanese writers solely because he has a Japanese surname. Born in Nagasaki, Japan, and moved to the United Kingdom with his parents at the age of five, Ishiguro, however, is a border-crossing writer who has a unique ability to transcend and blur boundaries of literary genres, cultural influences, and geopolitical areas. Even though his initial two works, most prominently *An Artist of the Floating World*, are situated in Japan, Ishiguro's persistent explorations of the entrapped human condition and the interplay between art/aesthetics and life/ethics make his works exceed those man-made boundaries. Ishiguro calls himself a "homeless writer" who writes in "an international way." He shares in a conversation with Oe Kenzaburo that he does not have a strong emotional tie with either Japanese

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[5] Allan Vorda, Kim Herzinger, and Kazuo Ishiguro, "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro," *Mississippi Review*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, 1991, pp. 131-154.

history or British history, so he only uses them to serve his own personal purposes.[6] His dual heritage in fact gives him "a stranger's objectivity" and "double vision" when he comes to the theme regarding both countries, enabling him to synthesize the "nearness and distance, indifference and involvement," to observe both countries as an insider and outsider simultaneously, and to think in a critical humanist way of always oriented outwardly towards the other.[7]

I would opt for referring to Ishiguro as a critical humanist writer who approaches his characters and works with a relational and subjectless perspective, transforming them into textual expressions of his critical humanist thought. "Subjectlessness" serves as a conceptual framework introduced by Kandice Chuh, acknowledging that "a subject is always also an epistemological object" because a "subject can only be recognized and act as such by conforming to regulating matrices." This concept enables the situational consideration of "Asian American" as a distinction rather than an identity, promoting a continuous Asian Americanist critique of U.S. nationalism and its apparatuses of power by thinking relationally and imagining otherwise.[8] I borrow Chuh's conception here for two purposes. First, one of the key themes in *An Artist of the Floating World* is about identity and the struggle to find meaning within contexts of social and political flux.

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[6] Kazuo Ishiguro and Oe Kenzaburo, "The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation," *Boundary 2*, vol. 18, no. 3, Autumn 1991, pp. 109-122, p. 115.

[7] Georg Simmel's essay "The Stranger" is available in print and online at www.infoamerica.org/documentos_pdf/simmel01.pdf. For further reading on related topics, see Edward Said's works: *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 6), *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (Vintage Books, 1996, p. 60), and *Reflection on Exile and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 186).

[8] Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*, p. 9.

Subjectivity is constantly disrupted by protagonist Ono's unreliable recount of his own experience before and after the war as well as by its subjection to the changing social ethos. Secondly, I hope that by prioritizing relationality over specificity and by establishing connections between the national and the global, we can rescue works—especially those set in non-Western regions—from the trap of self-referentiality. This would prevent them from being merely viewed as social records and archival minutiae, which often befalls literature created by minority authors within mainstream societies using the dominant language or by non-Western authors writing in their native tongues.

A critical humanist writer thinks subjectlessly and relationally, highlighting the intricate interplay and mutually shaping relationships between the self and others, between different locations, and between the universal and the particular. This approach allows readers to recognize how a subject's formation is influenced by discourse within power structures, encourages ethical imagination beyond the existing norms, and fosters a sense of responsiveness and responsibility not only toward oneself and one's own nation but also towards individuals in other regions of the world. Ethics arises from this intersubjectivity between "me" and "the other" and "being" and "being-in-the-world," as they unravel the fixed essential notion of the subject, helps in thinking transpositionally and transvalueationally, and encourages a new global awareness rooted in the interplay of the self, the other, and the world.[9]

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[9] Shu-mei Shih proposes that border-crossing scholars, diaspora individuals who intrude on the separatist boundaries, should think transpositionally and transvalueationally. This means using "their radically multiple positions to destabilize the production and

Critical humanism is exactly built upon this new global awareness, so it has its multiple subject positions, its orientation toward the other, its enlarged and invigorated conception of citizenship and political responsibility, as well as its affirmation of a plurality of truths and a larger ethical dimension which transcends the parochial boundary of nation-states. It is critically humanist because it emerges, as Levinas accentuates, out of the logic of the encounter, exchange, and dialogue and thus is a condition of openness to the world. It adds complexity to the dichotomy of self and other, promoting active involvement, such as loyalty, commitment, obligation, and responsibility, with a world that extends beyond local, national, and transnational boundaries. It also recognizes that individuals can assume multiple subject positions, civic identities, and senses of belonging through the act of thinking of the other and thinking subjectlessly.

Therefore, to read *An Artist of the Floating World* as merely a retired Japanese nationalist's confession or nonrecognition of past deeds during the war is meaningless. As Ishiguro stresses in many of interviews that his writing of Japan is an imaginary one and his usage of the "floating world" (浮き世/憂き世, ukiyo) is on the metaphorical level, the novel should be read metaphorically beyond the fetters of judging a nation's past crime and its people's present repentance or unrepentant psychology.[10] The novel,

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circulation of value from any one given locational standpoint." This insight is discussed in her "Towards an Ethics of Transnational Encounters, or 'When' Does a 'Chinese' Woman Become a 'Feminist'?" in *Dialogue and Difference: Feminisms Challenge Globalization. Comparative Feminist Studies Series*, edited by Waller, Marguerite R. and Sylvia Marcos, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 23). In fact, cultivating this global awareness is relevant for everyone, not just diasporas, to avoid the fate of protagonists like Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* or many other Japanese individuals, as well as ordinary people living in nations worldwide.

[10] See Kazuo Ishiguro and Oe Kenzaburo's "The Novelist in Today's World." See Ken

instead, is a critical humanist critique of and provides a critical humanist answer to our fateful human condition by delving into a profound aspect of the human experience where subjectivity and subjection occur concurrently, and the norms and principles governing human conduct are both derived from and interchangeable within a dynamic and ever-changing world. A critical humanist writer addressing World War II, like Ishiguro, would never neglect their duty to ethically and aesthetically envision both the humanity and inhumanity of the war, as so proposed by Viet Than Nguyen in his writing about the memory on the Vietnam War.[11]

A Fateful Human Condition：The Trauma of the Real

"Floating world" is a direct translation of the Japanese term "ukiyo" but unfortunately entails an exotic and oriental imagination on the stereotypical Japanese demimonde especially in the Edo period. The term actually alludes to the world of suffering and the world of impermanence beyond its pronounced meaning of the world of pleasure according to Japanese Dictionary of Ancient Words (古語辞典). Ishiguro addresses all of these aspects in *An Artist of the Floating World* but underscores the ephemeral nature of the night-time world of pleasure, entertainment, and drinking to signify the constantly evolving interpretations of morality and ethics, in tandem with shifting societal values.

Chen's "Kazuo Ishiguro: My Own Private Japan," published by *The Margins*, Asian American Writers' Workshop (AAWW) on April 7, 2015. It is available online at aaww.org/kazuo-ishiguro-my-own-private-japan/. See the interview with Kazuo Ishiguro by Gregory Mason in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 30, no. 3, Autumn 1989, pp. 335-347.

[11] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, pp. 264-265.

Ishiguro characterizes Ono as someone who, living in this changing world with its shifting values, is unable to transcend his own limited perspective and provide a coherent account of himself. Ono couldn't think relationally and subjectlessly because he fails to realize that his self-construction, which he believed he was continually shaping independently, was always an amalgamation of social norms, the recognition of others, and being recognized by others. The novel is a best annotation of Lacan's divided self through its account of protagonist Ono's unfulfilled desire to know in a floating world, where signifiers such as social values and norms and definitions of morality, traitor, and loyalty, etc. are transient and ever-changing.

It is "the individual naivety of the subject" to believe that he is himself, Lacan says, but "we are all inclined to believe that we are ourselves" and it is a tradition from Socrates to think about the central function of the ego as "our thoughts, our tendencies, our desires, of what belongs to us and what does not, of what we admit to being expressions of our personality or what we reject as being parasitical on it."[12] In fact, "*I is an other,"* which means, according to Lacan, "[t]he subject as such, functioning as subject, is something other than an organism which adapts itself...the subject is decentred in relation to the individual."[13]

The formation of the self is a process of identification, perpetually fragmentary and never fully complete. It commences with the "mirror stage," where we identify with our reflection in the mirror, recognizing ourselves as the Ideal-I, constructed from the

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[12] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, W. W. Norton & Company, 1991, pp. 5-6 and 11-12.
[13] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, p. 7.

mirrored images. Subsequently, our identity originates externally, rather than from within ourselves. As we acquire language and enter the realm of the symbolic, we immerse ourselves in a world marked by lack—a lack of control and a lack of satisfaction of our desires. A gap perpetually exists between language and reality, preventing us from attaining a genuine understanding of the real. Yet, we are consistently haunted by the anxiety of not knowing and not being in control. This unquenchable desire to know is intrinsic to the human condition, even though our quest is destined to remain unfulfilled. It is this unattainable reality that Lacan refers to as the trauma of the real.

After losing his wife and son in the war, Ono, a retired Japanese painter, found himself compelled to reexamine his life and career due to the shifting social ethos that emerged after the war. Ono's account of himself is indeed meandering, as he frequently shifts between topics, flashes back to past events, blends the words of various characters, and consistently questions his own narrative, while also apologizing for his digressions. Overall, it appears to be a seemingly coherent self-narrative, which progressively depicts his personal journey towards becoming a successful nationalist painter, as he continually battles against family and societal constraints, ultimately transcending mediocrity.

He first broke free from his mercantile father, who had hopes of him becoming a businessman to take over the family business. Then, he decisively left the commercial studio of Master Takeda, where numerous items associated with Japanese culture, such as "geishas, cherry trees, swimming carps, temples" were mass-produced at a rapid pace and sold abroad.[14] Finally, he diverged from the path set by his mentor, Mori-san, whose

[14] Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, Vintage International, 1989, Kindle

workshop celebrated the beauty of the ephemeral and patronized artists from the world of pleasure houses and social decadence. Ono's success as a nationalist painter brought him fame and influence, leading him to believe that he was true to himself, pursuing his genuine desires, and ultimately surpassing the bounds of the ordinary.

Unexpectedly, right after the war, everything changed: Japanese militarism was replaced by American democracy; Japanese style taverns were razed to the ground either by air raids or by bulldozers, while high-rise office buildings and modern American-style apartment buildings were constructed; young Japanese, like his daughters and daughters-in-law, blamed the older generation for dragging Japan into the war; and the younger generation, like his grandson, was raised to love American cowboys and Popeye rather than Lord Yoshitsune, samurai warriors, or Ninjas. All of a sudden, Ono's achievements in old Japan turned against him and even posed a threat to his younger daughter's marriage. The war inflicted a deep wound upon the nation, leaving a scar too profound to heal—a division between the old and the new Japan characterized by conflicting values and ideologies. People like Ono found themselves caught in this rift, torn between the urge to forget and the need to remember.

Ultimately, Ono appeared to accept his diminished role in the new world, along with his evolving identity. To use the language of painters, he transitioned from being a proud "engineer" who worked tirelessly for nationalist goals before and during the war, to a contemptible "backwarder" who frequently looked backward and contemplated life after

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edition, loc. 803, 805 of 2438.

the war.[15] Gradually, he came to terms with the new social values, embraced the modernity and development ushered in by the Americans in post-war Japan, and felt hopeful about his country's bright future. Ono remarked, "to see how our city has been rebuilt, how things have recovered so rapidly over these years, fills me with genuine gladness. Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things."[16]

Judith Butler argues, in her book *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), that it is impossible to give a coherent account/narrative of oneself. The emergence of the self, according to Butler, is inevitably conditioned and delimited by "the prevailing matrix of ethical norms and conflicting moral frameworks" that precede the subject.[17] In other words, the self is not a subject but is a relation, constantly flowing and evolving rather than a static entity. This relationship is shaped by an act of address, in which the formation of an "I" is a response to an interpolation with an addresser conditioned by social norms. Similarly, the "I" becomes an addressee when I articulate myself, conditioned by that interpolation. Butler argues, "I come into being as a reflexive subject in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself when I am spoken to by someone and prompted to address myself to the one who addresses me."[18] Since the self only arises through an act of address influenced by societal norms, which are beyond individual preference, there is a perpetual opacity of the subject, leading to its inability to make sense of itself in a singular, coherent manner. Ono's seemingly coherent account of

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[15] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 1878, 1880, 1882 of 2438.
[16] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2430 of 2438.
[17] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 7.
[18] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* , p. 15.

himself is thus obviously a distorted and unreliable one, as he never stands outside of his own milieu, not to mention that he is a traumatized person who had lost his wife and son during the war.

Anxiety about his younger daughter Noriko's marriage and the pressure from his elder daughter Setsuko to take preventive actions to conceal his past, which no longer aligns with the current times, constantly pushed Ono to revisit his past experiences. While the text never explicitly confirms that Setsuko made such a suggestion, it is safe to say that Ono is interpolated by the changing social ethos of post-war Japan. Therefore, it is worth examining what Ono's veiled narrative both reveals and suppresses about "the prevailing matrix of ethical norms and conflicting moral frameworks," as argued by Butler, and one must remain vigilant for the ruptures beneath his progressive reconciliation with the past. Ono is, after all, a person caught between the struggle of forgetting and remembering.

As mentioned earlier, the author employs a language technique that suppresses and conceals meaning. Ishiguro incorporates the evolving historical situation and the moral-ethical matrix into the text, which conceals meaning through Ono's seemingly progressive narrative. However, it also leaves traces where any reference to an origin is disrupted and questioned through structural repetitions, parallels, and circularity. Ono's meandering narrative serves as a textual representation of a lack of perspective, raising doubts about concrete knowability. To borrow Ishiguro's words, it reflects "the inevitable lack of perspective that most of us have about our own actions."[19] Hence, a new sense of

[19] Chen, "Kazuo Ishiguro: My Own Private Japan."

ethics is forged from, in Butler's words, "a certain willingness to acknowledge the limits of acknowledgment itself."[20] Responsibility thereby arises from recognizing and acknowledging the shared opacity experienced by both the emerging subject and its addressee. Consequently, Ono's unreliable narrative diverts potential judgments of the character toward considering what we, as readers and ordinary individuals like Ono, should do in response. In other words, it prompts us to ponder the answer to this fateful human condition.

The Banality of Evil

Ono's narration commenced with his recollection of acquiring his large house fifteen years ago. Despite being of modest means, he purchased the house at a nominal price because he passed the seller's background and credential check based solely on his good character and achievements.[21] He was then apprehensive about a similar background check conducted by the family of his potential daughter-in-law. He sensed that the present societal ethos overturned his past beliefs and accomplishments.

As a pitiful aging man, he embarked on a journey to reconnect with acquaintances from the past and reminisce about his "good old days." He once believed that ephemeral things like the commercial interests of his family business and the Takeda studio, as well as the beauty and entertainment of the pleasure houses celebrated by Mori-san, held little value. His pursuit of nationalist goals was rooted in a sense of duty for the common good, promising a satisfaction that money couldn't match. In pursuit of this vision, he used bold

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[20] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* , p. 42.
[21] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 22 of 2438.

lines and vivid colors to depict nationalist themes celebrating Japanese imperial expansion. He even held positions on the Cultural Committee of the Interior Department and as an official adviser to the Committee of Unpatriotic Activities. His accomplishments were crowned by receiving the Shigeta Foundation Award, which filled him with "deep sense of triumph and satisfaction" and "a profound sense of happiness deriving from the conviction that one's efforts have been justified; that the hard work undertaken, the doubts overcome, have all been worthwhile; that one has achieved something of real value and distinction."[22]

As an fragile, aging man, Ono reflected on his life, cherishing the memory of celebratory moments while also acknowledging certain flaws, sometimes defending himself, as the signifier of morality and ethics have evolved. For example, when the Miyake family backed out the promising marriage between Miyake and Noriko, Ono was surprised but compelled to think about what ruined the "love match" that her daughter had so fervently pursued.[23] He recalled an encounter with Miyake, during which Miyake mentioned that the president of his company committed suicide as an apology on behalf of all Japanese for those who died in the war. Ono felt that the suicide was rather extreme and thus defended those nationalists in the past who were just like himself by saying:

> After all, if your country is at war, you do all you can in support, there's no shame in that. What need is there to apoligise by death?...those who fought and worked loyally for our country during the war cannot be called war criminals. I fear that's an expression used too freely these days.[24]

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[22] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2398, 2401 of 2438.
[23] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 145 of 2438.
[24] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 620, 624, 626 of 2438.

Old Ono brings to mind Huang Xiaoyang's peers, who were assimilated into totality and willing to serve the government in the previous chapter. They would not hesitate to shoot and trample an enemy alien as many times as possible if they had the chance. Furthermore, he evokes memories of Eichmann as depicted in Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (2006).

Arendt astutely notes that many of us, as ordinary individuals, resemble Eichmann in being "neither perverted nor sadistic" yet remaining terribly and terrifyingly normal.[25] Like Eichmann, ordinary-man Ono did evil "under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong."[26] His struggling experiences with his father, the Takeda studio, and Mori-san all demonstrated that he created propagandist pictures "not from any peculiarly aggressive tendencies," but "out of a sense of obligation—a conception of his duties as a subject," as Stanley Milgram commented on Arendt's notion of "the banality of evil."[27] Much like Eichmann, who described himself as an "idealist" and someone who "lived for his idea—hence he could not be a businessman" and "was prepared to sacrifice for his idea everything and, especially, everybody," Ono recalled and believed his old friend Matsuda's final words:

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[25] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, 2006, Epub edition, p. 643.
[26] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 644.
[27] Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, Harper Perennial, 2009, p. 7.

"we at least acted on what we believed and did our utmost."[28] Moreover, Ono enjoyed the consolation, happiness, and real satisfaction from his achievement in the past and believed that not many people could understand this feeling. For individuals like the Tortoise and Shintaro, who were considered "backwarders," Ono was certain that they "will never know the sort of happiness...[f]or their kind do not know what it is to risk everything in the endeavour to rise above the mediocre."[29]

As aging Ono narrates his past, one can sense his naivety and commonness, much like the majority of us who tend to follow the prevailing trends of our time. Ishiguro comments on this banality of evil addressed in *An Artist of the Floating World* in an interview when he states, "even if you don't participate in something as blatantly evil as the Holocaust, everyone at every level gets touched by that evil...it's very difficult to avoid being contaminated by that evil. You go along with the flow, you go along with the crowd."[30] Ono is not an evil person. He just fails to realize that his fervent pursuit of subjectivity is a concurrent process of subjection and subjectification, bearing the legacy of Enlightenment liberalism's exaltation of the nation-state. As Matsuda concluded, they had faith and talent. They tried very hard to contribute their talent to society, which in turn brought them achievement and satisfaction at certain point but also proved their

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[28] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 159-160. Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2408 of 2438.
[29] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2404 of 2438.
[30] Chen, "Kazuo Ishiguro: My Own Private Japan."

parochial insight as ordinary men eventually. "There were some powerful forces set against us," Matsuda exclaimed. Unfortunately, Ono and Matsuda just couldn't see it.[31]

I would not engage in the colossal controversy of Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial when it first appeared in *New York Times,* as it falls beyond the scope of this dissertation project. Instead, I will focus on Arendt's consideration of causes and solutions to the banality of evil committed by ordinary, normal people, possibly like most of us who are not diabolical or demonic monsters.[32] In *Responsibility and Judgment* (2003), Arendt argues that one committed evil deeds because of one's "extraordinary shallowness"—i.e. one's "inability to think"— rather than out of one's sheer "wickedness, pathology, or ideological conviction" in a totalitarian society.[33] Thinking is the precondition of judging. Without thinking and judging, evil is invited to "enter and infect the world," because one is either unable or unwilling "to imagine before [one's] eyes the others whom [one's] judgment represents and to whom it responds," as outlined by Jerome Kohn in the book's introduction.[34]

Arendt's conception of the banality of evil differentiates between dictatorship and totalitarianism. Different from a dictatorship under which "private life and nonpolitical activity are not necessarily touched," the domination of a totalitarian government radiates

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[31] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2337 of 2438.
[32] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 194, p. 826.
[33] Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited by Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2003, p. 159.
[34] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. xxix.

to every sphere of social life and everyone "is implicated in one way or another in the deeds of the regime as a whole" except for "those who withdrew from public life altogether" and "who refused political responsibility of any sort."[35] It is hence utterly impossible not to be touched by the pervasive evil in a totalitarian society, such as the Fascist regime of Germany or the imperial rule of Japan, where the state's malevolence infiltrates every aspect of daily life.

Another distinction that Arendt accentuates is "personal guilt" and "collective responsibility." For Arendt, there is no such thing as collective guilt because guilt makes sense "only if applied to individuals."[36] Thus, Arendt points out that it is a "fallacy" and "whitewash" to claim collective guilt for all Germans after the war because "where all are guilty, no one is."[37] Arendt believes that the cry of "We are all guilty" sounds noble and tempting but, in fact, serves "to exculpate to a considerable degree those who actually were guilty."[38]

Although Arendt argues that guilt is "strictly personal...refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities" and "[w]here all are guilty, nobody is," one can be held liable for things one has not done.[39] In other words, there is collective responsibility for things one has not done if one has a membership in a group (a collective), such as citizenship,

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[35] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, pp. 33-34.
[36] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 29.
[37] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 21.
[38] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 147.
[39] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*.

that one could not voluntarily dissolve. It is a political or moral responsibility that "a whole community takes it upon itself to be responsible for whatever one of its members has done" or "a community is being held responsible for what has been done in its name."[40] No one can escape such responsibility as even leaving the community cannot revoke but only exchange one kind of responsibility for another along with one's changing community. Correspondingly, every government and every nation assume the political/moral responsibility either for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessors or for the deeds and misdeeds of its past.[41]

According to Arendt's conception, Ono's response to Miyake's remarks on the suicide of his company president is reasonable. Ono felt that "the world seems to have gone mad" and that "people killing themselves in apology is a great waste."[42] Even Miyake admitted that the act of suicide, as a gesture of apology on behalf of the company and the nation for past war crimes, brings relief to people like him. They can now "forget the past transgressions," which have been acknowledged and atoned through the suicide as an apology, and "look to the future," despite the fact that some of the real criminals are still in hiding or have returned to positions they held during the war.[43] In other words, it is the quickest and most convenient way for most people to get rid of collective

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[40] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 149.
[41] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*.
[42] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 618, 620 of 2438.
[43] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 620, 622, 624 of 2438.

responsibility, forget the past, and move on. Ono's account of the accusations made by the young Japanese, who were bombed by the Americans and introduced to American democracy, against the older generation in order to eliminate their shared accountability foreshadows the historical circularity, which is emphasized, especially at the end of the novel, as I will discuss later.

Ono is far from thoughtless; he consistently pondered his actions. As mentioned earlier, he consistently considered his role as a "subject" and believed in contributing to the welfare of the less fortunate by championing the nation's imperial cause. He was unquestionably a "good" citizen who took political responsibility and actively engaged in the national, and imperial, project led by the totalitarian government of that era. However, he fails to recognize that signifiers such as morality and ethics evolve over time.

Arendt, following Friedrich Nietzsche, believes that morality and ethics are "shabby and meaningless."[44] These words are ambiguous and are no more than customs, manners, habits or conventions that are considered "most appropriate for the citizen" and thus are "exchangeable" and "derived."[45] It is similar to how the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" could be easily reversed to "Thou shalt kill" under Nazi rule and then reinstated after World War II. Morality or social participation simply signifies conformity or nonconformity, as what is considered moral is changeable and can be learned. Therefore,

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[44] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 52.
[45] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 51, p. 151.

Ono is not thoughtless per se. He just could not stand outside his own milieu. In other words, he couldn't think from the point of view of others. And this is exactly what Arendt means by suggesting that a normal person like Eichmann commits evil deeds due to a failure to think critically, instead of inherent malevolence. In order to avoid the banality of evil, Arendt proposes her model of thinking: two-in-oneness. It is a schism or inner dichotomy in which one is in silent dialogue with oneself.[46] Arendt accentuates that difference and otherness are two phenomenal characteristics of the human condition, stating "I am inevitably *two-in-one*—which incidentally is the reason why the fashionable search for identity is futile and our modern identity crisis could be resolved only by losing consciousness."[47] More than that, the dialogue extends from between the self and the other to between the self and the world. Arendt points out that "[t]he question *is* never whether an individual is good but whether his conduct is good for the world he lives in."[48] The center of interest, therefore, is the world instead of the self. Only when one is able to have intersubjective dialogue with oneself and with others can one make nonparticipation "a matter of decision" in a totalitarian society as well as "a form of resistance" in a democratic society instead of "a matter of course."[49]

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[46] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 45.
[47] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 184. Italics original.
[48] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 151. Italics original.
[49] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 154-155.

Arendt's concept of two-in-oneness thus aligns with Levinasian ethics, which emerge from the "the prolonged staying in the discourse" between "being" and "being-in-the-world." Both thinkers therefore value an ethics that emerges from the interactions between the self, others, and the world. It is not easily swayed by specific regimes, rules, laws, or policies and it forms a bond through intersubjective relationships. To step outside one's own milieu, one must think relationally and subjectlessly, engaging in the extended discourse between oneself, others, and the world as proposed by Levinas and Arendt. Otherwise, one may be overtaken by powerful forces that are imperceptible, as seen in the cases of Ono and Matsuda.

Structural Parallels and Historical Circularity

Throughout the novel, Ishiguro emphasizes the changing nature of everything, particularly the evolution of social values, norms, and standards of morality. However, he sarcastically portrays two individuals who have remained unchanged. One of them is the Hirayama boy, a naively simple-minded individual who continued singing the same patriotic songs and received praise and money before the war. However, he has been beaten up after the war for his singing. The other is Matsuda, a marginal person whose entire world was confined to his house and garden on the outskirts until his death. He fervently upheld his ideals and firmly believed that one day, standards and norms would return to the time when people admired nationalists like him and Ono, as long as he could

live long enough. The historical circularity, or eternal recurrence, as a form of invariability that Matsuda awaited and believed in, is accentuated by the structural parallels throughout the novel. Ishiguro's text highlights these structural parallels and historical circularity to connect the old imperial/totalitarian Japanese regime with the new American-forced democratic Japan. This serves to underscore Ono's reconciliation and other Japanese people's subordination to the new regime, as well as their blame for the old one, remaining complicit within the structure.

The progressive transition from old imperial Japan to a new nation with American democracy occurred within years after the war, coinciding with an economic boom. Most people experienced a brief period of confusion and hesitation but soon chose to forget and move on. By 1950, the year of Ono's last narrative entry, Japan had seemingly been turned upside down, with completely different social ethos. Ono was no longer a sensei—"an engineer"— but a student—"a backwarder," learning new social norms that the new regime adopted to implement its control. Ono's generation was blamed by the young generation for the nation's imperial expansion so that the young generation could forget the past crime of the nation and aim for a new beginning. The bustling tavern street of the old days was transformed and characterized by countless high-rise office buildings. The starving boys on Ono's patriotic paintings were replaced by smiling young Japanese before Ono's eyes. Even Ono's attachment to the past gradually transforms into a

yearning for a brighter future. However, these seemingly distinct features in different eras represent the cycle of history suggested by the novel's structural parallels.

For instance, prior to his becoming a sensei, Ono was the most accomplished student of Mori-san, learning to use painting to capture fleeting moments before diverging to embrace nationalist themes.[50] This pivotal shift in his artistic direction echoes later in his life when he breaks ties with his most talented student, Kuroda, upon discovering the latter's unpatriotic artworks. This reflection and questioning of past mentor-student relationships underscore Ono's ongoing struggle with the concepts of legacy and influence. Furthermore, the novel intricately explores the tensions between generations, as Ono's era is scrutinized by the youth seeking to distance themselves from historical responsibilities. Post-war transformations render young Japanese, including figures like Miyake and Suichi, as embodiment of a generation marked by resentment towards their predecessors. Through Ono's eyes, we perceive a landscape of change where past ambitions and current disillusionment collide, mirroring the societal shifts from imperial Japan to a country under American influence. Ishiguro uses these reflections not only to critique the cyclical nature of blame and idealism but also to draw parallels between the aspirations of Ono's youth and the contemporary critique against the older generation's failures. By tracing these echoes of mentorship, legacy, and generational conflict, Ishiguro meticulously highlights the complex interplay between personal history and

[50] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2128 of 2438.

national identity, ultimately suggesting a nuanced view of progress and continuity within Japanese society.

The historical circularity culminates at the end of the novel in its depiction of the smile of three young Japanese in front of modern office buildings which reminded Ono of "those brightly-lit bars and all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing a little more boisterously perhaps than those young men...but with much the same goodheartedness" in anticipation of a bright future.[51] This is to emphasize the resemblance and continuity between the past and the present and to draw connections between Japanese militarism and American democracy. Those three young men also remind us readers of the poverty-stricken boys in Ono's painting "Complacency" and the stern-faced soldiers with bayoneted rifles, pointing westward to Asia under the military flag of the rising sun in his painting "Eyes to the Horizon."[52] The caption on the latter painting—"No time for cowardly talking. Japan must go forward" —echoes sentiments expressed by the young generation in the new era:[53]

> We feel *very optimistic about the future*.[54]
>
> I have a feeling Japan has finally established a foundation on which to build *a brilliant future*. This is why firms like ours can *look forward with the greatest confidence*.[55]

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[51] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2426, 2428 of 2438.
[52] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 1985-1989 of 2438.
[53] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 1989 of 2438.
[54] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2186 of 2438. Italics mine.
[55] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2200, 2202 of 2438. Italics mine.

> I'm confident that by and large the lessons of these past years have been good ones and will lead us all on to *a splendid future*.[56]
>
> [O]ur country has finally *set its sights on the future*.[57]

As pointed out by Rebecca Walkowitz in her book chapter on modernism, Ishiguro intentionally employs these repetitions and echoes to draw parallels between the new Japan under American occupation and the old imperial Japan, aligning "allies of American democracy and Japanese militarism, both certain of progress and continuity."[58]

Confined by his own perspective, Ono in the end again went with the flow, albeit reluctantly and slowly. He eventually told his son-in-law Taro that "you are all so confident [of a splendid future]. I can only wish you the best."[59] As the nation successfully rebuilt, Ono believed, "[o]ne can only wish these young people well."[60] On the surface, we follow Ono's journey in coming to terms with the new society as he recounts his story. However, with the earlier mentioned parallels and circularity, the novel ends abruptly with Ono's good wishes for the young generation in June 1950. It is hard to have peace of mind when remembering that the Korean War began on June 25th, 1950, and one might even detect sarcasm in Ono's "good wish." As Wright correctly points out, "The entry of Japan into the 'end of history' is contingent on the plunging of Korea into the destructive inferno of history at its most malignant."[61]

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[56] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2207 of 2438. Italic mine.
[57] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2202 of 2438. Italics mine.
[58] Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*, Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 130.
[59] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2208, 2210 of 2438.
[60] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2429, 2431 of 2438.
[61] Wright, "No Homelike Place," p. 74.

Old Japan embarked on its aggressive path to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, with the aim of becoming a dominant force "like a giant amidst cripples and dwarfs" in Asia. Their goal was to "forge an empire as powerful and wealthy" as Western nations and secure their "rightful place amongst the world powers."[62] In the new era, a prosperous Japan was seen as essential for winning the impending Cold War, allowing America to bolster its global influence in the Asian hemisphere. Japan was positioned as "capitalism's eastern bulwark against Russian and Chinese communism," as highlighted by Brian Catchpole.[63] Totalitarian or democratic, these structural parallels and historical circularity are employed to reveal, in Wright's words, that "each successive historical regime finds and masks its own particular monstrosity."[64]

Ono was unable to think relationally and subjectlessly and his thinking always turned inwardly rather than engaging with others and with the world. Therefore, he failed to recognize his subjection to the state—regardless of the past totalitarian or the current democratic state. His prior support for the old regime and current reconciliation with the new regime yield little difference. The same holds true for the younger generation, who place blame on the older generation to evade collective responsibility while embracing American-influenced modernity. They all engage in the banality of evil because they are bound by the inescapable human condition of the trauma of the real. This reinforces Chuh's argument that an individual's status as a subject is intrinsically entwined with

[62] Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*, loc. 2047-2054 of 2438.
[63] Brian Catchpole, *The Korean War, 1950-53*, Carroll & Graf, 2000, p. 334.
[64] Wright, "No Homelike Place," p. 74.

their role as an epistemological object, predicated on their adherence to regulating matrices for recognition and agency.

However, different from Wright who sees only the problem that Ishiguro's novel addresses, I take heed of Ishiguro's call for a critical humanist awareness of others and the world in order to enlarge one's perspective and avoid committing the banality of evil. More than just "a waiting room" to imagine a better world, Ishiguro in *An Artist of a Floating World* offers a theoretical framework of critical humanism through his skillful textual representation of our inevitable human condition, as well as through the use of structural parallels and historical circularity. In doing so, he accomplishes the role of artists, highlighted by Nguyen, to provide us with models for becoming more humane and ethical in our interactions with one another. Simultaneously, he compels us to recognize our capacity for inhumanity and unethical actions.[65] The hope for a better world, therefore, lies in situating oneself in the world and embracing intersubjective interactions with others and the world. And this can be achieved by thinking otherwise and breaking free from the constraints, especially those imposed by the nation-state.

[65] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 286.

Kaze Tachinu: Ethics for Our Common World

[I]sn't there something inhuman and monstrous about carrying on our daily business— indeed, in enjoying ourselves— while people die because of our war machine?......[D]o we who think we are human know that we are also inhuman?

——*Nothing Ever Dies*, Viet Thanh Nguyen

Indeed, akin to the gentle glow emanating from this humble abode of mine, there lies a multitude, far beyond my contemplation. It might well be that these unseen forces, in their silent grace, are the very ones cradling my existence, unbeknownst to me... (本当はこのおれの小屋の明かりと同様に、おれの思っているよりかもつともつと沢山あるのだ。そうしてそいつ達がおれの意識しないで、こうやって何気なくおれを生かして置いてくれているのかも知れないのだ......)."

——*Kaze Tachinu*, Hori Tatsuo (my translation)

I have mentioned in Chapter 2 that the Yushukan Museum (遊就館), located behind the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, prominently features a Zero fighter in its lobby. The accompanying display board proudly highlights the Zero's very first performance in the air of Chongqing, where it downed nearly all Chinese fighters without any Japanese losses. It has crafted a war memory that idealizes the invincible fighter and emphasizes Imperial Japan's early victories. What has been entirely erased from this narrative is the inhumanity of Japan's invasion of China and the relentless bombing of Chongqing, which resulted in significant civilian casualties and property damage. What is even more inhumane and disheartening is that Japanese nationalists still refuse to acknowledge and provide compensation for their country's wartime atrocities. The strategic bombing of the city has been erased from memory ironically through what can aptly be described as their "strategic forgetting," a process driven by their own interests. This is precisely why Viet

Thanh Nguyen and Paul Ricoeur reiterate emphatically that the act of forgetting plays a fundamental, intricate role in the mechanisms of remembrance.[1]

On August 19, 1940, the Mitsubishi A6M Zero made its debut in the air above Chinese city Chongqing. Maeda Tetsuo delineated its first performance in his monograph: 12 Zeros escorted eighty-one Mitsubishi G3M bombers in what was the thirtieth bombing raid on China's war-time capital. Protected by the Zero, the bombers released 634 60kg-bombs over the urban areas of the city. This assault resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties, ignited 15 streets, and led to the destruction of 10,000 homes.[2]

The fighters that had been shot down that day includes P-36 fighters whose pilots were trained by General Claire Lee Chennault in Kunmin. Chennault recalled that the Zero flying at an altitude of 2,700 feet shot down unprepared Chinese fighters and pilots one by one, just like evil eagles pouncing on a chicken coop.[3] Zero fighters could reach an altitude of 2,700 feet in 6-7 minutes whereas other fighters needed 15 minutes. They had the unprecedented long-range flight capability of 3,500 kilometers. Furthermore, each was equipped with two powerful 20-mm machine guns that could expel other fighters and ensure Japanese air supremacy. In short, the advent of Zero fighters created well-qualified conditions for strategic bombing.[4]

The Zero was subsequently considered the most capable carrier-based fighter in the world. Its designer, Horikoshi Jiro (1903-1982), realized his dream of creating aircraft

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[1] Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," p. 11.
[2] Maeda, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*, pp. 194-95.
[3] Maeda, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*, p. 196.
[4] Maeda, *From Chongqing to London, Tokyo, and Hiroshima*, pp. 192-93; p196.

that could "surpass the rest of the world's technology, not just catch up to it."[5] The Zero and Horikoshi had their glorious moments in the early stage of WWII. However, in the closing years, as U.S. forces steadily gained the upper hand and Japan was losing the war, the Japanese military deployed aircraft in Kamikaze attacks against Allied naval vessels, a desperate strategy reflecting the shifting tide of aerial dominance. The once invincible Zero was doomed to make suicide attacks as well. Beginning in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October, 1944 until Japan's surrender, the Zero was adapted for *Kamikaze* operations. Altogether, more than 1,321 Japanese aircraft crash-dived into Allied warships.[6] Upon hearing about those suicide missions, Horikoshi wrote in his memoir that his heart cried.[7]

Horikoshi Jiro, the chief engineer behind many Japanese fighters of WWII, serves as the central figure in the controversial animated film *Kaze Tachinu* (The Wind Rises, 2013), directed by the Japanese animator Miyazaki Hayao.[8] This film marks the first occasion where Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli have used a real person as the subject of their animated work. In a simplified and somewhat crude summary, *Kaze Tachinu* can be described as the story of its protagonist, Jiro, who relentlessly pursued his childhood dream of becoming an aircraft designer and creating beautiful planes.[9] This journey

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[5] Jiro Horikoshi , *Eagles of Misubishi: The Story of the Zero Fighter*, translated by Shojiro Shindo and Harold N. Wantiez, University of Washington Press, 1981, p. x.

[6] John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945*, Random House, 1970, p. 567; H. P. Willmott, *Zero A6M*, Bison Books, 1980, pp. 40-41; "First Kamikaze Attack of the War Begins," *This Day in History*, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/first-kamikaze-attack-of-the-war-begins. Accessed 10 Aug. 2021.

[7] Horikoshi Jiro, *Zero Fighter: Record of Its Birth and Glory* [零戦：その誕生と栄光の記録], Kadokawa Bunko [角川文庫], 2013, p. 220.

[8] Miyazaki Hayao, *Kaze Tachinu* [風立ちぬ], Studio Ghibli, 2013.

[9] I will use "Jiro" to refer to the character in the animated film and "Horikoshi" to refer

unfolds against a backdrop of challenging times, including the Great Kanto Earthquake, the country's descent into war, years of depression, and the tuberculosis epidemic. All of this happens even though Jiro is aware that his planes could be used by the imperial military for war, and he tragically loses his wife to tuberculosis.

No wonder the film caused uproar in both Japan and its neighboring countries. A *Guardian* article under the title "Japanese Animator Under Fire for Film Tribute to Warplane Designer" points out that the legendary Miyazaki "has managed to anger everyone" with the film.[10] The leftists accuse him of glorifying, or at least turning a blind eye on, Japan's war machine. Japanese nationalists denounce him as a "traitor" and "anti-Japanese" because they believe the film focuses on "the futility of war."[11] South Korean internet users criticize him for "lionising the creator of one of the most potent symbols of Japanese militarism."[12] Inkoo Kang articulates "The Trouble with The Wind Rises" in *The Village Voice*, calling the film "a whitewashed version of history" that "perpetuates Japanese society's deliberate misremembering and rewriting of history, which cast the former Empire of the Rising Sun as a victim of World War II, while glossing over—or in some cases completely ignoring—the mass death and suffering its military perpetrated."[13]

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to Horikoshi Jiro, the historical figure for the rest of the chapter.

[10] Justin McCurry, "Japanese Animator Under Fire for Film Tribute to Warplane Designer," *The Guardian*, 22 Aug. 2013, www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/23/hayao-miyazaki-film-wind-rises. Accessed 11 Aug. 2021.

[11] McCurry, "Japanese Animator Under Fire for Film Tribute to Warplane Designer."

[12] McCurry, "Japanese Animator Under Fire for Film Tribute to Warplane Designer."

[13] Inkoo Kang, "The Trouble with The Wind Rises," *The Village Voice*, 11 Dec. 2013, www.villagevoice.com/2013/12/11/the-trouble-with-the-wind-rises/. Accessed 11 Aug.

The controversial comments on the film are, nonetheless, overly simplistic, relying solely on a singular perspective and a partial understanding. *Kaze Tachinu* is, in fact, a very complex film that I personally would rank number one in Miyazaki's oeuvre. On the surface, it depicts the life of Jiro, a determined aircraft engineer. However, the life and career of character Horikoshi Jiro in the film is, in fact, continually examined and intertwined with the literary figure Hori Tatsuo (1904-1953). The film even draws upon Hori's love life to create Jiro's heart-wrenching romance with Naoko. *Kaze Tachinu* is thus not a one man's paean. It skillfully presents an intersubjective subject in the making, raising the question of how one can be an ethical person while navigating a chaotic world when the wind rises, and what his/her relationship with the world should be. Because it is designed for adults, it contains profound philosophical reflections on the self, the other, and the world, as well as critical humanism and the collective responsibility we share for our common world.

Miyazaki's Critical Humanist Critique

Miyazaki began creating the film in January 2011, and just two months later, the Tohoku earthquake struck off the northeast coast of Japan. In 2012, Japan unilaterally nationalized Sentaku islands—a long-standing dispute between Japan and China. In response, Chinese fleets patrolled the area, and the bilateral relationship grew tense, with the threat of a military conflict looming. In a time when history appeared to be repeating itself in a cycle, with the earthquake, the possibility of imminent war, and economic recession, Miyazaki made *Kaze Tachinu* to remind the audience that everyone must make

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their own decisions on how to face the strong winds blowing instead of providing easy answers. In an interview, he stated that he "never wanted to create a film where you can easily say 'This is yes' or 'This is no' or it's easy to put the 'X' in a circle. Things are way more difficult and complex. History is as well."[14] Hence, Miyazaki consistently juxtaposes contrasting concepts within the film, such as beauty versus mortality, idealism versus reality, and the aesthetic versus the ethical, where the choices prove to be formidable ones.

Through the portrayal of the intricate dynamics between these contrasting concepts, Miyazaki not only provides a critical humanist critique of his own character Jiro, a determined engineer ardently pursuing his dreams, but also prompts the audience to introspect and contemplate their own thoughts and actions. While the film's attribution of the name "Jiro" may lead viewers to interpret it as a biographical narrative centered on the aircraft engineer Horikoshi Jiro, it is essential to acknowledge the absent presence within the film, which significantly contributes to director Miyazaki's construction of a critical framework.

Hori Tatsuo (1904-1953), a Japanese writer, poet, and translator from the Showa period, is always present behind the scenes. In his most renowned novella, *Kaze Tachinu* (The Wind Has Risen), published from 1936 to 1938, Hori crafted a tragic story of two deeply in love individuals who were compelled to confront life and death when one of them was diagnosed with a fatal disease. The unnamed protagonist, also a writer, narrates

[14] Dan Sarto, "Hayao Miyazaki—The Interview: The Legendary Director Talks About His Final and Most Controversial Animated Film, 'The Wind Rises,'" *Animation Wold Network*, 14 Feb. 2014, www.awn.com/animationworld/the-hayao-miyazaki-interview. Accessed 11 Aug. 2021.

his love story with his fiancée Setsuko, who was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The story is told from the first-person point of view, and it unfolds as they find moments of happiness and love in a sanatorium in Nagano, even as Setsuko's health deteriorates. Simultaneously, this situation prompts the protagonist to reflect on and write about his love life. It is noteworthy that the character of Setsuko was inspired by Hori's fiancée, Ayako Yano, who, like the character, succumbed to tuberculosis.[15]

Miyazaki borrowed the title of Hori's novella, originally derived from the verse "Le Cimetière marin" (The Graveyard by the Sea) by the French poet Paul Valéry: "*Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre* (The wind is rising, we must try to live)."[16] In the prologue to his novella, Hori had the male protagonist recite the verse in Japanese as he began reminiscing about the joyful moments when he and Setsuko first met: "風立ちぬ、いざ生きめやも (The wind has risen, we should try to live. But...)."[17] The wind not only kindled the intimacy between the two protagonists but also served as a harbinger of their impending separation, driven by Setsuko's illness and her eventual passing, which was soon unveiled as the protagonist reminisced.

Similar to Hori in his novella, Miyazaki quoted Paul Valéry's verse in the opening scene of the film bearing the same name: "*Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre* (00:00:25)." Beneath the line, Miyazaki offered Hori's Japanese translation: "風立ちぬ、

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[15] Minoru Kokubo, *Shincho Japanese Literature Album 17 Hori Tatsuo* [*新潮日本文学アルバム１７堀辰雄*], Shinchosha [新潮社], Jan. 1984, pp. 26-64.

[16] This line is from the last stanza of Paul Valéry's poem "Le cimetière marin" (The Graveyard by the Sea, 1922), which is the author's meditation on life and death.

[17] Hori Tatsuo, *The Wind Has Risen* [*風立ちぬ*], East China University of Science and Technology Press, 2020, p. 10. My translation.

いざ生きめやも (00:00:25).” Hori’s translation introduced a sense of doubt and uncertainty to the original, as the Japanese particle「やも」(yamo) used at the end of a sentence conveys doubt and inquiry.[18] Japanese scholars have deliberated on the role of questioning and irony conveyed by “yamo” when used at the end of a sentence, and they contend that Hori’s translation encapsulates the moment when the resolve to live gives rise to uncertainty and anxiety.[19]

Figure 4.1: Hori’s Translation

In “Le Cimetière marin,” the narrator’s affirmation of choosing life over death, symbolized by the wind sweeping waves and creating foamy seas, reflects a profound existential and philosophical perspective. The poet conveys the idea that life is a continuous struggle, characterized by challenges and adversities, and that one must confront them with unwavering determination and courage. The imagery of the wind, with its powerful and unpredictable nature, serves as a metaphor for the unpredictability

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[18] “Goo National Language Dictionary: yamo [Goo 国語辞書：やも],” dictionary.goo.ne.jp/word/やも/. Accessed 13 Aug. 2021.

[19] Ohno Shin and Maruyama Saichi, “The Most Important Thing in Japanese [日本語で一番大事なもの],” *Chuko Bunko* [中公文庫], Dec. 2016; Kumekawa Mitsuki, “Considerations on ‘Now Let Us Live, But’ [いざ生きめやも考],” *Classics and the Contemporary* [古典と現代], Oct. 1978; Yamada Kiyoshi, “Considerations on ‘Now Let Us Live, But’ [いざ生きめやも考],” *Interpretations* [解釈], Dec. 2004; Hori Tatsuo, *The Wind Has Risen*, Haruki Bunko edition, Apr. 2012, Appendix & Glossary: Wind, [付録・語註: 風], pp. 107–109.

of life. The narrator's resolute choice to embrace life amidst the chaos of existence resonates with themes of existentialism and the human condition. In contrast, *Kaze Tachinu*, the novella, takes a different approach to the symbolism of the wind. While the novella presents the wind as a source of energy and liberation, it also underscores the potentially destructive forces lurking beneath. The characters in the story are drawn to the idea of choosing life, yet they grapple with uncertainties and doubts. This nuanced portrayal of the wind reflects the complex nature of human existence. It suggests that the pursuit of life and freedom may not always be straightforward, as there are underlying complexities and challenges that individuals must navigate.

When Valéry proclaimed the imperative of living in the face of the inevitability of death, Hori and, perhaps, Miyazaki, who chose Hori's translation of Valéry's verse to set the tone of critique for the film from the very beginning, paused to contemplate a fundamental question: If death is indeed inevitable, what then is the meaning of risking everything in pursuit of "practicable things?"[20] Although the film's portrayal of protagonist Jiro suggests a willingness to sacrifice everything for his ideal, this overarching existential question lingers in the background. And it prompts and enables the audience to contemplate, as the film unfolds, essential questions: We all aspire to live, but can we and how? How can we be ethical individuals in a world characterized by constant change? What is the purpose of our existence?

Horikoshi and Hori were born only a year apart. They both attended the First Higher School and later enrolled at Tokyo Imperial University, though they pursued different

[20] This is Valéry quoting from Greek poet Pindar as the epigraph for "Le Cimetière marin."

fields of study. Horikoshi went to the Department of Engineering, while Hori went to the Department of Literature. Remarkably, despite their shared educational background, the two never crossed paths during their lifetimes. Miyazaki ingeniously blends these two historical figures, who lived in the same era, to create the new and fictionalized character Jiro. In doing so, he offers a critical humanist perspective by reinterpreting Horikoshi's life and career through the lens of Hori's literary worldview. When discussing Jiro's artisan spirit and unwavering dedication to his career and life (生きねば), Miyazaki reminds us of the pivotal "but" that underscores every seeming progression. This transitional "but" is often overlooked by most viewers and critics, even though it is presented clearly as the film's opening frame and serves as the foundational element for the entire critical framework.

Miyazaki not only adopted the title of Hori's novella and Hori's translation of Valéry's verse but also integrated the love story of Hori's protagonists into his film. In Hori's autobiographical novella, he created a character, much like himself, who authored an autobiographical novel reflecting on the theme of love. Consequently, two narratives emerged and intertwined within the novella: one is authored by Hori, narrated from the perspective of the unnamed protagonist "I," and the other is being written by "I" as a writer. "I" fulfill the roles of narrator, writer, and main character. The subject is, as a result, inevitably fragmented, and the voice of "I" could never maintain a uniform, singular tone within such a complex narrative structure. Hence, it is essential for "I" to remain prepared to engage in dialogue with other selves, embodying a state referred to as Hanna Arendt's "two-in-oneness," a concept discussed in the preceding chapter.

In the novella, "I" passionately pursue love and its beauty with beloved Setsuko, even as she lies on her sickbed. Our love is imbued with ephemeral beauty, much like cherry blossoms, and "I" believe it to be the most sincere love for Setsuko. "I" am convinced that "I" must write about our profound love and happiness, especially for those who have not experienced or may not understand it. "In this story, Setsuko and I believe that we have experienced our unique happiness as long as we have savored the little joys of life. At least, I feel my soul is completely satisfied with it (この物語の中のおれ達はおれ達に許されるだけのささやかな生の愉しみを味わいながら、それだけで独自にお互を幸福にさせ合えると信じていられた。少くともそれだけで、おれわおれの心を縛りつけていられるものと思っていた)."[21] However, when "I" began to write, the narrative seemed to unfold on its own, inexorably leading towards the tragic conclusion of Setsuko's death. Upon rereading what "I" had written, the happiness "I" initially sought to convey was nowhere to be found. Instead, a sense of unease and uncertainty pervaded. "I" couldn't help but ask myself, "Is it enough for us to have had moments of happiness like that (あのような幸福瞬間をおれ達が持てたということは、それだけでももうおれ達がこうして共に生きるのに値したのであろうか)?"[22] Hori employed a divided self to pose a Sisyphean question, one he himself may have grappled with at the time: Is it still meaningful to pursue love and appreciate its beauty when death looms as an inevitable ending? In other words, can the act of writing about death and writing about love coexist in parallel?

[21] Hori, *The Wind Has Risen*, p. 93. My translation.
[22] Hori, *The Wind Has Risen*, p. 94. My translation.

Such a dilemma appears to be a central theme in modern Japanese literature. Whether in *Snow Country* (1935-37) by Yasunari Kawabata, *Spring Snow* (1965-67) by Yukio Mishima, or even *Paradise Lost* (1997) by Junichi Watanabe, the fleeting sense of extinction, like cherry blossoms, is a recurring motif. It seems that Japanese writers continually grapple with the pursuit of love and the embrace of death in their works. Sometimes, the characters' passion for love is kindled by the shadow of death, while at other times, their yearning for death stems from intense love. Miyazaki, of course, was acutely aware of the inherent contradiction concealed within the seemingly progressive trajectory of Horikoshi's life and career. Horikoshi's quest to create aircraft of Japanese beauty was, at the same time, the construction of a deadly instrument for mass destruction. Embracing the literary exploration of this contradiction, Miyazaki fashioned a protagonist by weaving the lives of two historical figures, Horikoshi Jiro and Hori Tatsuo, into a single character. Moreover, the fictionalized Jiro also possessed a dream self, Caproni. Much like Hori's protagonist, the character Jiro in the film embodies an ongoing discourse with multiple facets of self. He represents not a static identity but a subject in the process of formation. While the film refrains from overtly portraying his ultimate selection of the ethical over the aesthetic, a lingering sense of potentiality implies that forthcoming circumstances might compel him to make such a choice, or at least it prompts contemplation among the audience regarding the intricate nature of such decisions.

Valéry's verse makes two notable appearances in the film, excluding the opening frame. The first instance occurs during the encounter between the male and female

protagonists on the train. A gust of wind lifts Jiro's hat, deftly caught by Naoko, named after Hori's novella *Naoko* (1941). As Naoko hands back the hat, she utters the first half of the verse—"Le vent se lève" (00:14:29). Jiro responds promptly with "il faut tenter de vivre" (00:14:34). Later, when Jiro is alone, he recites the entire original verse and follows it with a Japanese translation: "風が立つ。生きようと試みなければならない" (00:15:00~00:15:07). In this instance, the Japanese version aligns with the standard translation: "The wind is rising. We must try to live." This marks a significant moment for Jiro, the engineer, as he makes a pivotal decision. Valéry's verse resurfaces for the second time as the fire intensifies after the Great Kanto Earthquake. Jiro, amidst rescuing books from the school library on the brink of destruction by fire, encounters Caproni, the skilled Italian aircraft designer, who appears in fantasy. Caproni addresses him with a poignant statement: "まだ風は吹いているか、日本の少年よ......では生きねばならん! 'Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre' (Is the wind rising again, Japanese boy?......Then you must live! 'The wind rises, we must try to live.'"; 00:24:10~00:24:23)

Twice, confronted by the wind—whether it's the vibrant wind that brings the two protagonists together or the disastrous wind of the earthquake and the fire—Jiro, as well as his dream self Caproni, chooses "life." Thus, Jiro strives earnestly to live and to bring to fruition the beautiful aircraft of his dreams. In pursuit of his goal, he loses his beloved wife to an incurable disease. Additionally, he grapples with the harsh reality that the beautiful planes he designs and pilots are being employed for *kamikaze* operations, leading them to their demise. Toward the end of the film, Jiro and Caproni reunite after the successful testing of his Zero fighter (02:00:05~02:01:31):

カプローニ：我々の夢の王国だ。
二郎：地獄かと思いました。
カプローニ：ちょっと違うが、同じようなものかもな。
君の 10 年はどうだったかね？ 力を尽くしたかね？
二郎：はい。終わりはズタズタでしたが。
カプローニ：国を滅ぼしたんだからな。
あれだね、君のゼロは。美しいな。いい仕事だ。
二郎：一機も戻ってきませんでした。
カプローニ：「行きて帰りし者なし」。飛行機は美しくも呪われた夢だ。
大空は皆飲み込んでしまう。

Caproni: This is our kingdom of dreams.
Jiro: I thought it's hell, isn't it?
Caproni: Not quite, but perhaps yes in some ways.
How was your 10 years? Have you done all your best?
Jiro: Yes but it's shattered and miserable in the end.
Caproni: Because your country is perished.
That's your Zero, right? So beautiful. Good job!
Jiro: None of the planes flew back.
Caproni: "No one comes back." Aircraft is a beautiful yet cursed dream.
The sky swallows them all.

Jiro's pursuit of dreams and beauty leads to destruction and nullification. In the end, to Jiro, the kingdom of dreams equates to hell. Aircraft technology not only realizes humanity's dream of freedom and mobility but also possesses the capacity to destroy a city, a nation, and humankind. His Zero fighter stands as a brilliant achievement yet also symbolizes the pain of failure. The phrase "That's your Zero" serves as a pun, encapsulating both the fighter itself and the void of a shattered dream. The extreme beauty that Jiro constantly chases harbors danger and the potential for annihilation. Even with the strongest will to live, even at the highest price, individuals like Jiro would undoubtedly grapple with uneasy relations within themselves, with others and the world.

Naoko, Jiro's beautiful wife, is the sole female protagonist among all of Miyazaki's animated films to meet a tragic end. The scene depicting her hemoptysis—scarlet blood spraying onto her drawing board—is unprecedented in all of Ghibli's productions. The bond between beauty and death/danger is solidified through Naoko's hemoptysis, presenting imminent danger amidst the picturesque Karuizawa environment. In the end, Jiro walks through the wreckage of his Zero and encounters Naoko, who waves her hand while urging Jiro to hold on to life: あなた、生きて (Darling, live; 02:01:55).

At first glance, Naoko's words appear to be a positive proclamation of life, easily interpreted as "生きてください(please hold on to your life)." However, is there a slight chance that it could mean "生きてこそ反省することができる(hold on to life so that you are able to retrospect and introspect)." Or perhaps, it is simply "生きて..." with the apostrophe signifying transition or doubt, mirroring Hori's translation of the verse, which sets the tone for the entire film from the beginning. Struck by the pun of "zero," one might ask: Would Jiro still choose to stick to his aircraft design career if given another chance, willing to sacrifice everything, including his love of life, all his designed planes, and pilots? This situation mirrors the dilemma faced by Hori and his protagonist "I," who couldn't truly sense the bliss of love upon rereading his own words that were supposed to depict love and its beauty and happiness.

Thus, the ending of the film clearly reopens Jiro's dream to new consideration. It encapsulates a thematic underpinning that Director Miyazaki endeavors to convey—an implicit acknowledgment of the dualities inherent in ambitious pursuits. While dreams are beautiful and often eulogized and encouraged, people often do not see or simply overlook the dark side of dreams—the sacrifices required for their realization. Personal dreams, as epitomized by Jiro's, may exact tolls upon cherished relationships. Likewise, national aspirations may necessitate the sacrifice of myriad families, as evidenced in the context of imperial Japan. Rather than stating that aircraft is a cursed dream, Miyazaki seems to remind us that all dreams requiring the sacrifice of others will be cursed, using Jiro's miserable experience as an example.

While many emphasize the individual's involuntariness and helplessness in the torrent of times, Miyazaki issues his literary and critical humanist critique by selecting Hori's translation of Valéry's verse at the beginning to set the thematic tenor and by adapting from Hori's literary world the tragic character of Naoko. With the concluding scene depicting Jiro's helpless back, the animated film has the power to prompt its audience to contemplate the transitional "but" at the end of Valéry's verse in Hori's translation. The ethical questions are left for the audience to ponder: When the wind rises, we have to strive to live. But how? As mere common members of the collective, how do we navigate and survive ethically as ethical sensate beings during violent times and how

do we thoughtfully position ourselves in the midst of the sensible world that is our common world?

Ethical Memory and Responsibility for Our Common World

Jiro harbored a longstanding aspiration to emerge as a proficient aircraft designer during the Taishō and Showa eras of Japan. In his reveries, he engaged in conversations with a visionary version of himself—a renowned Italian aircraft designer, Caproni. Encouraging Jiro to steadfastly pursue his dream without reservation, Caproni posited that an individual's creative zenith spans merely a decade. Galvanized by Caproni's philosophy, Jiro committed himself unwaveringly to the trajectory of becoming a successful aircraft designer. Having completed his studies in aircraft engineering, he secured a position at Mitsubishi Internal Combustion Engine Corporation, dedicating his efforts to enhancing and designing aircraft for the government.

Aware of the reality that the expense associated with adopting Junkers' technology could satiate the hunger of every child in Japan with *tendon* and cakes, Jiro couldn't help but feel a twinge of discomfort witnessing hungry children meandering near his apartment. His colleague Honjō, however, displayed unwavering determination, seizing every opportunity to realize his dream. Observing Jiro's disquiet in the face of child poverty, Honjō perceived it as hypocritical. Fully cognizant of the arduous journey and monumental efforts required to catch up with the world's leading technology, the question

lingered for Jiro—should he persist in the pursuit of his dream at any cost? Uncertain, Jiro engaged in introspection and sought counsel from his "visionary" alter ego during his return trip from Germany (00:57:20~00:57:47).

> カプローニ：君は、ピラミッドのある世界とピラミッドのない世界と、どちらが好きかね？
> 二郎：ピラミッドですか？
> カプローニ：「空を飛びたい」という人類の夢は、呪われた夢でもある。飛行機は殺戮と破壊の道具になる宿命を背負っているのだ。
> 二郎：はい。
> カプローニ：それでも、私はピラミッドのある世界を選んだ。君はどちらを選ぶね？
> 二郎：僕は、美しい飛行機を作りたいと思っています。

> Caproni: Which would you prefer—a world with pyramids or the one without?
> Jiro: Pyramids?
> Caproni: The human dream of "wanting to fly to the sky" is also a cursed dream. Aircraft is doomed to be tools for slaughter and destruction.
> Jiro: Uh-huh.
> Caproni: Nevertheless, I chose the world with pyramids. Which one do you choose?
> Jiro: I want to make beautiful aircraft.

This marks the moment when Jiro subjected himself to introspection. Jiro's dream counterpart, Caproni, tenaciously clung to his aviation aspirations despite the acknowledgment that aircraft were destined to serve as instruments of killing and destruction. Resolutely opting for a world adorned with pyramids, Caproni willingly embraced the profound sacrifices underlying the dazzling structures, sacrifices involving countless individuals and families. Jiro, however, was not quite like him. Neither did Jiro

choose to give up on his personal dream of becoming an aircraft engineer for a more grand dream of protecting the world from aerial bombing through non-action, even as he lucidly comprehended that the toll for such a dream would extend beyond individual designers like himself, encompassing every family, the state, neighboring states, and indeed, the world at large. Confronted with this internal interrogation, Jiro evaded a direct response, asserting instead his desire to craft a beautiful aircraft. He remained reticent regarding whether he favored a world adorned with pyramids or one devoid of them.

Hence, prior to the heart-wrenching moment when Jiro witnesses the destruction of his Zero fighters, and his lifetime of hard work crumbles before him, he actually had the moment of self-interrogation and he had the opportunity to contemplate not only his personal aspirations but also the implications for others and the broader world, which might lead to the relinquishment of his persistent pursuit of a beautiful yet perilous dream. Regrettably, he continues to actualize his dream, deliberately turning a blind eye to its inherent dangers and costs.

Aware of Imperial Japan's preparations for impending conflict, evidenced by his consistent inquiries to Honjō about the countries Japan might engage in war, Jiro remains cognizant of the military context. He is conscious that his designs may ultimately be repurposed for use in the impending conflict. This awareness is underscored when colleagues bring him new materials to reduce the overall weight of the fighter,

accompanied by a newspaper wrapping bearing the prominent headline of the “Shanghai Incident.”[23] Despite this revelation, Jiro and his colleagues promptly discard the wrapping newspapers, choosing instead to concentrate solely on the materials (01:28:15~01:28:43).

Figure 4.2: Wrapping Newspapers

Jiro’s intentional oversight or forgetting of the inhumane aspects of his dream serves as an analogy to imperial Japan’s fervent pursuit of its ideal Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, selectively overlooking the suffering it inflicted on its own people and neighboring countries. This deliberate amnesia echoes the current ethical debates surrounding Japan’s intentional erasure of the devastating bombings on Chongqing from its collective memory, highlighting the ethical dimensions of historical recollection. The implications of Jiro’s actions mirror the ethical complexities inherent in historical narratives, where certain aspects are consciously omitted or relegated to oblivion. Just as Jiro’s dream is realized at the expense of ethical considerations, imperial Japan’s pursuit of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere similarly and certainly involved ethical

[23] The Shanghai Incident paved the way for the Second Sino-Japanese War, which erupted five years later. This conflict marked the initial extended deployment of aircraft carriers in a continental war, showcasing their effectiveness in aiding ground forces during expeditions—a capability that would prove crucial in the broader Pacific War a decade later. For further information, please refer to “The Shanghai Incident, 1932, ” *Pacific Eagles*, pacificeagles.net/shanghai-incident-1932/.

compromises and the intentional dismissal of human suffering. This deliberate act of "forgetting" becomes a poignant metaphor for the broader ethical challenges in grappling with historical memory and its selective construction.

This moment of self-interogation is pivotal, as it is not solely Jiro who undergoes interrogation in this moment. Addressed by the narrative, the audience, too, is compelled to contemplate alongside the character—questioning whether the world truly necessitates pyramids and fighters, and whether these ostensibly cursed dreams should be acknowledged, or even endorsed. Simultaneously, it prompts us to even consider whether Horikoshi had the opportunity as well to take (non)action or rectify a situation before his heart ached upon realizing the grim reality that his Zero fighters and their pilots were engaged in suicide missions.

Some individuals with their "shallowness" of perspectives may argue that Jiro/Horikoshi had no alternative but to persist in their dream of designing beautiful aircraft. Given the prevailing destiny of airplanes during that era to be deployed in wars, designers are seemingly fated to create fighters. A designer may harbor the wish for aircraft without machine guns, mirroring Jiro's sentiment in the film. However, this idealistic notion is destined to be met with laughter, much like the portrayal in the film. While a designer may harbor discontent with the actions of the military government, the reality is that they may feel powerless, much like Jiro. In essence, the designer becomes a representative of thousands of individuals akin to Jiro—common people navigating turbulent times or involuntary environments, striving to survive, and doing their utmost to shield their dreams from the tempestuous storms of their era.

However, Miyazaki harbors doubt regarding whether humans genuinely lack a choice and are indifferent to the price and sacrifice associated with clinging to their lives and dreams when the wind rises. Consequently, he portrays Jiro cringing when confronted with this self-interrogation. In essence, Miyazaki employs Jiro's evasion as a means to pose a significant question: "What constitutes the self and its relationship to others and the shared world?" This inquiry bears a resemblance, to some extent, to that of Arendt.

Arendt observed that many individuals conform to the prevailing norms of their time, becoming "terribly and terrifyingly normal." Despite not being "perverted nor sadistic," they unwittingly become implicated in the evils of their era, diligently fulfilling their duties during wartime.[24] While they may remain apolitical and refrain from active participation in the conflict, their conscientious efforts unwittingly contribute to the vast war machine, according to Arendt. She contends that while they may not be directly culpable for war crimes, they share collective responsibility for their "extraordinary shallowness," their "inability to think," and their inaction. Arendt characterizes this phenomenon as the "banality of evil," as mentioned in the previous chapter.[25]

Arendt's admonition in her reports on the Eichmann trial underscores that no one possesses the right to determine who should or should not inhabit the earth. Judith Butler, echoing this sentiment, contends that Arendt's indictment of Eichmann reflects a "firm conviction" that none of us has the privilege to choose our cohabitants on Earth. This is because such cohabitation is "given to us, prior to choice and so prior to any social or

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[24] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, p. 643.
[25] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 159.

political contracts we might enter through deliberation and volition."[26] Arendt's concept of unchosen cohabitation implies more than just the inherently diverse and heterogeneous character of the earth's population. It also implies an "an obligation to safeguard this plurality and a commitment to an equal right for all to inhabit the earth, thereby signifying a commitment to equality as well.[27]

Expanding on Arendt's ethical perspective of cohabitation, Butler posits that the ethical imperative of the common world does not solely emanate from love or choice. It transcends "kinship, community, nation, and territory," constituting the fundamental interrelationship among living beings that binds diverse life forms together. This interconnectedness facilitates our thinking of the other and propels us toward a collective orientation to the world.[28] The common world thus becomes a shared bond that necessitates our awareness of the myriad ways lives or life forms depend on one another, compelling moral imperatives to transcend self-interest. This is because every "I" is a part of a "we," cohabiting our common world, where lives are intricately implicated, rendering the proximity and distance between oneself and the other somehow reversible.

In depicting Jiro's moment of interrogation, Miyazaki, in *Kaze Tachinu*, prompts the audience to contemplate collective responsibility for aspirations and the pursuit of an ethical common world, rather than providing an easy answer to Jiro's immediate predicament. Engaging in an ongoing dialogue with his alter ego throughout the film,

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[26] Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26, no.2, 2012, special issue with The Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, p.143.
[27] Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," p. 145.
[28] Butler, *What World Is This?*, pp. 96-98.

Jiro's initial conversation with Caproni implants his dream of flight. Subsequently, he gradually realizes that the flying dream is also a cursed dream in a second encounter with Caproni. Finally, Jiro undergoes the simultaneous realization and disillusionment of his flying dream. Through Jiro, echoes seem to emerge of Hori's protagonist, who muses, "I constantly sense that there is something adversarial to the love shared between Setsuko and me on the other side of our life, a facet that remains elusive and unexplored......Whatever I have done, it appears that I've done them solely due to my concern for my own feelings (私がまだつきりさせることの出来ずにいる私達の側面には、何となく私達のそんな幸福に敵意をもつているようなものが潜んでいるような気もしてならない.....それがそのままでもつて自分一人のためにしているように自分に思われる程)."[29]

The film is unequivocally not a singular homage to the historical figure Horikoshi Jiro. As discussed above, it serves as a literary and philosophical contemplation on the self, the other, and the world. It delves into critical humanism and advocates for collective responsibility toward a shared world by reinterpreting Horikoshi's life and career through the lens of Hori's literary worldview. In fact, Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli distinctly pay tribute to both Horikoshi and Hori, prominently featuring their acknowledgment on every advertisement poster and in the closing credits of the film (02:03:00):

[29] Hori, *The Wind Has Risen*, p. 92, p. 130. My translation.

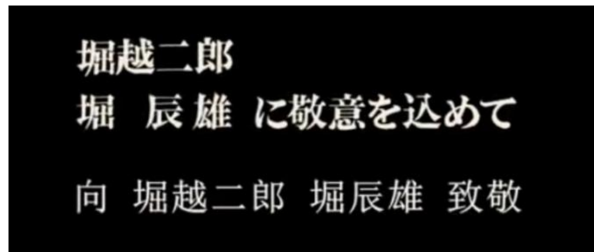

Figure 4.3: In Honor of Horikoshi Jiro and Hori Tatsuo

For individuals residing in a world where the wind is rising, akin to Jiro, it is crucial to bear in mind Nguyen's inquiry: Isn't there an inherent inhumanity and monstrosity in carrying on with our daily lives, seeking enjoyment, while people succumb to the consequences of our war machine? Do we, who consider ourselves human, recognize the inhuman aspects within us?[30] This awareness serves as the response to Miyazaki's philosophical question posed through the medium of animation. It is essential for us to make ethical choices and cultivate ethical memories.

[30] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, p. 235.

Conclusion

In reanimating the memory of the Chongqing Heavy Bombing, this project has adopted a critical humanist approach, unraveling the intricacies of war through interdisciplinary exploration. The chapters traverse documentary films, novels, and animation, weaving together diverse narratives that transcend national and cultural boundaries.

Chapters 1 and 2 delve into the documentaries *Kukan*, co-produced by Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott, and Robin Lung's *Finding Kukan*, along with the Chinese novel *Under the Sun* by Luo Weizhang. These literary and cinematic works serve as direct portrayals of the overlooked history of the Chongqing Bombardment ruthlessly conducted by imperial Japan. They scrutinize the impact of war on individuals, encompassing both Chinese-Americans and Chinese, providing a lens through which ethical history and memory can be explored and restored. Critical humanism, with its emphasis on the relationality between the self and the other, becomes a guiding thread. Conscious of critical humanism's orientation towards the other and its ordeal for humanity, these narrative accounts persistently dedicate themselves to pursuing ethical history and memory, even building upon the faintest glimmer of critical humanistic light.

Chapters 3 and 4 extend the analytical framework of critical humanism to encompass Kazuo Ishiguro's literary work, *An Artist of the Floating World*, and Miyazaki

Hayao's animated film, *Kaze Tachinu*. These literary and cinematic works serve not only to explicate the inexorable human condition characterized by an unfulfilled desire to know and the banality of evil within an ever-evolving world due to our inherent limitations in perspective, but also to furnish venues for contemplation regarding the intricate relationships among the self, the other, and the world. They propel individuals beyond the confines of self, instigating a philosophical inquiry into ethical responsibility within a world shared by inherently diverse individuals. The ethical imperative of such an inquiry, according to Levinas, lies in embracing intersubjective interactions and transcending the constraints delineated by both the self and the nation-state.

Levinas envisioned ethics as a vision devoid of imagery, urging us to refrain from objectification and embrace ethical engagement. This project is, in fact, inspired by Levinasian intersubjective relations and ethics emerging from encountering the "other." Remember the episode I shared in Chapter 2, where I encountered a Zero fighter on display at the Yushukan Museum in Tokyo, or my moments of hesitation and profound contemplation at the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima? The Zero fighter is showcased at the museum's heart, complete with exhaustive descriptions and photographs, proudly highlightling the Zero's decisive victory in their initial engagement over Chongqing in September 1940, where they overwhelmingly defeated Chinese fighters without suffering any losses. At the Peace Memorial Museum, I was captivated

by an elderly narrator's poignant account of the suffering endured by the Japanese during the atomic bombings, her tears reflecting a deep melancholy. As a native of Chongqing, my upbringing in a city replete with historically significant bomb shelters repurposed into hotpot restaurants and an intricately extensive underground transport system allows me to present an alternative perspective to the prevailing narratives of Japanese pride in the invincible Zero and the enduring memories of nuclear victimization. Nonetheless, it is my contention that, even amid the experience of overwhelming shock and disorientation, I discovered a profound connection to a Levinasian moment of ethical encounter.

Struck by the Levinasian address and ethics, I sensed the forming of the self in relation between me and the other, right at those moments. My heart ached for my city and compatriots, enduring more than six years of bombing during the war, vividly captured by Rey Scott's camera lens in *Kukan* and *Finding Kukan*. Yet, I also heard Horikoshi's lament and felt Jiro's shattered inner world concerning pilots dying from *Kamikaze* missions in *Kaze Tachinu*. I empathized with the Japanese and their descendants who experienced the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, akin to Japanese woman Yinowue Yasuko/An Jing/An Zhiwei depicted in *Under the Sun*. I seemed to remember Kazuo Ishiguro's caution against the "banality of evil." The occurrences "there" paralleled those "here," and this "here" had already become an elsewhere. I found myself existing simultaneously here and there, and this relationship

between myself and the other was not contingent on the reciprocity of the other, as Levinas warns that egoism is the antithesis of ethics.

Through intersubjective exchanges underscored by Levinas, denoting the fundamental relationship or, more precisely, the essence of existence, I engaged with both my own self and the other, reciprocally addressing and being addressed. Echoing Butler's argument that these inherent relations between oneself and the other comprise a more dynamic manifestation of the self, serving as the foundation for our common world, they impose a collective responsibility—an ethical obligation—for our communal existence. I contend that this ethical obligation for our shared world represents a pursuit within critical humanism of the infinite domain, wherein one ethically thinks of and speaks to both oneself and the other.

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