

ASIANetwork EXCHANGE

**A NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHING ABOUT ASIA
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ASIANetwork is a consortium of over one hundred twenty-five North American colleges which strives to strengthen the role of Asian Studies within the framework of liberal arts education to help prepare a new generation of undergraduates for a world in which Asian societies will play more and more prominent roles. The unique teaching mission of the undergraduate liberal arts institution poses special opportunities and challenges in the development of Asian Studies. ASIANetwork seeks to encourage the study of Asian countries and cultures on our campuses and to enable our students and faculty to experience these cultures first hand. In a time of fiscal constraints, ASIANetwork facilitates conversation among faculty and administrators concerning the development and strengthening of Asian studies programs, as well as ways to foster collaboration among institutions.

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Past President
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Anthony C. Yu
Carl Darling Buck Distinguished
Service Professor in Humanities
The University of Chicago

Board of Directors

James Leavell, Chair
Furman University
(864) 294-3349
james.leavell@furman.edu

Diane Clayton
Hamline University
(612) 523-2046
dclayton@gw.hamline.edu

Steve Goldberg
Hamilton College
(513) 859-4233
sgolber@hamilton.edu

Paul Kjellberg
Whittier College
(562) 907-4404
pkjellberg@whittier.edu

Joan O'Mara
Washington & Lee University
(540) 463-8858
jomara@wlu.edu

Gita Rajan
Fairfield University
(203) 254-4000 x 2508
grajan@fair1.fairfield.edu

Joel R. Smith, ex-officio
Skidmore College
(518) 580-5407
jsmith@skidmore.edu

Van J. Symons, Executive Director
Augustana College
(309) 794-7413
hisymons@augustana.edu

I. Job Thomas
Davidson College
(704) 892-2352
jorthomas@davidson.edu

Paul Watt
DePauw University
(765) 658-4719
pwatt@depauw.edu

Yi Sun
University of San Diego
(619) 260-6811
ysun@acUSD.edu

The *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE*, A Newsletter for Teaching About Asia, is published three times a year. The newsletter, an important venue for communication among members, prints, for example, the speeches of ASIANetwork Conference keynote speakers, course syllabi, and reflections by faculty and by students of study-abroad programs.

We welcome submissions of materials which support the above goals.

Deadlines for submission of materials are **August 1** for the Fall issue, **November 1** for the Winter issue, and **February 1** for the Spring issue. The editors reserve the right to edit all materials submitted for publication.

Materials may be submitted electronically to ANExchange@augustana.edu, or disks may be sent to Marsha Smith, *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE*, Augustana College, 639 38th Street, Rock Island, Illinois 61201. For further information contact the editor at the above e-mail address or by telephone at (309) 794-7270.

From the Executive Director



In this issue of the newsletter, I wish to write about a small group of very talented individuals who have served, now serve, or will begin this spring to serve ASIANetwork as our Council of Advisors. The timing is appropriate because this April five members of the original council will complete six years of service and leave the council. They are Tom Benson, Ainslee Embree, Donald Gregg, Timothy Light, and David Vikner. As many of you know, Tom and David were instrumental in founding ASIANetwork, and they remain stalwart supporters of our endeavor. As a former ambassador to Korea and current board chair of The Korea Society, Donald Gregg has impressed upon our board the importance of integrating the study of Korea into the study of Asia. Throughout their academic careers, Ainslee and Tim have been among the most effective voices in support of the liberal arts and higher education, and of integrating the study of Asia into the college curriculum. We will miss having these colleagues on the council, but we will continue informally to seek their advice.

Current members of the council whose service will continue include Betty Buck, co-director of the Asian Studies Development Program at the East-West Center, now in her fourth year of service; Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of Japanese History at Columbia University; Anthony Yu, Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor in Humanities at the University of Chicago, both in their second year of service; and Barbara Metcalf, along with Carol Gluck a former president of the Association for Asian Studies, and a professor of South Asian history at the University of California, Davis, who is in her first year of service. Tony and Barbara have both been keynote speakers at ASIANetwork conferences, and Carol is scheduled to speak this coming spring.

Three new members will join the council this April: Lucien Ellington, the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga and editor of the journal *Education About Asia*; Roberta Martin, the East Asian Institute at Columbia University and

director of one of five National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA) sites; and Richard Woods, the president of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia.

Knowing how busy these colleagues are, ASIANetwork tries not to impose a great deal upon them. Mostly, we seek their advice on an *ad hoc* basis, but perhaps just as importantly, we are able to draw some luster to the consortium simply from being associated with them. This does not ignore the fact that we share a common commitment with all council members to enhance the study of Asia in North America at a time when the necessity of doing so is even more evident. We are also aware that there is a natural synergism between ASIANetwork and Betty's ASDP programs, Richard's United Board outreach, Lucien's *Education about Asia*, and Roberta's efforts to infuse the teaching of Asia into K-12 education and her other projects. We are proud to identify ASIANetwork with these endeavors.

In my annual cycle of service as executive director, I find myself attending board meetings, working with the editorial staff to get three issues of the *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE* out, handling memberships and mailings with the ASIANetwork secretary and financial matters with our controller, and preparing for the spring conference with the current board chair. However, one additional opportunity presents itself. This is hosting, with the board chair and vice-chair, an annual luncheon for the Council of Advisors. At the luncheon, we report to the council the key events and initiatives of the past year for ASIANetwork and then seek counsel from them. Council members are always solicitous of our needs, eager to help, and wise in the counsel they offer to us. Each year, we leave these luncheons reinvigorated and with solid advice to draw upon. I wish to publicly thank our council for their service. We are especially grateful for those leaving us this year after six years of service.

Van Symons

The American Context of China's Christian Colleges and Schools Project
Martha Lund Smalley
Research Services Library and Curator of the Days Mission Collection
Yale Divinity School Library

The American Context of China's Christian Colleges and Schools project is investigating the interaction between the Christian educational institutions in China and American liberal arts colleges between 1900 and 1950.

Funded by the Luce Foundation, the project is based at Wesleyan University and directed by Professor Ellen Widmer of the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures. Through meetings held in 2002 and 2003 and the development of a web site (<http://www.library.yale.edu/div/colleges/>), the project will explore the relations between the Christian schools of China and the small, liberal arts colleges in America that supplied many of their faculty and certain of their core ideas. The values, structures, and activities of liberal arts colleges in the two countries during the first half of the 20th century will be examined.

An important goal of the project is to facilitate the identification and accessibility of the primary source materials held at the designated institutions to enhance their use in undergraduate student research. The first meeting of the project was a workshop at Wesleyan September 20-21, 2002. Organizers of the workshop were Ellen Widmer; Suzy Taraba, Head of Special Collections and University Archivist at Wesleyan; and Martha Lund Smalley, Research Services Librarian and Curator of the Day Missions Collection at the Yale University Divinity School Library.

The September 2002 workshop focused on gathering information and perspective on archival and print resources that document the interaction between American colleges and the Christian colleges in China. Participants in the workshop included representatives from eleven U.S. schools: Carleton, Claremont, DePauw, Dickinson, Grinnell, Haverford, Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Smith, Wellesley, and Wesleyan. Archivists reported on their holdings and on the history of involvement with China at their institutions. Additional papers were provided by Professors Ryan Dunch, Patricia Hill, and Peter Ng.

In preparation for the September 2002 workshop, the eleven participating U.S. institutions contributed information, documents, and photographs to a web site that is designed to raise the consciousness of undergraduate students regarding the availability of primary sources on this theme. Contributions from the participant colleges are supplemented by records from the China colleges held in archival collections at the Yale University Divinity School Library, including an online image database related to the China Christian colleges and universities: <http://research.yale.edu:8084/ydlchina/index.jsp>. It is hoped that

this web site will be an ongoing source of information and guidance for undergraduate research.

A second meeting of the project will be held in September 2003, organized by Ellen Widmer and Daniel Bays of Calvin College. This conference will focus on historical interpretation of the interaction between the U.S. and China colleges. Scholars will be invited to give papers that examine various facets of the U.S.-China interaction, exploring questions such as the following:

- What ideal of the educated person in China and the U.S was reflected in the values and structures of the liberal arts colleges?
- What historical processes were at work in both sets of schools?
- What were the assumptions and expectations that produced these schools and how did they change over time?
- How was the liberal arts ideal manifested in the curriculum, pageantry, dress, music, architecture, physical education, education for women, school traditions, school governance, fund-raising, etc.?
- What was the role of religion, science, race, and culture in creating "well-educated women and men?"
- What were the weaknesses or flaws in realizing the ideal? How did the various denominations differ in their approach to education?
- How was this reflected in the colleges in China? And especially, what can we learn from the contrasts and similarities between the Chinese and American experiences?

The fact that many graduates of the Christian colleges have achieved prominence in various walks of life in China over several decades, and that when permitted in the 1980s, graduates of all the former Christian colleges formed active alumni/ae associations, indicates the importance that these organizations had in Chinese life during the twentieth century.

Another focus of the 2003 conference will be how missionary experience abroad carried influenced college curricula and campus life at American institutions that had a special relationship with one of the Chinese Christian colleges. Is it coincidence, for example, that not long after the Christian Colleges were founded, Wesleyan University initiated a course on comparative government in 1914, one that included units on India, China, and Japan? Between the

1910s and the late 1930s, campus publications at Wesleyan and elsewhere help to detail a growing interest in China at American institutions, particularly when they chronicled home visits of graduate missionaries who came in pursuit of financial contributions and manpower for Chinese and other foreign schools. Throughout the Republican era there was a constant stream of American graduates of liberal arts colleges who made their way to and then back home from China. At the very least, this dynamic helped to internationalize the campuses from which these graduates emerged. Oberlin's strong consciousness of its ties to Shanxi Province is one particularly tangible example of how reverse influences from China had an effect on American soil. And there is evidence to suggest that Americans with China experience, in concert with those whose missionary experience took them to other countries and cultures, created a wave that gave rise to, or significantly altered, such disciplines as anthropology and linguistics. The inception of area studies programs in the postwar era, along with the study of comparative religion and comparative botany are other direct legacies of missionary experience abroad. Thus even decades after the Christian college era ended in China in the early 1950s, important traces of its impact continue to be visible both in the U.S. and in China.



University of Nanking Students, no date
photo courtesy of Martha Smalley from the China Colleges and Universities Image Database, Yale Divinity Library
Source: <http://research.yale.edu:8084/ydlchina/index.jsp>



Ginling College Faculty in Nanjing, 1927

photo courtesy of Martha Smalley from the China Colleges and Universities Image Database, Yale Divinity Library
Source: <http://research.yale.edu:8084/ydlchina/index.jsp>

ASIANetwork Conference 2002

Lisle, Illinois

Throughout the year we continue to feature keynote addresses and selected papers from the ASIANetwork Conference 2002.

Keynote Address: *Into the Labyrinth: Technology, Modernity and Apocalypse in Japanese Animation.* Susan J. Napier, University of Texas-Austin

Japanese Film in the Classroom. Joseph Laker, Wheeling Jesuit College; Lee Makela, Cleveland State University

Asian Economic Issues. James Gillam, Spelman College; Anne Hornsby; Spelman College

Hiring Asianists for Liberal Arts Colleges. Joan O'Mara, Washington & Lee University; Brian Dott, Whitman College

Keynote Address: *Into the Labyrinth: Technology, Modernity and Apocalypse in Japanese Animation*

Susan J. Napier., University of Texas-Austin



My talk today concerns technology and apocalypse in Japanese animation in relation to modernity in general. Both these subjects are treated in vast and memorable detail in *anime*, (Japanese animation). In the West, animation is often disparaged as a children's medium, but in Japan *anime* covers an enormous range of topics. Partly because of the unique properties of the medium itself, it is particularly well suited to dramatize fantasy and science fiction, genres which often deal with questions related to my topic.

I would like to structure today's talk around two questions. The first is from John Treat's superb book, *Writing Ground Zero*, about the literature of Hiroshima survivors. The question is "How do we convey the un conveyable?" Treat's question is of course in reference to apocalypse, to world-ending events such as Hiroshima where 400,000 people were incinerated in a few seconds: how *do* you convey that—through testimony, through

writing, through pictures, through film? In our own time we have seen numerous attempts to do this in a variety of media, from the writings of the Holocaust survivors to Picasso's *Guernica*.

But Treat's question is equally interesting and important when it comes to technology as well. It's now a truism to point out the overwhelming impact of technology in our lives, not only technology per se, of course, but the speed, the sophistication and variety of technological change which can leave us breathless, almost helpless, unable to process what is going on. But it is a truism that is worth repeating. And, again, it is worth asking — how do we convey these dizzying changes, these formidable impacts on our lives? Part of my talk today, therefore, will be about how Japanese animation conveys the un conveyable. But, I want to first talk a little bit more about how we present the horror of apocalypse or the overwhelmingness of change on a more general level.

When I was asked to give this talk I think it was only a few weeks (maybe even less) after September 11 and of course

I, like everyone else, was immersed in the sea of articles and newscasts about the tragedy. But partly for my own interest, and also partly in preparation for this talk, I began to collect articles about the event that were of a particular type—articles that explore the problem of how we create art after a catastrophe of this magnitude. Indeed, there was a certain amount of hand wringing frustration detectable in the weeks following the event. People (or at least newspaper and magazine writers) seemed to be looking for artists to deal with or treat in some meaningful way the experience of catastrophe, and seemed impatient when the artists didn't leap immediately to the task. This struck me as a little impatient, for it seemed obvious that dealing artistically with what scholars of apocalypse call "world-ending events" takes time, and that often the best and most creative meditations on such an event can come years later. I certainly believe that this is true in Japan in both "high" and "popular" culture, where representations of cataclysm have become increasingly complex and sophisticated the further time has moved since Hiroshima.

There were other approaches to the problem of representation as well. On March 13, 2002 the New York Times reported on a symposium entitled "The Apocalyptic Imagination: Daydreaming in an Era of Nightmares" in which three writers were paired with their very own psychoanalysts, especially selected to analyze their fiction. The symposium revolved around "the question of fantasy after September 11. Can writers still allow themselves to have apocalyptic fantasies or are there new limits?" This seemed to me a rather shallow question. Of course people are going to go on having and creating apocalyptic fantasies and for some very good reasons, two of which came up in the symposium itself. The first was the author Jim Wolf's explanation that he wrote about apocalypse because he had a "fascination with catastrophe, a boyish enthusiasm of destruction." It's "cool," he said.

Perhaps even more insightful was the writer Robert Stone, author of *Damascus Gate*, who said, "What happens to characters happens to them so that it doesn't happen to me. I buy off catastrophe." (both quotations from *The New York Times*, March 13, 2002)

I think these are both comments that are worth taking seriously. Undoubtedly, Wolf's point about a "fascination with catastrophe" is a central reason behind why there are so many representations of catastrophe. Catastrophe, if it is not happening to us, can be "cool", it can be liberating, even sensuous, what Robert Lifton¹ describes as "The orgiastic excitement of the wild forces let loose." We can even perhaps posit an "erotics of destruction" in relation to the representation of catastrophe, and certainly many Japanese animations seem to play into these erotics—there is a kind of sensuous pleasure in watching how animation can convey destruction.

The other comment concerning the "buying off" of catastrophe is equally important. Catastrophe is "cool" at an aesthetic distance but it also fundamentally terrifying—disturbing us at the most basic core of our being, our desire

for security. Not simply by writing about it but also by reading it, viewing it, or experiencing it vicariously, the reader/viewer does not just "buy it off," he or she also *works it through*. By getting on the roller coaster ride that the catastrophic text inevitably embodies, the audience can experience and share the terror, but, most importantly, at the end of the ride they can get off the roller coaster. Clearly, in this argument the representation of catastrophe is a therapeutic event. And again, this is very appropriate when it comes to Japanese animation which in many ways can be seen as working through the trauma of the atomic bomb, even if the threat of the bomb is represented in an ever more complex and displaced form.

Now, I mentioned when I began this talk that there were two questions I wanted to use as a framework. We have discussed the problem of conveying the unconveyable but I'd like to turn now to another problem: If we are able to convey the unconveyable, how do we ensure that we get a response? How do we go beyond mere temporary sensation to force the reader/viewer to actually be moved to think about what is being conveyed?

In reference to this question I found a very interesting essay by Thomas de Zengotita² in the April, 2002 *Harper's* magazine entitled "The Numbing of the American Mind", in which he, too, inevitably references September 11 but this time as a problem of response. He begins with the question, "How often did you hear, how often did you say, 'Since the events of 9/11?'" and continues, "A new idiom has been deposited in the language, approaching the same place of habituality as 'By the way,' or 'on the other hand.' And in the process we got past it all. Six months or so was all it took."

Zengotita is talking about the problem of psychic numbing, of moving on because "what else can we do?" but he also brings up this problem in relation to technology. As he says:

"Here's the basic situation. On the one hand: the Web, satellite cable TV, Palm Pilot, DVD, Ethernet—Virtual Environments everywhere. On the other hand, cloning, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, robotics—Virtual beings everywhere. Someday when people (or whatever they are) look back on our time, all this will appear as a single development called something like "The Information Revolution." This is not science fiction, this is really happening. Right now, in an Atlanta hospital, there is a quadapeligic with his brain directly wired to computer. He can move the cursor with his thoughts. The moving cursor doesn't need explaining—it comes down to digital bytes and neurochemical spikes—but what needs explaining is our equanimity in the face of staggering developments. How can we go about our business when things like this are really happening? How long before we start taking [such developments] in stride? About six months?"

Those of you familiar with *anime* will recognize in

de Zengotita's examples many tropes very common to *anime*, and it is certainly the case that much science fiction *anime* revolves around these very ideas. The bed and the cursor sound a lot like Otomo Katsuhiro's dystopian satire on old age, *Rojin Z*, while cloning, codes, AI, and virtual beings are integral parts of such science fiction films and series as *Ghost in the Shell* and *Serial Experiments Lain*. And in the fantasy space of animation these elements often appear in ways that evoke a response that forces the viewer to actually think, perhaps even beyond six months!

In fact it is my contention that *anime* is not only particularly suited to convey the unconveyable but also, and perhaps surprisingly, it can challenge the problem of psychic numbing. *Anime* texts can and frequently do evoke a response far beyond simply "Wow, cool!" I say "perhaps surprisingly" because *anime* is a medium in which it is very easy to lose oneself in the sensuous pleasure of its sheer fluidity and ability to display an endless variety of transforming images, to "convey the unconveyable" at a most basic level, without the need of complicated or expensive special effects. But one might not expect it to be a medium that could evoke the genuinely complex response which de Zengotita is calling for.

In fact however, *anime* is more than surface images. Although, as with all popular culture phenomena there is much that is low quality, the best of *anime* offers sophisticated and moving narratives, intriguing and often notably three-dimensional characters, and even memorable philosophical visions that do indeed evoke viewer response at a variety of sophisticated levels. Fundamentally, I would like to argue that *anime* deals with catastrophe and technological trauma in much more provocative and stimulating fashion than most Hollywood live action films.

I'd like to turn now to some concrete examples of the treatment of apocalypse and technology in *anime*, (of course they are very much interrelated) but, before I do, I'd like to offer a brief example of an American treatment of the same issues, the film *Armageddon*. This is a film in which the Earth is menaced by a comet and the only people who can save the day are a feisty group of oil riggers (led by Bruce Willis) who are willing to go out to the comet and blow it up. This being a Hollywood film, they of course succeed, but at the cost of the Bruce Willis character's life, as he stays behind to blow up the comet and himself, thereby saving the earth.

In certain ways *Armageddon* is fascinatingly comparable to a 1970's Japanese film and television series known as *Space Battleship Yamato* (*Uchu Senkan Yamato*). In the film *Farewell Yamato* the earth is menaced by a gigantic white comet which conventional weapons are incapable of dealing with. The only hope, it seems, is the *Yamato*, a spaceship that is actually a refitted version of the gigantic battleship *Yamato* that was sunk off the islands of Okinawa in the last days of the Pacific War. Piloting the *Yamato* are a feisty group of young people led by the handsome Susumu Kodai who is aided by two older characters, one of whom is actually the ghost of the *Yamato's* former captain. In the film's

powerful ending the crew realizes that the only hope of exploding the comet is for a suicide mission into its heart. Kodai insists on piloting the *Yamato* alone, with two exceptions— his dead girlfriend, Yuki, whose body he embraces as he puts the ship into attack mode, and the spectral presence of the ghosts of former *Yamato* captains who surround him on the spaceship's bridge as he aims for the heart of the comet. As somber military music plays, the *Yamato* is sucked into the comet's heart. The film ends in utter silence with a single long held shot of a white radiance that fills the screen.

Yamato and *Armageddon* contain some notable similarities. Both are essentially apocalyptic films in which the world is menaced by a comet. Both contain, for their times, quite exciting special effects but with an emphasis on the human dimension, especially father figures. Most importantly, both portray examples of sacrifice.

But if we compare the endings we see how very differently sacrifice is narratively configured. In the American film we have a brief vision of the Bruce Willis character pushing the button and the subsequent explosion of the comet, not dissimilar from *Yamato's* conclusion. But *Armageddon* does not end there. Instead, the last ten minutes of the film are packed with "feel good" emotional high points. The crew returns to earth amid much waving of the American flag (from all corners) of the world while the soundtrack swells with inspiring music. The last scene is a wedding in which the daughter of the Bruce Willis character marries the most handsome member of the crew. The audience is able to leave the theater in a euphoric state, aware that great enterprise requires sacrifice, but certain that the sacrifice has succeeded, and cushioned by an ending that emphasizes renewal and optimism.

In contrast to the celebratory tone of *Armageddon's* finale, the ending of *Farewell Yamato* would seem to most Americans to be a both downbeat and ambiguous. Instead of a wedding we have a young captain and a corpse, and instead of a clear resolution we can only assume/hope that the comet has been destroyed. The silence and the white light of the film's ending refuse to give the viewer the emotional comfort that *Armageddon's* vision of music, a church wedding, and happy smiles provides.

I emphasize these differences between the films, not as a criticism of American culture, but rather as a key to understanding different cultural reactions to catastrophe. In many ways *Armageddon* demonstrates some important strengths in American culture. We are an optimistic country that wants happy endings that accentuate the "positive" rather than the "tragic."

The only problem is that this outlook may make it harder for us to deal well with tragedy. And sometimes tragedy happens. But when it does, American culture seems to prefer to move on and this "moving on" may be what de Zengotita refers to as psychic numbness. In contrast, the Japanese visions do not allow us to move on nearly so easily. They insist in rubbing our noses in pain and suffering, emphasizing both the sadness and the necessity of sacrifice

even, or perhaps especially, when we don't know whether there will be a happy ending.

I'd like to give you some other examples of *anime* dealing with catastrophe and with technology (often combined) especially in relation to their often ambiguous endings. One of the important treatments of technology and apocalypse is the 1988 film *Akira*, perhaps the most famous apocalyptic film ever to come out of Japan. In this dark, but also viscerally exciting work, it is humans who usher in technological catastrophe. In this case, a group of scientists whose experiments on psychic children first bring about World War Three, and then create a telekenetic mutant, (a teenage outsider named Tetsuo) whose rampages threaten to create a new universe. For much of the film, *Akira* presents a sustained vision of the erotics of destruction as Tetsuo rampages through "Neo Tokyo," destroying everything around him while he himself transmogrifies into a grotesque gigantic infant. For many viewers (especially young males, perhaps), Tetsuo's symphony of destruction is undoubtedly "cool," wrought with memorably grotesque images of demolition, dissolution, and a kind of exultant despair.

Tetsuo is ultimately stopped before he totally destroys the city and, potentially, the earth, but, as with *Yamato*, the ending inspires more questions than answers. It may be that Tetsuo is simply regrouping his powers for something infinitely greater—the construction of a new universe. The film ends with a shot of a single massive eye while a voice-over intones "I am Tetsuo." Perhaps this is a sign of rebirth, but, given Tetsuo's problematic personality, most viewers are more likely to be disturbed than gratified by this.

My next example is *Ghost in the Shell*, (*Kokaku kidota*) a film about a female cyborg who longs for a "ghost," essentially a soul. Less explicitly apocalyptic than *Yamato* or *Akira*, the film is more of a metaphysical exploration of world-ending possibilities. It is also a brilliant vision of the promise and the threat of technology, as the cyborg's quest involves issues that explicitly foreground the dynamic between the spiritual and the scientific, and the animate and the inanimate. Far more lyrical and ruminative than either of the other films, the narrative dwells on the loneliness of the cyborg, metonymically suggesting, through a visually arresting sequence in which she journeys on a boat down a crowded waterway, that her loneliness is not that of the machine but of post-industrial humanity itself.

As with the other two films, however, *Ghost* ends ambiguously as the cyborg apparently joins with a bodiless entity known as "The Puppet Master," a move which may liberate her, and perhaps other sentient beings, from overreliance on either the body or technology. In the final scene, the viewer sees her standing, seemingly alone but perhaps not, asking, "Where do I go from here?" Typically, the film provides no answers, only possibilities.

Ghost may be profitably compared with such American cyborg films as the extremely popular *Terminator* series. In the American films, however, the menace/promise of the machine, while initially prominently highlighted, is

ultimately seen as squarely under control of the humans. Visualize this in the final section of *Terminator 2 Judgement Day* in which a young boy teaches the menacing cyborg, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, to become a kinder, gentler form of terminator.

A work that combines *Ghost's* philosophical reflectiveness with *Akira's* visceral display of destruction is the extraordinary 1997 television series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*Shinseiki Evangelion*). In this series a group of young people are forced to synchronize with enormous robots known as Evangelions to fight a series of enigmatic invaders known as Angels. As the explicitly Christian nomenclature suggests, *Evangelion* is a work that deals with a broad variety of religious and metaphysical questions. At the same time, it also brings in existentialism and psychoanalysis to probe the complex and problematic personalities of its characters. It is impossible to summarize such a rich and complex work but for the purposes of this talk, I will note that, again, the series raises far more questions than it answers. These questions revolve largely around the theme of self and Other but, in *Evangelion's* remarkable animated universe in which science fiction and the fantastic co-mingle, the Other is not only other people but also the Evangelions (the machine) and the Angels (the metaphysical Other).

Evangelion in many ways takes up themes from both *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*—inter-generational conflict, psychic wounding, menaces from above, cloning, transubstantiation—but in a way that is only very minimally "cool." In fact, in many ways the series plays with some of the more clichéd technological and apocalyptic tropes to present an utterly unique vision of existential anguish which stays with the viewer well beyond the end of the series. This is not so much because of the power of the special effects but by the extraordinary three-dimensionality of characters who all are lost and broken individuals. If we can say that *Akira* is Tech Noir, both excoriating and celebrating the fascination with world-destroying technology, *Evangelion* is simply Tech Darkness, without a "cool" noir sensibility, in which even the characters entrusted with the machines see technology as entrapping, destructive and terrifying.

By now we have seen a number of rather dark examples of *anime* dealing with apocalypse and technology, and it is perhaps worthwhile to ask if there is any room for a "happy ending" in these dark visions? I would like to end with an example of a film which, although not totally comforting in that it still refuses the American style "happy ending" form of closure, does offer a measure of spiritual, emotional, and aesthetic solace. This is the film *1997 Princess Mononoke* (*Mononokehime*) directed by perhaps the greatest of Japanese animation directors, Miyazaki Hayao. This film differs from those previously mentioned in a number of significant ways. First, it is set in medieval Japan, and its *mise en scene*—while including a proto-industrial town where guns are produced—also includes a lushly beautiful forest in which dwell the *kami* or ancient gods. The film's narrative tension revolves around a war between the human

citizens of the town and the supernatural denizens of the forest. In the penultimate scene it appears that the humans and, by implication, the darker side of technology have won out. The town's leader has cut off the head of the forest's reigning deity, and the forest itself begins to destruct before the viewers' eyes in a memorable vision of ecological apocalypse. But Miyazaki goes beyond the erotics of destruction to give us hope. A young boy and girl, the "heroes" of the film, unite to bring back the head of the deity and the forest is renewed. Even in this film, however, a darker cultural sensibility exists as one child, the "princess" of the title who is united with the creatures of the forest, insists that she can never forgive the humans for their crimes against the forest and its inhabitants. The boy insists, however, that the forest will survive, as will the town. The ending does not give us a wedding between the two, despite their obvious love for each other. Instead, the film concludes with the two agreeing to "visit" each other.

While *Princess Mononoke* was the highest grossing film of its year in Japan, in its American release it did not do very well. Many viewers found it too "confusing," since they were unable to decide who were the "good" and who were the "bad," and were disturbed by the film's ambiguous conclusion. But for viewers who are willing to tolerate a vision of a complex world in which good and evil may not be obviously divided and in which technological development brings both tragedy and progress, the film offers the chance to work through these issues at a more complex level than many live action films provide. Japanese animation may at times appear dark and depressing, offering us no escape from the apocalyptic labyrinth of modern technology, but, at its best, it gives us memorable maps to explore that labyrinth and perhaps to understand its hidden passages.

¹Robert Lifton, "The Image of the End of the World: A Psychohistorical View," in *Apocalypse: End or Rebirth*, eds. Friedland, Holton, Marx, and Skolnikoff. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985. p. 165.

²Thomas de Zenotita, "The Numbing of the American Mind: Culture as Anesthetic," *Harpers*, vol. 304, No. 1823, April, 2002.

**Eliot Deutsch and Carol Gluck will be
our Keynoters at the 11th Annual
Asianetwork Conference in
Greenville, SC
April 11-13, 2003**



Photo from "Japanese Film in the Classroom" Panel

Japanese Film in the Classroom

Panel: Mark MacWilliams, Chair, Saint Lawrence University; Joseph Laker, Wheeling Jesuit College; Lee Makela, Cleveland State University

Using Feature Films in the Classroom Creatively: Sandakan No. 8 and Modern Japanese History

Joseph Laker, Wheeling Jesuit College

Teaching history through the use of feature films has become more and more popular during the past twenty-five years. Sessions devoted to film history and the interpretation of film have become more numerous at historical conferences. Historical journals have begun to offer regular reviews of both feature and documentary film, and the journal *History Today* has begun to run periodic discussions of film in its "Film in Context" series. Mark Carnes suggests that he had no difficulty getting sixty professors of history to agree to write essays for his collection *Past Imperfect*, which was published in 1995. He notes that most of the historians he spoke with love historical films, even though they are highly critical of the lack of historical accuracy.¹

The producer/director John Sayles argues that moviegoers, film producers and directors love historical films as well. He states:

There is a certain power that comes from history. I mean, I've heard producers say many, many times that the only way a movie is going to work is if the ad says "based on a true story." Audiences appreciate the fact that something really happened. Whether it did or didn't, they're thinking it did or knowing that it did. That gives the story a certain

legitimacy in the audience's mind, and sometimes in the filmmaker's mind. Whereas if you make something up out of whole cloth, it's not the same.²

Mark Carnes claims that "most of us crave to learn from real people who have endured what we fear and done what we dream, whose experiences offer guidance as we seek to understand our place upon this planet."³

Yet, film is a dangerous medium. Feature historical films are particularly seductive and frequently help to create and promote racial, ethnic, or gender stereotypes or provide false interpretations of an historical event. Leon Litwack argues concerning D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of A Nation* that "few if any films in the history of the cinema had such tragic and far reaching consequences. . . .More than any historian or textbook. . . *The Birth of A Nation* molded and reinforced racial stereotypes."⁴ Oliver Stone's film *JFK* has rightly been harshly criticized for its numerous historical errors.⁵ Since many of our students learn much of what they know of history from movies, we historians have an obligation to help them become critical viewers of film.

According to John Sayles, the way movies are produced and made and the inherent nature of film lead to inevitable distortions of what really happened. One such limitation is that film omits many points of view and tends to oversimplify the complexity of historical events. He argues that:

In a two-hour movie, though it's very, very difficult for an audience to accept or follow more than three points of view (omniscient, protagonist, and antagonist). . . .With these three viewpoints you do a lot, but for an audience that's used to making an emotional connection with a film, it's very, very alienating to have too many points of view and that fact militates against complexity.⁶

Carnes acknowledges the difficulty and claims that "when historians call for 'historical accuracy,' what they want more than precision in details is an acknowledgement of the ambiguity and complexity of the past."⁷ Sayles admits that directors often make up or change the facts to be truer to the spirit of the past event or to increase the entertainment value of the film rather than to stick to the historical record. Feature films rarely suggest that there might be more than one reasonable version of the events portrayed in the film.⁸ Richard Marius warns that movies have conditioned us to "cast our political and social world in categories of saints and devils."⁹

My colleagues and I have used feature films in most of our courses, and have created a "History Through Film" course. In this course, we have used six or seven full-length feature films. However, during the past two years none of us have taught it. All of us feel that in courses like this, the use of so many films appropriates too much of the course content, lectures, readings, and assignments. As a consequence, the "History Through Film" course has fallen into disfavor and now most of us use, at most, two feature films in a semester

course.

One of my favorite Japanese films is *Sandakan No. 8*, a film which I have used several times in my course: "History of Japan Since 1800." It is this film that I would like to discuss. I use this film because it introduces students to some of the costs of Japan's modernization and expansion in the twentieth century and has great chronological sweep. It also raises a number of thought provoking, highly discussible topics, such as the causes and consequences of poverty, the human costs of prostitution, the unforgiving nature of polite society, and the ethical behavior of journalists and historians who lie and betray others for a story. The film fits neatly into my course and thus supplements rather than determines the course content.

Here, let me briefly discuss how I structure the course. It is broken up into three sections: Tokugawa Japan up to the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the industrialization and Westernization of Japan 1868 to 1945, and Japan today. I don't use a standard textbook, but rely upon my lectures to provide students with the chronological outline of modern Japanese history. I want my students to read about the lives of as many Japanese as possible. This semester I have assigned the following four books, with some supplementary readings for the first and third section of the course: Haru Reischauer's *Silk And Samurai* which examines the upper-class in modern Japan, *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan*, edited by Anne Walthall, which includes twelve biographies of mainly middle-class men and women, Yukio Mishima's novel, *Runaway Horses*, which examines a strain of Japanese xenophobia produced by Westernization and modernization; and finally Norma Field's *In the Realm of the Dying Emperor*, which focuses on the careers and contributions of three post-1945 Japanese middle-class individuals. In the past I have used Mikiso Hane's *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts*, but since it is currently out-of-print, I now use Walthall's book. I much prefer Hane's book for a variety of reasons, but mostly because he concentrates on lower-class perspectives and issues and so represents a sharper contrast with Reischauer's volume than the Walthall book does. Hane covers such groups as miners, factory girls, tenant farmers, Koreans, *burakumin*, and prostitutes. Indeed, in his chapter on prostitution, Hane discussed the work of Yamazaki Tomoko's research on the prostitute Osaki, whose life story is the subject of the film *Sandakan No. 8*.

The film begins with a young historian and journalist named Mitani (really Yamazaki) who is visiting the Amakusa islands in southern Japan looking for *karayuki-san*, women who went off to the south seas and worked as prostitutes before World War II. She strikes up a conversation with an old woman in a diner (Osaki) whom she correctly suspects was a *karayuki-san* and decides to learn her story. The first thirty minutes of the film focuses on the growing friendship of the two women; Mitani does not reveal who she is or what she wants. She comes to stay in the squalid home of Osaki and poses, at Osaki's suggestion, as the old woman's daughter-in-law who has come down from Kyoto for a visit. After a lecherous local invades Osaki's home and

unsuccessfully tries to rape Mitani, Osaki begins to reveal her story.

The scene then shifts to Japan at the end of the Meiji era. Osaki and her brother have lost their father and their mother has remarried, but there is no place for them in the new household. Poverty forces the brother to leave for the coal mines and Osaki to sell her services (she thinks as a maid), at the age of ten, to a local boss and procurer named Torazo, who owns Brothel No. 3 in Sandakan on the island of Borneo. For about five years Osaki and several of her friends from home serve as maids in the brothel before they are forced to take customers. Some of the causes, horrors, and human costs of prostitution are exposed in the film.¹⁰

The scene shifts back and forth between Mitani getting and proving Osaki's story (short segments) and the story itself which features Osaki's hard work to earn money to pay off her debts to her pimp, send money to her brother (he builds a nice house), and her one chance to find true love with a young Japanese man who works on a rubber plantation. He arrives to buy out her contract and marry her just after she has serviced more than thirty Japanese sailors. She is so traumatized by the experience she cannot respond and he leaves. Her pimp dies, and she is rescued from an even worse boss by a Madame Okuni, who runs Brothel No. 8. Okuni is kind and protective of her girls. After Okuni's death, Osaki returns to Japan only to find her ungrateful brother and his wife ashamed of her past and eager for her to move on. She throws away her savings at a wild party and heads off to Manchuria. In Manchuria she marries, has a son, and they all return to Japan at the end of World War II. Her husband soon dies, and when the son decides to marry, he presses her to return to Amakusa so his bride's family will not learn of her sordid past. He sends her a measly 4,000 yen a month so she can eke out a living in her filthy broken-down home filled with cats and vermin.

Eventually Mitani's true identity and purpose are exposed. Mitani helps clean and repair Osaki's home and the two women part in a tearful scene. Mitani proves the accuracy of Osaki's tale by finding Madame Okuni's grave in the jungles near Sandakan, and she pointedly notes that the graves are so positioned that the back of the tombstones face Japan; Kikuo rejects Japan just as Japanese society has rejected and are ashamed of the *Karayuki-san*.

The film is well-directed and nicely paced by Kumai Kei and the acting by the main characters is well done. When I first saw the film, I was quite taken with it, and I completely and uncritically empathized and sympathized with Osaki and the other young women who were forced into prostitution and mistreated by the bosses, relatives, and society itself. When it comes to really good movies, I, like many of my students, often, at least initially, set aside my critical faculties. My students frequently complain that I make watching film less enjoyable by making them critically analyze what they see on the screen.

What I expect in a film to be used in class is a well-directed, well-acted film with a great story and believable characters. It must be rooted in history and raise significant

political, social, and ethical issues. In addition, I want a film where the director falsifies the historical record in some significant ways that can be discovered, so that students can learn to be critical of the historical movies they watch. *Sandakan No. 8* clearly fits my requirements.

Three parts of the film falsify the historical record: the attempted rape of the modern historian/journalist Mitani—which leads Osaki to tell her story, the sense of timing used in the film which sets up causal relationships that in fact do not exist as depicted, and the importance attached to the location and position of Okuni's grave in Sandakan. The attempted rape of Mitani by a lecherous local is not mentioned in Yamazaki's book *Sandakan Brothel No. 8*, and so we can only conclude that it did not really happen. It is fiction, but nonetheless a very useful device to create a bond between the characters Mitani and Osaki and produce the breakthrough that allows Osaki to begin to tell her story.¹¹

One of the inevitable consequences of rendering decades of a person's life story into a two hour movie is to collapse events in ways that suggest causal relationships when no such connection existed. This happens repeatedly in *Sandakan No. 8*. To give just a few examples: the film shows the death of Torazo occurring at the time the Japanese fleet visited Sandakan, and Osaki ends up so numbed servicing sailors that her Japanese lover abandons her, and she is then to be sold to another brothel keeper, but she is saved by Okuni. In fact months separated all four of these events and no real causal relationship between them can be established. The film suggests that Osaki is still working at Okuni's brothel when Okuni dies. Such was not the case. By this time she had become the mistress of an English businessman, Mr. Home, who treated Osaki quite generously and made few demands upon her. She remained, however, close to Okuni.¹²

In the film, much is made of the fact that Okuni's grave is located in Sandakan and that the graves were positioned in such a way as to show that Okuni rejected Japan as it rejected the *karayuki-san*. Shortly before she dies Okuni indicates that she never wants to return to Japan and encourages "her girls" to adopt the same attitude. In chapter 9, "Okuni's birthplace," Yamazaki relates that not only was there a gravesite for Okuni in Sandakan, but also one in her hometown. In addition her daughter and granddaughter returned to live in Okuni's hometown. Rejection was less total and more complicated than the film indicates.¹³

To help my students get the most out of the film *Sandakan No. 8*, I distribute a diagram of the chief characters of the film and their relationship to Osaki before the students see the film. After the students see the film they must give me ten questions they would like to ask the characters and the director (four directed to Osaki, three to Mitani, and three to the director). I ask them to read Osaki's story, which is found in Yamazaki Tomoko's book *Sandakan Brothel No. 8*, pp. 45-107. Then, students are to write a short paper of four to five pages discussing two ways in which the text differs from the film. Following submission of the papers, I devote one class period to discussing the film. Finally, students will have to answer a short question dealing with prostitution in

modern Japan on the final exam.

Sandakan No. 8 is a film that I will continue to use. It raises controversial societal and ethical issues, especially the issue of prostitution, which is a hot topic right now, given the controversy and discussion of the role of the Japanese and American governments in providing “comfort women” to their troops.

¹Mark C. Carnes, “Hollywood History,” *American Heritage*, September 1995, p. 76.

²“A Conversation Between Eric Foner and John Sayles,” *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, edited by Mark Carnes, Henry Holt, 1995, p. 17.

³Carnes, “Hollywood,” p. 83.

⁴Leon F. Litwack, “The Birth of a Nation,” *Past Imperfect*, p. 141.

⁵Robert Brent Toplin, *History By Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the American Past*, Univ. Of Illinois Press, 1996, see chapter 3 - “JFK—Fact, Fiction, and Supposition,” 45-78.

⁶“A Conversation”, p. 13.

⁷Carnes, “Hollywood,” p. 83.

⁸“A Conversation,” pp. 15-16.

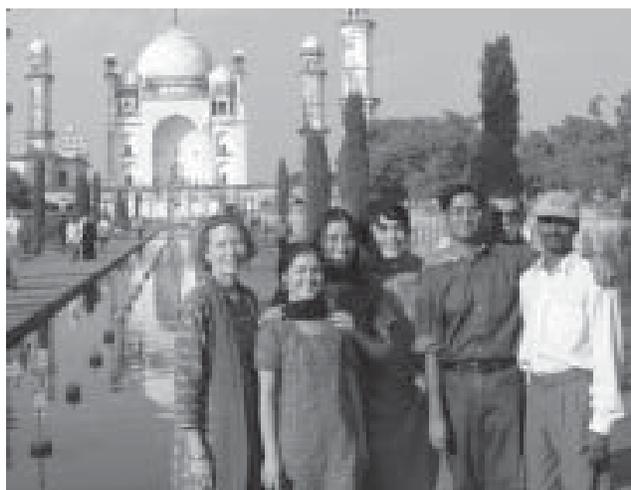
⁹Carnes, “Hollywood,” p. 83.

¹⁰Yamazaki Tomoko, *Sandakan Brothel No. 8: an Episode in the History of Lower-class Japanese Women*, translated by Karen Colligan-Taylor, M. E. Sharpe, 1999, pp. 45-66 and the film *Sandakan No. 8*.

¹¹Yamazaki, 18-45.

¹²Yamazaki, 85-96.

¹³Yamazaki, 146-61.



Cathy Benton and students in India: part of the ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty program

Teaching the Postmodern Using Examples from Japanese Film and Popular Culture

Lee A. Makela, Cleveland State University

PREFACE

My first encounter with the “postmodern” as a subject of intellectual inquiry came with my reading of Miyoshi Masao and H.D. Harootunian’s *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), an edited collection of articles probing the arrival and influence of this concept in Japan. This initial interaction was prompted by the need to keep abreast of the latest trends in Japanese life and culture for a course I was teaching on contemporary Japan in historical perspective; I came away from the book with enough of an abstract understanding of the notions involved to talk about the subject within the context of my course if asked by students to deal with the principles involved but, I must confess, little more in the way of interest or concern.

Then in 1996, I taught a version of that same course at the Japan Center for Michigan Universities in Hikone (on the shores of Lake Biwa outside Kyoto) while on sabbatical leave. Soo-Kyung Chang, one of my students from Korea, brought me a video by the Japanese film director Shunji Iwai which she insisted I view as an example of the abstract concept we had touched on briefly in class the previous day. I was completely captivated by the film and thereupon began a quest for not only other works by the same director but other examples of “postmodernism” within the general arena of contemporary Japanese popular culture.

Soon enough I was awash in the recommended works by film makers, authors, musicians and various other artists brought to my attention by well-meaning friends and students. And I was hooked! In early 1997 I presented a paper on Shunji Iwai at a conference on Japanese Popular Culture held at the University of British Columbia.¹

The next issue I had to face was how best to integrate this newly-fascinating subject matter (for me, at least) more fully and completely into my undergraduate courses. I began to search for selected examples among my assembled resources that could be effectively used to introduce, define and illustrate the facets of the postmodern phenomenon within the context of contemporary Japanese popular culture. The resulting “learning package” became an integral part of two different courses: one, my ongoing exploration of contemporary Japanese culture in historical perspective; the second, a contribution to a team-taught course on “Power and Authority in Nonwestern Societies.”

In the classroom I chose to approach the subject matter from two distinct perspectives. The first built on already-developed concepts associated with the interplay between “tradition” and “modernization,” illustrating “the postmodern” as an attempt to break away from the paradigm linking the traditional to the contemporary through the process of “growth and change within a cultural tradition” (my basic definition of the modernization process). My

second point of view emphasized the notion that, however “postmodern” an aspect of contemporary Japanese culture might seem, it nonetheless was, to some extent, still imbued with characteristics and attributes associated with Japanese cultural traditions, however much the author/artist/musician and his/her audience thought those constraints had been overcome and abandoned.

What follows represents an attempt to extend these insights beyond my own classroom into the general arena of “Japanese Studies,” “East Asian Studies,” “Asian Studies” or “World History” at both the university and advanced high school level. Here’s hoping teachers everywhere might find something of value here worth transferring into the undergraduate curriculum in general or into the high school classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging from the Kitayama station at the northern terminus of the subway system in Kyoto, one is plunged into a surreal world of gleaming automobiles, glitzy shops and avant-garde architecture. The atmosphere is more redolent of Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles than of anything likely to be expected in what many consider the most quintessentially traditional of Japanese cities.

Like the new Kyoto train station near the other end of the subway system, the Kitayama streetscape displays great expanses of gray concrete, glass and polished marble done up in exposed steel beams and brushed aluminum. Gradually the visitor begins to realize that no Japanese language signage is to be found anywhere along the street—even “New Tenant Wanted” is posted in English. Indeed the sought-after effect seems purposefully designed to capture something of “the exotic West” by denying the surrounding Japanese cultural and natural landscape altogether. Young, expensively-dressed Japanese women flock to Kitayama to shop at the local DKNY or to sip cappuccino at the Cordon Bleu Café, another characteristic which in turn strongly suggests the heady appeal undergirding this seemingly “postmodern” outpost in the heart of traditional Japan.

To label the Kitayama area of Kyoto “postmodern” is not an accidental assessment. The term “postmodern,” and the associated concept of “postmodernism,” came into widespread use in a number of different descriptive and analytical contexts beginning in Japan during the early 1980s; it should, therefore, come as no surprise that by now the “postmodern” is amply represented in late twentieth century Japanese popular culture.

“POSTMODERN” DEFINED

Several decades ago, the concepts of “postmodern” and “postmodernism” were initially applied to examples of architecture and art in the West which seemed to abandon the rules of convention; “postmodern” examples in both fields appeared to strike out on a course purposefully defying both tradition and historical context. Since then both “postmodern” and “postmodernism” have received particularly widespread attention in the world of academe, affecting the social

sciences and the humanities no less so than the universe of those scientists grappling with the “information revolution.”

Sherry Turkle, professor of sociology of science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to cite only a single example, claims that in this new, revolutionary information age:

...no unitary truth resides anywhere. There is only local knowledge, contingent and provisional. ... The surface is what matters, to be explored by navigation. Postmodernism celebrates this time, this place; and it celebrates adaptability, contingency, diversity, flexibility, sophistication and relationships—with the self and with the community fostering “the precedence of surface over depth, of simulation over the real, of play over seriousness”...nothing is true in or of itself; truth is only an artifact of social negotiation.²

The notion of the “postmodern,” a decidedly “Western” construct, stood assumptions about the relationship between “tradition” and the process of “modernization” on their heads. To the “postmodernist” there is no meaningful tradition, no relevant history; history and tradition bind one too closely to an expected trajectory and to the centralizing power defining that particular pathway to the future. What replaces these restrictive culturally-defined imperatives is a consumption-oriented “transnational community of taste,”³ a multi-centered, decentralized, egalitarian multiplicity of “world views.” Defined as “difference without difference,” the postmodern gives rise to that which is fragmented, fluid, differentiated, indeterminate—and thereby enabling.

The postmodern seeks, not progress, but the identification of core/periphery relationships. As such it represents the essentially timeless, rootless, free-floating present understood and appreciated without reference to a past from which one may be estranged or of which one is essentially ignorant.⁴

In fact, to secure or maintain an existing core/periphery relationship, history might well be reconstructed or reinvented to establish a needed direction, the imagined past making possible the imagined future from the vantage point of the “empty” and essentially static present. The present happiness promised by the past thus becomes, to the “postmodernist,” “the retroactive consequence of nostalgia.”⁵

The “postmodernist” seeks to create for oneself a small, safe space in an otherwise deficient, destabilized, fragile present, a safe space that meets one’s own immediate interests on a contingency, provisional basis. The role one arbitrarily assumes in such a world recognizes the incongruity of daily life rather than innate realities defined by tradition, cultural expectation and history.⁶ The core determinants, therefore, are also themselves circumstantial and temporary. It becomes the responsibility of each individual to transform “information” into “knowledge” by placing the data derived from the various sources consulted into a meaningful contextual whole depending on the defined needs of the

moment. The context provided by a value system, a given set of assumptions and beliefs, however, is provided by the auditor, the viewer, the listener; it is not inherent in the materials themselves.

Since becoming an arena of scholarly analysis, the postmodern appears to have taken hold with particular tenacity in Japan and in the study of contemporary Japanese life. At least three edited volumes and a host of scholarly articles have appeared in English over the past decade or so applying the term to the study of a vast array of disparate figures, including not only those figures we will examine this afternoon but also, for example, the “pop” writer Yoshimoto Banana.⁷

GETTING STARTED — MOVING INTO THE POSTMODERN: “ON YOUR MARK,” A MUSIC VIDEO BY MIYAZAKI HAYAO

“On Your Mark,” animated for Chage and Aska, represents Miyazaki Hayao at his most postmodern, an excellent example of the postmodern influence at work in *anime*, and a great place to begin our exploration of the place of the postmodern in Japanese popular culture.

Miyazaki Hayao, Japan’s foremost *anime* icon, was born in 1941 in Tokyo and graduated from Gakushuin University (Japan’s well-known Peers’ School) with a degree in Economics. He began his career as an animator at Toei Doga (Toei Animation Studio) in 1963. Among the feature films in his highly-regarded oeuvre are *Nausicaa* (1984), *Laputa* (1986), *Totoro* (1988), *Mononoke-Hime* (1997), and *Sen To Chihiro No Kamikakushi* (2001). Both of the last two films topped the list of highest grossing films in Japanese movie history at the time of their initial release. In fact, more than 23,140,000 people have seen the latter as of March 25, 2002! Another indication of his icon-like pop cultural status: the Studio Ghibli Museum featuring Miyazaki *anime* has become a major Tokyo area tourist attraction since its debut in October 2001.

RECOGNIZING THE POSTMODERN

Using “On Your Mark,” the music video *anime* by Miyazaki Hayao, as an example of the postmodern construct at work, let’s take the aspects of the above definition and apply them to see if the required elements are present.

•Unexpected, jarring juxtapositions of featured elements

Just as in the Academy-Award-nominated film *Moulin Rouge*, wherein twenties-style music, Beatles tunes, and Madonna hits are used to tell a story set in late nineteenth century Paris, so “On Your Mark” uses the “occasion” of a music video to play out a totally-disjointed narrative featuring Chage and Aska (the two singers performing the music) but otherwise unconnected to the music in any significant way.

•Movement beyond cultural borders, out of the arena of contextual expectations

While the futuristic urban setting of much of the video meets multiple, recognizable “cultural expectations” about the ideal city of tomorrow, the action is presented as taking place anywhere—and nowhere. The rural scenes, furthermore, feature unidentified monoliths hulking in the background—what are they all about? Certainly nothing with which we might be innately familiar in cultural terms.

•Abandonment of “the rules”/established norms of adopted format

“On Your Mark” is neither a conventional *anime* nor a representation of the usual formula encountered in an average music video but rather an unexpected hybrid in terms of both form and content.

•Ambiguous narrative, open to a multiplicity of interpretations

What are we to make of the disjointed narrative structure at the heart of the video? Seen as a backdrop to the opening of a rock concert, few in the audience necessarily would have cared, paying more attention instead to the performers they had come to see. But even a more focused audience would be hard-pressed to come up with a definitive interpretation of the storyline.

•Expected audience consciousness of media form; awareness of simulated “reality”

The listener hears the music; the visually-oriented views the narrative being played out on the screen. One is, therefore, consciously aware of one or the other in the need to “reject” the less important media format. Some have seen the disjointed narrative itself as a conscious attempt on Miyazaki’s part to make his audience aware of the creative process involved in coming to grips with a useable narrative to be visually presented in *anime* form.

•A lighthearted, fun, playful and sophisticated consumer product

However “serious” Miyazaki’s intent to play out for his audience the creative process, the medium chosen, a rock video, could hardly be more geared towards entertainment—and yet a sophisticated and aware viewer just might catch on immediately to the animator’s intention and appreciate the insights provided.

•Referent loaded linkages, obvious and otherwise

The radioactive symbol emblazoned everywhere, the eerily suited guards in white protective clothing, the military video game violence, the youthful victim’s

feathered angel wings, all alert us to familiar narrative themes invoking the age old confrontation between “good” and “evil” with a minimum of needed explication.

• *Self referential content*

Miyazaki’s *anime* style is unmistakable as are the environmentally-friendly, politically-liberal themes he seeks to explore—this may be a commissioned undertaking for a pair of pop idols but it’s unmistakably a Miyazaki production.

• *Narrative focused on surface detail and movement from peripheral to core*

Cleverly we begin with familiar video game mayhem and an immediately understandable narrative line; only then do we veer off into the incongruities and blind alleys, the disjointed results, of Miyazaki’s creative processes at work.

Applying these criteria to works suspected of harboring postmodern sensibilities, then, ought to turn up enough evidence to confirm or undercut one’s suspicions and thereby enable one to judge the work appropriately rather than simply turning away, admitting to discomfort and disorientation but unwilling to judge the merits of the work at hand.

REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF THE POSTMODERN PERSONALITY

Several well-known contemporary Japanese musicians, film directors, authors and animators enrich their popular cultural contributions with their postmodern sensibilities. Below are a few representative figures worth taking into account.

SAKAMOTO RYUICHI

The musician/actor/composer Sakamoto Ryuichi, born on January 17, 1952, in Nakano, Tokyo, graduated from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1976. He is credited with inventing technopop in the late ’70s while working with the Yellow Magic Orchestra. One of his first international successes came when he acted in and composed the soundtrack for *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (1983). In addition to his several scores for television, fashion shows and video games, he won an Academy Award for *The Last Emperor* movie score in 1987, was awarded a Golden Globe Award for Best Original Score for *The Sheltering Sky* (1991) and composed and conducted a 30-minute piece, “El Mar Mediterrani,” for the opening ceremonies of the Barcelona Olympic Games (1992).

In 1999, commissioned by Asahi newspaper on the occasion of the newspaper’s seventy-fifth anniversary, he wrote the opera *Life*, subsequently released on CD in four different versions: one recorded while being composed; a second, live in the studio; the third and fourth while on stage

in Osaka and Tokyo. All four rose to become number one hits in Japan!

Most recently Sakamoto composed the film score for Nagisa Oshima’s *Gohatto* (1999) and has issued *Anger/Grief*, a remix companion to *Discord*, his modern classical endeavor with multi-media features for CD-ROM from 1997. His two latest albums from Warner Japan, released within the last few months, are entitled *Comica* and *Elephantism*.

Sakamoto Ryuichi epitomizes the multiplicity of talents frequently found within the postmodern artistic community, both in Japan and elsewhere. He plays, composes, acts, produces, and directs. Today Sakamoto lives in New York City where he has actively collaborated with John Cage, Madonna, Cyndi Lauper and Iggy Pop. He works with other musicians and film makers as well in Japan, Brazil, France, Great Britain and Korea.

Sakamoto’s popularity and musical influences are multicultural and multidimensional. His CDs are readily available in the United States, for instance, and his European tours regularly sell out. His appeal clearly crosses national and linguistic boundaries. His musical range extends across the spectrum, too, ranging from folk music collages through a modernist classical idiom into the realm of hip-hop and jazz piano.

His music strikes familiar notes but veers off in unexpected directions; his career moves take him along unfamiliar and unconventional routes. His work defies easy categorization in terms of time and culture. He is, then, without doubt, a prime example of the postmodern sensibility at work, an artist with a great deal to say to his world-wide audience of admirers and fans.

IWAI SHUNJI

Born in 1963 in Sendai and educated at the Yokohama National University, Iwai Shunji began his career producing videoclips for cable television. He directed his first television drama (*Mishiranu wagako* [My Child, Who is a Stranger to Me?]) in 1991 and subsequently has filmed a dozen or more dramas, including the highly-praised *Swallowtail* (1996). In 1994 he received the “Best Young Director Of The Year” award from the Directors’ Guild of Japan for his film *if/Moshimo uchiagehanabi shitakara miruka? Yokokara miruka?* (If / Sky Rockets, How Do You Watch Them? From the Bottom or the Side?). He was given a Minister of Education Award for New Artists in the field of film in 1996.

His feature-length films, *Love Letter* (1995) and *Picnic* (1996), were well received in international film festivals in Montreal, Milan, Toronto, Cleveland and Berlin (where *Love Letter* was awarded the Berliner Zeitung Reader’s Jury prize). *Love Letter* also has been optioned by Fine Line Features for release in the United States with an English-language adaptation being planned (to star Meg Ryan).⁸

Most recently—in addition to new short film work—he has written and produced a film, *All About Lily Chou-Chou*, shot on digital video and based on an interactive

Internet novel by the director published on April 1, 2000. The character of Lily Chou-Chou is loosely based on Hong Kong pop star Faye Wong.

Iwai Shunji's Lily Chou-Chou offers eternal peace; she's ethereal, the rebirth of death (indeed, she was born the moment Mark David Chapman shot and killed John Lennon). She's all-powerful, a voice for a pop-cyber culture that feeds on her Bjorkness. In *All About Lily Chou-Chou*, fans of the fictional singer use her "amniotic" music to detach themselves from the violence that consumes their Japanese culture.⁹

Here again, in looking at this popular young filmmaker's work, I would claim that any assessment of Iwai Shunji's cinematic works and of his popularity among young Japanese filmgoers is rooted in his appeal to "postmodern" sensibilities commonly found in numerous arenas of contemporary Japanese popular culture. Moreover, that "postmodern" appeal is in turn dependent upon an assumption on the part of the film maker that his audience is willing to make the investment needed to assure effective communication and a realization on the part of his audience that Iwai's films represent an enduring present to which the viewer can return again and again, even in the midst of a constantly changing and unsettled world, to search out new meanings, insights and implications comforting in their validation of their own contemporary cultural values. These qualities, in turn, I believe amply illustrate the appeal of the "postmodern" in the world of contemporary Japanese popular culture.

If we apply "postmodern" criteria to the film world of Iwai Shunji, we find that his appeal among younger Japanese audiences is in large measure reflective of his ability to construct a cinematic universe that permits the "postmodern" process to move forward. Iwai Shunji films are very "presentist" in their presentation of time and place, seldom rooted in a specific locale or historical/seasonal time frame, they appear to fly in the face of the "high context" demands usually made of those engaged by Japanese film. Unlike the works of Itami Juzo, for example, which use a single well-conceived scene to establish a specific place, time frame and a host of other specificities, Iwai places his characters in a featureless environment that could be anywhere or anytime. The plots usually reflect an attempted response to a given stimulus, an adaptation to a change in circumstance reflective of the seemingly random nature of existence.

MURAKAMI HARUKI

Born in Kobe in 1949, Murakami Haruki managed a jazz bar in Tokyo from 1974 to 1981. His novel, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, was awarded the Noma Award for New Writers in 1982. His *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* won the Tanizaki prize three years later, enhancing his popularity so much so that a later novel, *Norwegian Wood*, published in 1987, sold more than 4.5 million copies.

His most famous work to date, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, appeared in English translation in 1998.

After spending several years teaching at Princeton University in the United States, Murakami returned to Japan in the aftermath of the Aum Shinrikyo gas attack on the Tokyo subway system. To regroup himself in Japanese culture, he undertook an extended investigation of those involved in this event, first interviewing and publishing the oral accounts of attack victims and then perpetrators. (These two volumes of interviews appeared in a single combined edition when translated into English as *Underground* in 2001.) His latest work, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, was published later that same year; a selection of short stories, many of them appearing first in *The New Yorker*, is scheduled to appear during the summer of 2002.

A summary of Murakami's short story "Barn Burning" from his collection entitled *The Elephant Vanishes* illustrates his postmodern predilections.

A thirty-one year old man meets a twenty-year-old advertising model at a wedding party; she informs him that she has inherited a small sum of money and plans to use it to travel to North Africa. She returns from her trip with another young Japanese male (somehow involved in trading) in tow.

One Sunday while his wife is out, the two call and invite themselves to dinner (to which they contribute all the food); after the meal the woman falls asleep, leaving the two men to carry on as best they can. In the course of their conversation, the younger man says, quite casually, "Sometimes I burn barns." This leads to an extended probing of reasons behind these barn burnings and all the other circumstances involved. The younger admits he has already picked out his next target: "A great barn. The first barn really worth burning in ages. Fact is, I went and checked it out only today."

It turns out the barn is in the immediate vicinity—or so it would seem. The host subsequently becomes obsessed with locating the target barn and begins to undertake a daily run taking him by the five candidates his research has led him to believe represent the potential "victims." The two men don't meet again for a couple of years; when they do, the older man (having recounted his efforts to keep tabs on possible candidates) asks if the intended target had indeed been torched. The younger says that it had, about ten days after their earlier encounter. Impossible, says the older man; "Must have missed it" says the other.

The younger man also indicates he is no longer seeing their mutual acquaintance; he also admits to feeling jealous of the way the woman appeared to trust the older man the most of all her (very few) "friends." This prompts the older man to seek her out again, but he proves unable to locate her—even her apartment seems abandoned, "her mailbox stuffed with fliers." He eventually gives up looking for her. He continues, however, to jog by the five "target" barns everyday—"Not one of them has yet burned down," he reports.

What happened here—and what didn't? The story begins conventionally enough, then moves on to involve a

seemingly stray encounter between two individuals resulting in one becoming obsessed by the potential behavior of the other. The story is only loosely tied to time and place, constantly shifts its narrative focus, is full of ambiguities and open to multiple interpretations; yet it contains a wealth of detailed “irrelevant” references to specific jazz CD titles, gourmet food items and other contemporary Western consumer products.

Perhaps most telling, however, is the inclusion of inescapable “traditional” literary qualities common to almost all forms of Japanese written expression—the indirection and ambiguity, the grounding references to the passing seasons, the metaphors and symbols drawn from poetic antecedents, the pervasive Buddhist melancholy, the demand for reader input into the process of composition and comprehension.

TEACHING THE POSTMODERN: ESTABLISHING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXT

Although the prospect of teaching an entire course on postmodernism appears a bit daunting, the material is there to do so. Drawing resources from the art world, architecture and recent fiction would result in a rich and rewarding educational adventure buttressed by side excursions into deconstructionism, post-colonial studies, and other areas of contemporary intellectual inquiry. The academic studies to support such a course are there as well, although not all are equally well-considered nor do they all approach the subject using the same analytical lens (not surprisingly so, given the nature of the beast and its avoidance of easy answers to complex issues of interpretation and meaning).

A more likely possibility incorporates a brief examination of the postmodern into an already existing subject matter area or discipline-centered field of academic inquiry. A twentieth-century literature course or one focused on contemporary art history or current architectural trends would likely already spend some energy analyzing the impact of the postmodern sensibility on the particular field being studied. Courses in history or marketing or communication easily could do so as well.

Other possibilities exist as well, however, which—like postmodernism itself—tend to cross disciplinary boundaries and accepted arenas of academic research and inquiry. Within the emerging focus on expanding world history beyond the study of the Western tradition, for example, the examination of the postmodern offers particular appeal as a thematically-oriented subject matter area. Within the general East Asian Studies or Japanese Studies curricula, the multidimensional and multicultural nature of the subject matter exerts a particular appeal as one means to gain a grasp of the contemporary scene beyond the world of politics, social problems and economics. As an illustration of an alternative vision of the world’s future, the concept also has numerous lessons to teach.

The study of world history, having abandoned its Eurocentrism, recently has begun to focus in on the thematic inquiry into the impact of shared historical phenomena such

as cross-cultural contact and migration patterns. With such figures as Frank Gehry, Don DeLillo, David Mitchell and others available as examples drawn from other cultural contexts, the Japanese artists we have considered herein—plus those drawn from South Asia, Africa and Latin America—could be used to jump-start a far-ranging and rewarding discussion on the future of “world culture.”

Another dimension to consider in the context of the study of world history is the impact of the postmodern on what Benjamin Barber describes in *Jihad Vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995) as the dialectical conflict between “consumerist capitalism” and “religious and tribal fundamentalism,” a conflict which, in his estimation, endangers the very future of democracy around the world. Does the postmodern contribute to the rise of fundamentalist attempts to preserve tradition? Or does it mark a similar challenge to the forces of modernization leading us all towards a future capitalist utopia?

If, in fact, the very process of modernization itself is rooted in the traditional as the base upon which change, growth and development is premised, what are we to make of those who would discard entirely the lessons of the past and the confining traces of tradition? Are those who throw off these traces undermining our collective future? Is it possible, in fact, to do so, to discard the influences of one’s cultural heritage? Or will remnants always remain?

In Japan specifically, what accounts for the phenomenal popular success of artists such as Sakamoto Ryuichi, Iwai Shunji, Murakami Haruki and Miyazaki Hayao? Are their fans aware of the postmodern aspects of their compositions or are they reacting to some other appeal particular to the Japanese contemporary cultural context?

All these questions—and doubtless others as well—commend themselves to educators everywhere seeking stimulating areas of study and inquiry for their college or high school students. Postmodernism provides wonderful fodder, much of it generated in Japan, for just such an intellectual undertaking. I commend the subject matter to you without reservation!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

That these alternative interpretive perspectives exist, each with an independent sense of its own validity, should come as little surprise to those familiar with traditional Japanese culture. Successful communication in traditional Japan was always dependent on the assumed ability of both parties in a cultural exchange to provide and understand the implied meaning present in the poem, the metaphor imbedded in the ink painting, the allusion casually mentioned in the few actual words spoken or written between the two. Poets, writers, musicians and painters were expected to employ a rich symbolic vocabulary; and their readers, auditors and viewers were called upon as well to have mastered a wide range of allusions, metaphors and images designed to provoke, to evoke, an expected emotional response. The work of prose, poetry or art was completed in essence by the consumer, whose knowledgeable participation in the

exchange was assumed by the producer.

Under such culturally-conditioned circumstances, although the popular music, films, short stories, music videos and animated movies we have been discussing might seem initially bereft of “meaning,” even a contemporary Japanese audience would be more likely than one in the West to provide the needed interpretation. Such an interplay has long been typical and expected in both the world of the fine arts and the arena of popular culture in Japan. The distinctive new element now present is the lack of implied commonality in the sought-after audience response; neither any of these artists nor their young audiences expects a single common interpretation to be imposed or generated. Indeed the artist’s purposefully ambiguous and indirect pastiche of layered meaning, replete with shifting levels of cultural implication, provides seemingly limitless space for debate.

On the other hand, “postmodern” popular cultural artifacts in Japan today project a sense of carefully managed time and culture within comforting, even constrained, limits. The resulting sense of “control” openly helps validate a larger sense of shared values held in common with other members of Japan’s younger generation of *shinjinrui* (“new human beings”). Iwai’s young audience, for example, surely must find comfort in seeing their view of reality confirmed in such a cinematically sophisticated visual narrative—clearly this is not their parents’ world, one limited and bounded by tradition; it is instead boundlessly theirs and theirs alone. His cinematic world makes many of his viewers comfortable as a whole, then, despite its uncertainties and ambiguities.

The Japanese aesthetic postmodernist does not lace his work with clues to a solitary underlying meaning or message; in fact, if anything, the opposite occurs: the disordered juxtaposition of elements from a variety of cultures and time periods layers “postmodern” art and literature with a range of sophisticated interpretive possibilities. What are we to make of the rich use of color in Iwai Shunji’s *Undo*, the deep blues and the warm glow of sunny yellows which permeate scene after scene? Why are there portraits and statues of nude women in the background of so many scenes? Surely all those wires across the sky mean something. And what about those tortoises? Drilling holes in one’s shell and inserting metal pins so that it can be dragged about on a leash is obviously not a random act included in the film for no reason. Yet, despite all these included symbols, no one “meaning” appears to emerge from their careful consideration; rather they appear to allow each viewer to take away his or her own “reading,” dependent on the given circumstances under which the film was seen and the particular symbolic references which catch one’s attention at the time.

Not surprisingly, multiple viewings/multiple readings encourage multiple interpretations. The effect of cinematography and music and the related arts likewise intrude on the mix of implied meanings, allowing still other ways of understanding “postmodern” popular culture. “Postmodern” popular culture appears, in fact, to exist in a timeless, rootless, free-floating present, one recognizing “the

basic incongruity of daily life” and its Zen-like relationship to one’s ongoing existence.¹⁰

In a world rife with little-understood and even less-appreciated change, “postmodern” Japanese popular culture, however tense and anxiety-producing its content might appear to be, nonetheless provides an island of tranquillity amidst the resultant unease and distress of contemporary life. Watch the (unchanging) film again and again or listen to the CD cut or reread the short story or watch the *anime* yet again; change your mind about its meaning again and again; imbue the work with its own history; accept the “postmodern” value system implied by its director—and thereby create your own control over that which might otherwise seem uncontrollable, a “safe haven” in the midst of contemporary chaos.

What greater appeal can one imagine emanating from the works of any creative artist working in the arena of contemporary Japanese popular culture? And how better might one be able to explain the appeal of the “postmodern”—the ability to create “things we can fashion for ourselves and in our own interests”¹¹—among Japan’s contemporary younger generation? All these artists may in the end represent only a passing fancy in the world of Japanese popular culture, but their expanding body of work is deserving of study and appreciation if only because their current appeal is rooted in a particular time and circumstance representative of the “postmodern” at work in Japanese popular culture today.

THE POSTMODERN IN JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE: SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

EVANGELION: A fourteen-part animated television series from 1996 which has recently been issued in a complete eight-disk DVD set. For more information, the place to start your Internet search is *Evangelion.com* at <http://www.evangelion.com/> or the list maintained at Google (http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Animation/Anime/Titles/Neon_Genesis_Evangelion/Opinions_and_Information/).

MIYAZAKI HAYAO: A music video, “On Your Mark,” animated for Chage and Aska, represents Miyazaki at his most postmodern, an excellent example of the postmodern influence at work in *anime*. The fan web site *Nausicaa.net* at <http://www.nausicaa.net/> contains lots of useful background information and current news about various Miyazaki *anime* projects.

MURAKAMI HARUKI: “Barn Burning” (found in *The Elephant Vanishes*). Murakami’s short fiction frequently is published in *The New Yorker*; most recently “Tony Takitani” appeared in the April 15, 2002, issue. The Complete Review web site at <http://www.complete-review.com/authors/murakami.htm> provides information and opinions about many of the author’s works with a list of links to other Internet sites. Murakami Links at <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/f-shi/grahamch/mura.html> collects another list of reviews and articles. *Exorcising Ghosts* is a currently maintained site with

up-to-date links at <http://www.exorcising-ghosts.co.uk/> as is the list at the dmoz open directory project (http://dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Authors/M/Murakami,_Haruki/).

SAKAMOTO RYUICHI: The official web site for Sakamoto Ryuichi is sitesakamoto located at <http://www.sitesakamoto.com/index-main.html> (run your cursor over the page and read the headings listed at the bottom of your browser screen to access the various parts of the site).

IWAI SHUNJI: *Undo* (1994). The final sequence, open to multiple interpretations, or the entire short film (about forty-five minutes in length), is acceptable for mature audiences. *Mouboshi* (1997). This music video commissioned by the Japanese group Moon Rider incorporates an homage to the film director Ozu Yasujiro and the Japanese long distance runner who won the gold medal at the 1964 Olympic Games held in Tokyo. Yen Town Report (<http://www.swallowtail-web.com/en/>) is the official Shunji Iwai web site on the Internet and includes a current chronology of the director's various projects.

YOSHIMOTO BANANA: Three useful fan sites: Monica Hubenette's Bananamania (<http://abyss.hubbe.net/banana/>), Chris Moxey's Bananamania (<http://www.cix.co.uk/~mfaller/fuschia.htm>), Shinichi Evan's Shockingly Beautiful (<http://www.aznet.net/~shinichi/banana/>). *Kitchen* (1993) is the most accessible of this author's novels.

The discussion of postmodernism discussed above has been integrated into the two following course web sites accessible at the following URL addresses:

HIS 373, 573, Contemporary Japan in Historical Perspective<http://academic.csuohio.edu/makelaa/history/courses/his373/index.html>; **HIS 227, Power and Authority in Nonwestern Societies** <http://academic.csuohio.edu/makelaa/history/courses/his227/index.html>

¹The gathering resulted in the eventual publication of *Japan Pop! Inside The World Of Japanese Popular Culture*, Timothy J. Craig, editor; Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.

²Marilyn Gell Mason, "The Yin and Yang of Knowing," *Sunday Magazine, The Plain Dealer*. Cleveland, Ohio, February 2, 1997, p. 7.

³LiseSkov, "Fashion Trends, Japonisme and Postmodernism" in John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, p. 159.

⁴See the discussion in Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 56-58.

⁵John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shojo* in Japanese Popular Culture," in John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, p. 298.

⁶See the discussion in John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shojo* in Japanese Popular

Culture," in John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, pp. 284-285.

⁷See Miyoshi, Masao and H. D. Harootunian, editors, *Postmodernism and Japan*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989; and John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, particularly the articles in the latter volume by Aoki Taotsu "Murakami Haruki and Japan Today," John Whittier Treat "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shojo* in Japanese Popular Culture," and Brian Currid "Finally, I Reach to Africa: Ryuichi Sakamoto and Sounding Japan(ese)." The categorization of "Evangelion" as a postmodern *anime* is by Daisuke Onitsuka, a film critic whose reviews are frequently featured in *Kinema Jumbo*, a leading journal devoted to Japanese cinema.

⁸Leah Kohlenberg, "Letters from the Dead," *Time*. web edition of vol. 149, no. 3: January 20, 1997.

⁹*Slant Magazine* at <http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/archive/allaboutlilychouchou.html>, accessed April 16, 2002.

¹⁰John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The *Shojo* in Japanese Popular Culture," in John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, p. 290.

¹¹Frederic Jameson, "Nostalgia for the Present," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (2), p. 569 as quoted in John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home," in John Whittier Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1996, pp. 306-307.

Asian Economic Issues: James Gillam, Chair;
Anne Hornsby; Bernice Scott: Spelman College

Impacts and Issues Associated With China's Three Gorges Dam Project

James T. Gillam, Spelman College

In the summer of 1999, I attended a two-week traveling seminar along the central and southern portion of the Yangzi River Valley. The seminar was sponsored and facilitated by the Council for International Educational Exchange in the United States and various agencies of China's national, provincial, and even county governments. The main focus of our activities was for my colleagues and me to acquaint ourselves with the issues related to the building of the world's largest dam, the Three Gorges Dam. Time and space prevent a comprehensive re-telling of my findings here, so after providing a brief historical context for the project, I will limit my observations here to six areas of concern associated with this project. They are: a summary of construction, cost and finance issues, ecological policy and problems, flaws in the government's resettlement policy, compensation and employment issues, and finally, the

government's response to protest about the project, its work standards and charges of graft and embezzlement.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There have been 214 major floods on the middle section of the Yangzi River where the Three Gorges Dam is being built. The floods have come on an average of every ten years since the historians of the Han dynasty, circa third century BC began keeping records. There were a number of spectacular inundations throughout the twentieth century. They came in 1931, 1935, 1949, and again in 1954. The deaths associated with those floods were 145,000, 142,000, and 30,000, respectively. A primary cause for the high number of fatalities is that over the centuries, dike construction along the banks meant that the average land elevation on the central Yangzi averaged ten meters (thirty-nine feet) below the channel of the river. There were also proposals to dam the river in the twentieth century. The first was made in 1917 by Sun Jongsan, (Sun Yatsen). In 1949, Mao Zedong made a similar proposal in the wake of the floods of that year. Then, between 1958 and 1991, two Premiers, (Zhou Enlai and Li Peng), and the estimable Senior Leader, Deng Xiaoping all weighed in with statements of support for such a dam.¹

It was Li Peng who moved from proposals to substantive action. During his tenure as Premier, Li Peng used his influence to convince the National People's Congress to build a dam at the historic gorges in the middle Yangzi valley, thus the name Three Gorges Dam. Under Li, the Three Gorges Project went from proposal to a priority political task with major institutional and financial support. There appear to be three elements that influenced the People's Congress support. First, there are Beijing's "claims" that the project is fully supported by the population as a means to alleviate poverty and control floods. Second, the dam is considered by Li and his cohorts to be a monument of second-generation CCP leaders to the first generation triumvirate of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai. Finally, the Three Gorges Project is a matter of national pride for Li and the technocrats that comprise the central party leadership of his generation. In this sense, the dam is also a reflection of the makeup of the seven-member Standing Committee of the Politburo. This Committee is China's supreme decision-making body and six are engineers, while the other is an architect.² Li Peng, one of the hydroelectric engineers on the Committee, was presumably speaking for both the Congress and the Standing Committee when he championed funding for the project. It was in that context that he has been quoted as saying that "the Three Gorges Dam will show the rest of the world that the Chinese people have high aspirations and the capabilities to successfully build the world's largest water conservancy and hydroelectric power project."³ Li's determination has given birth to the Yangzi River Water Resources Commission. It is an organization of 7,000 professionals who have been assigned the task of planning all aspects of the project. Construction began in 1993, and the Commission and its budget grew as rapidly as the construction project itself. For example, in just three years,

the Commission was overseeing the activities of a work force of 40,000 workers and engineers. Its annual budget grew from seventeen to thirty billion dollars per year.

CONSTRUCTION SUMMARY

There are three major components to the project: the dam, the power plant, and a series of navigation aids that will recreate the historical city of Chongqing into an ocean port located 1,800 miles from the coast. The primary navigation aids that will accomplish this are the five-stage ship lock and massive single-stage ship hoist at the dam site. Each of the ship locks is 110 meters deep, making them capable of servicing ocean-going size ships. The ship hoist, when completed, will be capable of lifting 500,000-ton ships over the dam in a single forty-five-minute operation. The dam project has four temporal phases. Construction began in 1993. The second stage began in 1997 when the main course of the river was partially diverted by constructing a coffer-dam. First power generation is to start in 2003. The final phase should be completed by 2009. It will entail raising the water level behind the dam to full capacity of 175 meters.⁴

The size and generating capacity of the project dwarfs America's Hoover Dam. The Three Gorges Dam is 610 feet high, which makes it lower than the Hoover, which is 726 feet. But it will be 6,864 feet wide. Hoover is only 1,244 feet wide. The dam will be built of concrete, using the gravity method for filling the forms. The crest elevation (top of the dam) will be 185 meters above sea level. It is estimated that 297,000,000 cubic yards of concrete will be needed to reach this height. (An average concrete truck holds twelve cubic yards of concrete.) The Dam axis is 2,309.47 meters, and the thickness of the face is roughly 200 meters. The spillway is located in the center. Intake and overflow dams are on the sides. This dam will also produce fifty-three percent of China's hydroelectric power when it is finished.⁵ It will have twenty-six turbines that produce 700 megawatts of power each. That will give Three Gorges the capacity to generate 18,200 megawatts of electricity. That is fifteen times as much as a standard 1,200-megawatt nuclear powered station produces and twice the wattage produced by the Hoover Dam.⁶

COSTS AND FINANCING

Although Beijing was determined to build this project, funding for it has been a continual problem, both on the international level as well as the national and local levels. Initial direct construction costs were estimated at twenty-five billion dollars. However, as the project has moved toward completion, the estimates have continually risen. For example, in 1996, three years after it began, the estimated cost was twenty-eight billion dollars. In 1997, the cost overruns had taken the estimate up to an astounding seventy-five billion. So, this is going to be the single most expensive construction project in history.⁷

As the Beijing technocrats sought international finance for Three Gorges, they faced many closed doors. For example, neither the World Bank nor the Export-Import

Bank of America would invest in the Three Gorges Project because of concern over environmental and socio-economic impacts.⁸ Interestingly, the Export-Import Bank of America actually found no fault with China's creditworthiness or technical ability to build the dam. Their concerns were in other areas. First among them were environmental issues; for example, they feared that the project would not provide adequate water quality in the reservoir, that it would not protect ecological resources and endangered species of fish. A second area of concern for Ex-Im was the socio-economic impact of the project.⁹ It will require the removal and resettlement of 1.3 million peasants. The bank felt that would make too large an impact on the Yangzi River valley. And finally, they were also concerned about the impending loss of certain cultural resources such as cities, temples, and archeological sites from the prehistoric era in China. Those concerns buttressed by the opinion of Samuel Berger, Deputy National Security Advisor to President Clinton who felt it "unwise for the U.S. Government to align itself with a project that raises environmental and human rights issues on the scale of Three Gorges" shut off the Ex-Im Bank as a major source of finance for Three Gorges.¹⁰

The Chinese found money abroad for their project, a good portion of it from Japan. Since Deng Xiaoping opened the economy of the People's Republic to foreign investment in the mid 1970's, the Japanese have been China's primary investor in joint international projects. Also, there have been a few American and European banks that have taken the gamble and invested in the project. Some of the foreign investment firms are Lehman Brothers, Bank of America, and Credit Suisse who are underwriting securities for China's State Development Bank. It is the State Development Bank that channels the money to the Three Gorges Project Development Corporation for dispersal.¹¹

ECOLOGICAL POLICY AND PROBLEMS

Although China has secured the necessary financing for the project, there remain a number of ecological concerns. And, due to the size of the project, those concerns have international, national, and local repercussions. Among the international concerns is the threat that it will cause an oceanic warming trend far beyond China's coast. Doron Norf, a Florida State oceanographer, says the dam could cause a regional warming trend that could affect parts of the Pacific basin as far away as Japan. He says this is because the dam will divert ten trillion gallons of fresh water from entering the ocean. Fresh water floats on top of seawater and impedes heat transfer from warm ocean water to the air through the process of convection. Norf says dams in Labrador, Norway and the Weddel Seas have been documented as the cause of warming trends of several degrees Celsius.¹²

The Three Gorges Project has also raised many domestic ecological concerns. Perhaps the foremost of them is the massive silt buildup that is expected. The

original plan was for the water depth to go to 156 meters (516 ft) for the first ten years while silt and other factors were monitored. Then, over the next seven to ten years, the level was to be raised to 175 meters. However, in 1997, project managers decided to go to 175 meters in just six years. Lu Qinkan, an 87-year-old retired engineer says the rapid filling will bring too much silt into the lake and the hydroelectric plant. The silt is a serious threat to various forms of aquatic life, and it is also likely to clog the turbines in the power plant. Additionally, there are expectations that silt will also enter and clog drainage systems along the lake and river. Wang Rushu, a Senior Engineer associated with the project, has admitted in interviews and published articles that at Yichang alone, the annual sediment buildup will be 526 million tons.¹³ Yet despite these forewarnings, the project managers insist on raising the level quickly to produce the extra electrical power that they anticipate will be needed in the resettlement areas above the water level.¹⁴

There have also been longstanding concerns about the pollution in the lake that will begin almost simultaneously with the rise of the water. As early as January 1996, Guo Chengmo, a Senior Engineer in Chongqing's Environmental Bureau, made a statement that was highly critical and very revealing about the central government's plans. He said:

Wastewater processing facilities are not even on the agenda of the city government, and I don't think that even for the next ten years these facilities are going to be on the priority list. There is also no money to remove the 1,000 year-old landfills of solid wastes, garbage and toxic materials like mercury and arsenic in the vast dumping grounds on the river banks that will be flooded...even if Chongqing raised the 500 million needed to build...the twenty-four wastewater treatment plants, the operational costs...would amount to tens of millions per day.¹⁵

Guo also complained that neither national nor local leaders have money to treat the 265 billion gallons a year of raw sewage and industrial waste that will flow into the lake each year. The local engineers accuse the central government of misleading the public about the dangers of this pollution, especially the industrial type, to the lake and surrounding environment. Guo and his colleagues say an environmental impact statement given to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing glosses over fundamental concerns on this issue. They argue that further studies are needed that include the use of models to show how the sewage flows will affect fresh water supplies to those who live around the lake.¹⁶ Dai Qing, an influential journalist who has been jailed and expelled from the Chinese Communist Party for her opposition to the project has said that "The Government doesn't have a single penny to control waste water discharge from these cities...and there are several hundred pollution sources along the river from Chongqing to Sandouping" where the dam will be built.¹⁷

RESETTLEMENT POLICY AND PROBLEMS

Although the ecological problems associated with the Three Gorges Project go well beyond the borders of China, the problems that have arisen from the project's impact on millions of people inside China have given rise to the project's most complex issues. Perhaps the reason for that is the sheer scope of the task to be accomplished. Thirteen large cities, 140 towns and 326 villages will be flooded. Projections for the construction time and scope of the project means that 300,000 children not born when the project began will also have to be accounted for in the resettlement plans.¹⁸ Among the thirteen large cities to be inundated, the downtown area of Chongqing City is the densest urban area to be affected. There are fifteen million people in this area. The flooding will also affect 1,700 towns, 1,711 villages, and 6,530 agricultural units.¹⁹ The dam will submerge 23,800 hectares of farmland. One and a third million peasants on that land will be immediately displaced, and fifty million others throughout the Yangzi valley will ultimately be affected. Twenty million of them above the dam will have to move, while the other thirty million below it will be affected because of faulty flood protection and the deprivation of fertile silt to downstream farming areas, and all fifty million will be affected by the water quality issues mentioned above.²⁰ Above the dam, 300,000 farmers must move to *poorer* soil. The Yangzi Valley is very crowded. There are an average of 350 persons per square kilometer, so there is very little suitable space for an acre-for-acre trade off. This means that only sixty percent of the farmers, who account for forty percent of the displaced persons are going to receive land for land.²¹

The decision-making apparatus and evaluation of the resettlement policy is a bureaucratic maze of multiple layers and competing interests. Shi Guoqing, a Hydropower Engineer and founder of the Research Center for Reservoir Resettlement in Hubei Province, described the bureaucratic structure and summarized the basic policy for resettlement in an interview and published paper in June 1999. Shi said that, ultimately, it is the State Council's Three Gorges Displaced Persons Development and Administration Organization that is responsible for resettling people. Below the central government office are the provincial and county branches that have direct responsibility in Hubei and Sichuan Provinces. The provinces are authorized to set up their own organizations, and cities and counties within those provinces can do the same. The provinces have created an organization called the Water Conservancy Committee of the Ministry of Water Resources and Provincial Governments of Hubei and Sichuan.²² What Shi described is basically a multi-layered bureaucracy that many discontented citizens claim intentionally obscures lines of responsibility and accountability.

Regarding the actual policy emanating from this labyrinth, Shi's publication goes on to say that the Ministry feels that resettlement must be founded on the development of agricultural projects, in which persons will be properly

resettled through the development of useable land, the improvement of medium and low yield fields, and the development of fisheries and other sideline occupations.²³

There is a major flaw in their policy. Provincial and city governments which represent people who must move must pay the corresponding unit of government that takes in the displaced people. They also have to make arrangements for these peoples' livelihoods. In addition to this expensive clause in the regulations, there is another one that basically absolves the central government from responsibility for much of the expense of relocation. The clause states, "The removal and construction compensation given to move cities and towns...shall be posted to accounts as displaced persons' expenses. In cases where increase in scale and raising standards exceeds the compensation payable for removal and construction, the excess portion shall be taken care of by the local people's government."²⁴ The practical result of this clause is devastating to the hopes of farmers who must resettle. Much of the farmland in the central Yangzi valley is terraced because of the steepness of the valley. The land above the 175-meter waterline is steeper than what has already been terraced, and it has not been terraced. What this policy means is that the central government assumes no responsibility for the preparation of new terraced fields on the steepest land in the valley.

Wang Rushu summarized and, thankfully, simplified the government's policy in another interview in June of 1999. He said in part that a "...development-oriented resettlement policy should be adopted; that it should not be merely a compensation operation, but should be actively in charge of the relocatees living and production ability and promote economic development of the reservoir region to the benefit of both the relocatees and their hosts." Finally, Wang said that resettlement policy should maintain the relocatees' living standard and provide a chance to improve upon it while preventing adverse effects on the lives of the host communities.²⁵ It is all too often found that there is a large gap between the idealism of policies and what actually happened to people who have moved.

Wu Ming, a Chinese sociologist, disputes the government figure of 1.3 million people to be moved. He says 1.6-1.9 million is a more accurate estimate. Half of them, according to Wu, will be urban residents, half will be farmers, and all will need new jobs or new land. Wu's report is based on projections from a January 1998 survey of five of the counties affected. He claims that not only are the resettlement numbers of the central government underestimated, but that the reported successes have been inflated. For example, journalists assigned for full-time reporting on the Resettlement Bureau's work told Wu that 200,000 people were successfully resettled in Sichuan and Hubei Provinces. He says that in reality, only half that number have new homes. Upon closer inspection, it seems that by mid-1999, only 8,737 people have actually been moved, and very few of them are successful moves.

The Resettlement Bureau has created three categories of resettlement to evaluate and document their progress. First,

there are the **Productively Resettled** (*Shengchan anzhi*). These are people that have a new farm or factory job. Wu Ming says 5,940 people are in this category. Next, there are the **Residually Resettled** (*shenghuo anzhi*). This means a place has been found for their new homes, but the process of moving has not been completed. Wu Ming says 2,610 people are in this category. Third, there are the **Accounts Closed** (*Xiaohao yimen*) people. These people have received their share of moving expenses and the government accepts no more responsibility for them. Wu Ming says there are only 187 of these people. Finally, there are the **Model Resettlers** (*Yimen Dianxin*), a category of people largely created to enhance public relations.²⁶ In addition to these categories of resettlement, I found that some officials and documents spoke of success in terms of individual people, and others counted families. This could create serious difficulties since the average urban family is three to five individuals, but since the relaxation of the one child per family rule for rural families, average numbers could climb as high as six people per family.

Wu Ming met six of the Model Resettlers families in two Hubei counties. The offices of local government and the homes of the model resettlers rival the quality of offices and homes in the well-developed coastal metropolis of Shanghai. This, according to Wu, is because they have received four times the average of what a family gets to cover moving expenses. However, there is the undercurrent of fear even among these lucky few that Premier Zhu Rongji, who is worried about cost overruns, will force them to move to accommodations of lesser quality.²⁷

Although Wu Ming's investigation has shown that 8,737 people have been moved, and that only 187 of them have had a successful experience, there are officials associated with the Resettlement Bureau who give cause to doubt the overall figures in general, and they bring specific concerns about the accuracy of the 187 Account Closed families. In a private interview, Qi Lin, head of the Yunyang county Resettlement Bureau said that the 187 Account Closed people were persuaded to move to Hainan Island which is off the mainland of China. Then upon arrival, they found that their site was uninhabitable. They came home broke, but their status as account-closed people meant that they will receive no more help from the bureau. They are effectively homeless.²⁸

COMPENSATION AND RE-EMPLOYMENT

The foregoing examples point to the central issue of how people are compensated for their resettlement. Here again, we find a gap between policy goals and implementation. For example, former Premier Li Peng and Qian Zhengying, the Minister of Water Resources, let it be known in 1992 that compensation was a critical part of the project, and that failure was not allowed.²⁹ Yet there is a gap between the implied impartiality in this policy and the way it is implemented. For example, there is a pattern of urban-rural discrimination in the way people have been compensated for the cost of moving. Wu Ming has discovered

that rural families get less money to move even though material for their houses costs the same as that of an urban family. His example is from Yunyang County. There, compensation for a square meter of brick or concrete housing in urban areas is 300 *yuan* for families who live in the county seat. It is 225 *yuan* for those in township centers, and only 180 *yuan* for those who live on farms in the county. In Zigui County, the rates are 480, 200 and 150, respectively.³⁰

There are also complex problems associated with land holding and employment opportunities. In Yunyang County, the dam will flood about 450,000 *mu* of farmland, most of which is on steep hillsides and is irrigated by rainfall. Thirty percent of the new farmland is even steeper than the old land. A twenty-five degree grade is the average incline in the new farming areas. Soil erosion is expected to have a drastic effect on eighty percent of these new farms, and the people will have to move again in a few years. So, the central government had plans for what they call "Developmental Resettlement" in state-owned enterprises. Unfortunately, unemployment in the area has risen dramatically between 1997 and 1999. For example, in Chongqing municipality two million state enterprise workers were laid off in this two-year period. In Yunyang county, twenty percent, or 8,000 state enterprise workers lost their jobs in 1997. So, mobility prospects for farm workers who seek industrial employment in a state-owned enterprise is extremely bleak. In 1997, only four of the eighty state enterprises in Fengjie County were operating at a profit. There too, the Developmental Resettlement plans have been cancelled.³¹

In Wanxian, a city of 300,000 just a few miles upstream from Yunyang, there are similar problems with Developmental Resettlement. The resettlement of 100,000 people began in 1994 with bulldozed homes and promises of new houses and jobs in a new chemical plant. The most obvious problem was the fact that the plant could only employ 20,000 people. Moreover, three years later, most of those 100,000 people were still living in tents, plans for the chemical plant were cancelled due to lack of construction funds, and the people were living on \$7.22 per month subsidies from the government. In a region where the average annual income is the equivalent of \$132, the average government compensation is just under \$96 per year. Among those who have moved out of tents and into apartments, there is still a high level of dissatisfaction. Liu Jianming, who lives in Wanxian's apartment block 38, complained that he and his wife and child receive the equivalent of \$14.44 per month in subsidies. Because he has no other job, he has become a street vendor of dumplings.³²

PROTESTS AND GRAFT

When the Three Gorges Project was begun, there were many who objected to it, including scientists, writers, scholars, and even some statesmen who took up the cause of the refugees-to-be. There are several facets to the opposition case. First, the engineers among them feel that China can get an equal amount of power and flood control by making several smaller dams on tributaries that are sparsely

populated. They favor the Dadu, Jinsha, and Wujian Rivers. They note that all of these tributaries are above Chongqing. They also point out that failure of one or more of these dams will not lead to the catastrophic flood that would be associated with the Three Gorges Dam if it fails. In addition, those who opposed the dam for technical reasons also pointed out that the need to lower the reservoir in the summer flood season would hinder navigation downstream. The release of those waters into the channel would mean that vessels of 10,000 tons or more would not be able to clear bridges at major cities like Wuhan or Nanjing. Finally, the technical objections to the dam also include problems with the ship locks on the dam. They claim that the locks do not meet current international safety standards.³³

The Chinese who publicly opposed the project have risked much with their pleas for caution, fairness and justice. For example, in May of 1992, 179 members of the Democratic Youth Party in Kai County were arrested and charged as counterrevolutionaries for protesting the project. These students have disappeared.³⁴ Students are not the only ones Li Peng and his Beijing supporters were willing to silence. For example, Dai Qing, an influential Chinese journalist, has also drawn negative attention from the government, and party. She was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and imprisoned, partly because of her efforts to organize scientists and engineers to oppose the project. Both she and Guo Chengmo, a Senior Engineer and technical advisor to Chongqing's Environmental Bureau, have been labeled counter-revolutionaries for their efforts to block the project. Guo's main offense has been to state publicly that in his opinion, as an engineer, the government's environmental impact report was very roughly done and lacked in-depth analysis.³⁵

In 1998, Zhu Rongji replaced Li Peng as Premier. It was under his administration that government admissions to shoddy work and graft on the Three Gorges Project were publicly aired. In fact, Zhu himself said the work was shoddy and that scores of officials had been arrested for fiscal irregularities.³⁶ Since then, Beijing has made examples of a few people involved in graft or embezzlement of funds. For example, in March 2000, Huang Faxiang, on trial in Chongqing, the major city to be inundated by the dam, received a death sentence for embezzlement of relocation funds. Wan Sumei, another official, received a prison sentence, and others suspected of diverting relocation funds are also to be tried.³⁷

There have also been revelations of graft at the county level where people are directly affected by the dam. For example, in Yunyang County where the sociologist Wu Ming has focused his attention, there seems to have been a prevailing attitude among the cadre that they should appropriate the money available through corruption or bribes while they can, then use it to disappear.³⁸ This example is also to be found downstream in the city of Maoping, very close to where the backwater of the dam will begin. There, Mrs. Wang Zuozhu said "...the village committee leaders used part of the relocation money to buy a big transport boat, but only a few people are benefiting from the profits of that business. Since

we moved to the city, no one can find those village leaders or the money the village was paid for enterprises and common property. We don't know where they are."³⁹

For many people, incidents in the city of Maoping have been seen as symptomatic of the manner in which the central and local government has dealt with embezzlement and poor construction under the administration of Zhu Rongji. The case of Mrs. Cui Bangfen is instructive. She has had a hard three years since the project claimed her home and orange grove. She was compensated \$1,100 for her land, house, and trees. She was moved into an apartment that her neighbors say has the dimensions of a toilet, and within a year, the foundation and load bearing walls were cracked. She and her neighbors blocked the road in protest when a central government inspection team arrived. When the police threatened to shoot them, they were forcefully removed, and Mrs. Cui was fined twenty-four dollars, the equivalent of three months removal subsidy.⁴⁰

¹Interview of Wang Rushu by the author in the city of Wuhan, China, June 13, 1999. (Hereafter cited as Interview With Wang Rushu), and Wang Rushu, "China's Sustainable Development Strategy and International Cooperation on Environment," in Jiangsu Environmental Protection Agency, *Environment and Development, Papers from the Third Annual Seminar on Environmental Issues in China*, (People's Republic of China, 1999), p.30. (Hereafter cited as Wang, "Sustainable Development").

²Cheng Li, *China's Leaders, the New Generation* (New York, 2001), pp. 1-2.

³Simon Winchester, *The River at the Center of the World: a Journey up the Yangzi* (New York, 1996), p. 227.

⁴Interview with Wang Rushu, June 15, 1999, and Wang, "Sustainable Development," p. 30.

⁵"Cracks in the Dam," *New York Times*, January 15, 1996, p. A4. (Hereafter cited as "Cracks in the Dam")

⁶Wang, "Sustainable Development," p. 30 and p. 36.

⁷Adrian Sleight and Sukhan Jackson, "Public Health and Public Choice: Dammed off at China's Three Gorges," in *Lancet*, Vol. 351, Issue 9114, pp. 49-51. (Hereafter cited as Sleight and Sukhan, "Dammed Off"), and Kate Kearns and Greg O'Malley, "International Financial Institutions and the Three Gorges Hydro-Electric Power Scheme," in *Greener Management International*, Autumn 1999, Issue 27, pp. 85-97. (Hereafter cited as Kerns and O'Malley, "Finance and Power Scheme").

⁸Adrian Sleight and Sukhan Jackson, "Dammed Off," pp. 49-51.

⁹Kate Kearns and Greg O'Malley, "International Financial Institutions and the Three Gorges Hydroelectric Power Scheme," in *Greener Management International*, Autumn 1999, Issue 27, pp. 85-97.

¹⁰Kerns and O'Malley, "Finance and Power Scheme," and "Cracks in the Dam," *New York Times*, p. A4.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Doron Norf, "Putting the Heat on Japan," in *Environment*, July/August 2001, Vol. 43, Issue 6, p.4.

¹³Interview with the author, and Wang, "Sustainable Development," p.36.

¹⁴*Economist*, May 13, 2000, Vol. 355, Issue 8170, pp. 43-44.

¹⁵"Cracks in the Dam," p. A4.

¹⁶"Cracks in the Dam," pp. A1 and A4.

¹⁷"Cracks in the Dam," p. A4.

¹⁸"Cracks in the Dam," p. A4.

¹⁹Shi Guoqing, "The Three Gorges Project and Resettlement," in *Environment and Development, Papers From the Third Annual Seminar on Environmental Issues in China* (People's Republic of China, 1999), p. 94. (Hereafter cited as Shi, "Resettlement.")

²⁰Sleigh and Sukhan, "Dammed Off," pp. 49-51.

²¹Sleigh and Sukhan, "Dammed Off," pp. 49-51.

²²Shi, Interview with the author, June 16, 1999, and "Resettlement," p. 97.

²³Shi, Interview with the author, June 16, 1999, and "Resettlement," p. 97.

²⁴Shi, Interview with the author, June 16, 1999, and "Resettlement," p. 97.

²⁵Wang, Interview with the author, June 15, 1999, and Wang, "Sustainable Development," pp. 39-40.

²⁶Wu Ming, *Joint Report on International Issues in China* (People's Republic of China, 1999) p. 3. (Hereafter cited as Wu, *Joint Report*).

²⁷Wu, *Joint Report*, p.8, and p.2.

²⁸Wu, *Joint Report*, p. 3.

²⁹Cheng Li, *China's Leaders, the New Generation* (New York, 2001), and p.4.

³⁰Wu, *Joint Report*, p. 5.

³¹Wu, *Joint Report*, pp. 5-7.

³²Sleigh and Sukhan, "Dammed Off," pp. 49-51.

³³Audrey Topping, "Ecological Roulette: Damming the Yangtze," in *Foreign Affairs, Volume 74*, Issue No. 5, p. 146. (Hereafter cited as Topping, "Ecological Roulette").

³⁴Audrey Topping, "Ecological Roulette," p. 134.

³⁵"Cracks in the Dam," p. A4.

³⁶*Economist*, May 13, 2000, Vol. 355, Issue 8170, pp. 43-44.

³⁷*Beijing Review*, "Officials Sentenced for Embezzlement," March 27, 2000.

³⁸Ming, *Joint Report*, p. 5.

Banking Crisis in Japan **Anne R. Hornsby, Spelman College**

Japan is facing a banking crisis that surpasses the one the U.S. faced in the 1980s. Her estimated \$600 billion in problem loans is three times the amount of bad loans involved in the U.S. S&L crisis (Burton and Lombra, p. 352). This banking crisis is partially a result of an institutional arrangement between the two major banking regulatory agencies (Ministry of Finance and Bank of Japan), which has rendered one subordinate to the other. The institutional practice, resulting in the Ministry of Finance acquiring major control over financial issues and policies, has operated to curb the authority and independence of the Bank of Japan. Therefore, these two financial regulatory agencies, especially the Bank of Japan (the nation's central bank), have been slow to react and at times overreacted to crises impacting the financial sector and the economy.

The basic fundamental relationship between these two financial institutions goes as far back as the 1942 "war-time" Bank of Japan Law which stressed dependence of the Bank of Japan on the Ministry of Finance. The following quotes from the 1942 Law emphasize the point: Article 25 states "the Bank of Japan may, with the permission of the competent Minister, undertake such businesses as are necessary for the maintenance and fostering of the credit system." Article 43 says, "the Bank of Japan shall be under the supervision of the competent Minister." Even with the gradual, administratively directed process of financial liberalization beginning in the late 1940s that sought to give more independence to the Bank of Japan, the resulting mixed signals left the ongoing supremacy of the Ministry of Finance unchallenged. In 1949, a Monetary Policy Board was established, ostensibly to give the Bank of Japan some discretion to operate outside the constraints of the 1942 Law. However, the creation of this board merely served to widen the influence of the Ministry of Finance over the Bank of Japan. The Monetary Policy Board in essence operated to curb the Bank of Japan's potential for using monetary policy to finance government deficits (Cargill, p. 149). Thus, the addition of the Monetary Policy Board did not significantly change the legal relationship between the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Finance.

Another financial liberalization occurred between 1976-89, which resulted in a change in the structure of Japan's financial sector to parallel that of the United States and gave more autonomy to the Bank of Japan. During this time period in the United States and Japan, regulatory institutions in the respective countries gradually phased out interest rate ceilings on deposits; allowed financial institutions to diversify their portfolios; and permitted greater competition between banks and investment companies. Also, during this period, Japan's central bank was able to combat inflation to a greater degree than the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank with more formal independence (Cargill, pp. 150-51). At the same time, however, Japan continued to rely on the older,

institutional “bank-finance model” which gave a large role to the government via influence of administrative guidance by the Ministry of Finance on the Bank of Japan policies. This hierarchical relationship between the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Finance served to weaken the overall effectiveness of the Bank of Japan’s monetary and economic policies in dealing with the banking crisis faced by the country after the buoyant economy of the 1980’s. The bubble economy during the 1980s saw asset prices and monetary growth increase. The Bank of Japan implemented an expansionary monetary policy that saw interest rates fall to historic lows, and land and stock prices increase sharply; between 1987-89, the Nikkei Index of Japanese stocks rose some 300 percent. Banks began concentration on real estate loans, which can serve to put financial institutions at risk in the event of an economic downturn. Also during this period, the country engaged in a domestic and international spending spree, purchasing an array of assets in other countries. Thus, the country was operating in a bubble economy which burst at the beginning of the 1990s when the Bank of Japan adopted a tight monetary policy (Blomstron, *et al.*, p.5; Burton and Lombra, p. 352). The Bank of Japan increased interest rates from 2.5 percent to 6.2 percent, and real estate, and stock prices in Japan fell more than fifty percent as the economy began to move into a recession. By 1998 the economy was entering an unprecedented eight consecutive years of recession, and the downturn in the economy is still persisting. This prolonged stagnation in the Japanese economy has negatively affected the banking system. In March 1997, almost half of the estimated \$600 billion in problem loans held by Japanese banks were labeled worthless. A majority of the bad loans stemmed from loans on stocks and real estate. The loans went sour when stock and real estate prices fell below the value of the loans. Problem loans gave rise to a credit crunch as bank lending declined, deepening the impact of the recession. The banking crisis in Japan is hurting her economy more than a comparable situation in America would impair the U.S. economy. This is because the stock and corporate bond markets in Japan are not as well developed as in the United States (Burton and Lombra, p. 353). Thus as banks, saddled with bad loans, decreased lending, Japanese business firms, especially small to mid-size firms, found themselves with fewer alternatives to bank loans as sources of funds needed to remain viable entities. This situation only served to heighten the severity of the recession.

The Ministry of Finance response was to institute stronger, more specific measures to bail out the ailing banking system. Japan has a history of resiliency and adaptation with a habit of melding and reshaping foreign institutional models to match her own, while, at the same time, maintaining the uniqueness of the Japanese culture. Thus, the Ministry of Finance created a “bridge bank” that functioned like the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) in the United States to deal with disposing the assets of failed institutions. Other regulatory agencies were established for allocating funds to

prop up weak financial institutions and deposits were insured up to 100 percent per depositor. However, the banking crisis continued, reflecting a problem of insufficient aid coming at an inappropriate time (Burton and Lombra, p. 353; Cargill, p. 152).

Though the regulatory authorities had begun to respond, they initially appeared hesitant to commit the appropriate funding needed to resolve the banking crisis as was done by the United States in the S&L debacle. The Japanese banking regulators strongly opposed committing \$4.5 billion in public funds to bail out her banking system as contrasted to the United States taxpayers paying \$145 billion to bail out the failed FTFTS in the late 1980s (Burton and Lombra, p. 353). Thus, the piecemeal, regulatory, “old-regime” approach in dealing with this crisis did not address the underlying problems for a sustained cure. By late 1996, further revision of the 1942 Bank of Japan Law gave the central bank more independence from the Ministry of Finance. The revision enabled the Monetary Policy Board to move from its former passive state and become the primary decision-making body of the Bank of Japan. This atmosphere gave the economy a slight bump; there was a slight decline in nonperforming loans and the country appeared to be in a recovery stage. However, in 1997, external factors, such as the financial weakness of Asian economies, generated more problems for the sagging Japanese economy and financial institutions. Especially adverse for the Japanese economy, in this year, were the failures of her nineteenth largest city bank (Hokkaido Takushoku) and her fourth largest security company (Yamaichi Securities Company). In addition, a year later, nonperforming loans at the top nineteen banks were estimated at 57.3 trillion yen which represented sixteen percent of outstanding loans or eighteen percent of real GDP. Two of these big banks, the Long Term Credit Bank and Nippon Credit Bank, were eventually nationalized (Cargill, pp. 155-56). Seeking further solutions to the ongoing banking crisis, regulatory agencies increased funding (from thirty trillion to sixty trillion yen) to cover depositors of failed banks and to provide capital to banks that showed signs of survival, either on their own or via merger (Cargill, p. 157). And, in addition to adopting practices of foreign financial institutions, Japan became more open to foreign capital investment.

A particular problem confronting the banking system in Japan is the fact that the country does not have an adequate number of healthy banks with funds to acquire the assets of the failing financial institutions. This is further complicated by the fact that there is an institutional practice in Japan of interlocking shareholdings between banks and nonbank firms restricted to citizens of the country that is, Japanese banks owning portions of the country’s nonbank firms that borrow from them and said firms owning shares of their nation’s banks. This system of interlocking shareholdings works fine in good times as a safeguard for firms against hostile takeovers. However, such practice during periods of recession places both the bank and firm in jeopardy. Hence, the door has opened for large foreign, in-

stitutional investors in countries like the United States to purchase assets of Japan's weak nonbank firms and failed financial institutions. In fact, Japanese banks and nonbank firms are both selling shares they own in one another. Banks are especially likely to sell their shares in corporations and nonbank firms are shopping for the best financial arrangements, domestic or foreign. By the end of 1999, "foreign investors held nineteen percent of Japanese shares by value, up from four percent" ten years ago (*Wall Street Journal*, p. 1). In addition, Merrill Lynch has been allowed to purchase the Yamaichi Securities Company.

In conclusion, the banking crisis in Japan continues and is not helped by the sagging economies in the United States and Asia. Japan is attempting to address the crisis by instituting independence in implementing monetary policy, creating regulatory agencies to dispose of pervasive economic reforms involving giving its central bank, the Bank of Japan, more nonperforming loans, insuring deposits up to 100 percent per depositor, allocating funds to prop up weak institutions, and becoming more open to foreign capital investment in the country. However, the success of Japan in solving her banking crisis depends on the degree of autonomy of the Bank of Japan and the adequacy and future timing of monetary policy and regulations that keep pace with structural changes occurring in the financial sector. There is the possibility that the Bank of Japan's new independence will be weakened as it comes under the influence of political pressures. Politicians, responding to their constituents' concerns over the sagging economy, may feel the need to intervene in monetary policy as a quick fix which may prove harmful to the economy in the long run. Thus, having loosened the shackles of the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Japan may find itself fettered to another polity, elected officials.

Finally, the financial regulatory agencies in Japan are patterned after a finance model centered on bank loans to large businesses. However, regulators should take into consideration and begin to focus on the changing structure of the industry which is causing banks to lose their market share as new financial options emerge for corporations. As has happened in the United States, bank loan demand in Japan is expected to decline in the next decade as businesses seek alternative sources of funding such as floating more of their own debt instruments in the money market. Also, as has occurred in the United States, banks in Japan will need to become more innovative in order to enhance their profit margins, such as engaging in securitization which can increase their income from fees.

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Hiring Asianists for Liberal Arts Colleges.

James Leavell, Chair, Furman University; Brian Dott, Whitman College; Joan O'Mara, Washington & Lee University;

**Hiring Asianists for Liberal Arts Colleges
Brian R. Dott, Whitman College**

THE CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE

I begin with a listing of my experiences as a job candidate. I received my Ph.D. in Chinese History from the University of Pittsburgh in 1998. Since 1997, I have had a total of thirty preliminary interviews (this includes both phone interviews and disciplinary conference interviews), eleven on-campus interviews, two one-year sabbatical replacement jobs, and two tenure-track jobs. While several of the preliminary interviews were with research institutions, most of my on-campus interviews and all of my jobs have been at liberal arts institutions (three private, and one public). My perspective as a candidate will naturally differ from others' ideas. After my first one-year job, I decided that I wanted to teach at a liberal arts college. I was therefore selective in choosing to which jobs I applied.

The suggestions I give below come from both positive and negative interviewing experiences. While much of what I have to say is common sense, these details can be easily overlooked amidst teaching duties and other aspects of the search process. Much of what I suggest is relevant to any search, but I also include information specifically pertinent to hiring in Asian Studies. I divide this article into four sections, one for each of the major steps of the job search process from the candidate's perspective (excluding dossiers, which are covered by the other members of the panel). Many of the suggestions I give help candidates feel that the institution is making an effort to recruit them. In organizing this panel, Jim Leavell emphasized the importance of making candidates feel comfortable, wanted, and a potential part of the college community.

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Most tenure lines are still assigned to a discipline, and not to interdisciplinary programs. For myself, I am very interested in interdisciplinary teaching and research, and looked to see if the position was integrated into an Asian Studies program. It is therefore important to coordinate between Asian Studies and the members of the particular department where the position will be officially housed. Try to reach a consensus of what everyone is looking for in a candidate before the ad is placed. It is important for members of the Asian Studies program to be involved directly in the search process at all stages. Although I have not yet served

on a search committee, I know from talking with colleagues that one purpose of the ad should be to have potential candidates self-select out of applying to a position they are not interested in or suited for. In the ad itself, I would urge including a line or two about Asian Studies, and emphasizing teaching and the liberal arts. I did not put as much effort into applications for jobs which did not mention Asian Studies in the ad.

Be aware that certain required courses might limit your applicant pool. I am capable and quite willing to teach European history or World history, but did not apply to any jobs which required the applicant to teach U.S. history. If possible, it would probably be better to list more than one option (I realize at some schools where a particular course is required of all students this is probably not possible, but make it clear in the ad that this is a mandatory expectation, and perhaps explain why). If the position is a joint-appointment, make sure that the division of labor is clear in everyone's minds at the outset of the process. Be prepared to address questions about number of courses to be taught in each discipline, division of committee work assignments, and how the tenure review process will proceed.

Make sure various web pages are up-to-date (the College, Asian Studies, the relevant discipline, and, if possible, the faculty homepages). I obtained almost all of my information for all stages of the process from web pages.

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

Let the candidates know who will be conducting the interview, how long it will last, where it will be held, and how to contact someone in case of an emergency (e.g., cancelled flight). I would suggest twenty minutes as the minimum length for the interviews. While holding the interviews in a suite versus the large ballrooms is certainly preferable, it is my experience that the candidates very quickly filter out the extraneous noise and distractions of the large ballrooms.

A number of the schools sent me information about the college, department, Asian Studies program and the local community via e-mail before the conference or telephone interview. This is a good example of demonstrating an effort to inform the candidates and to make the actual interview as instructive and painless as possible. At the beginning of the interview all interviewers should introduce themselves. Offer the candidates some water to drink. Be prepared to demonstrate cooperation within the college for Asian Studies. Ask questions which show that you know the candidate's file. For example, in one interview I had the interviewer ask me to discuss a particular passage from one of my letters of reference. During the interview emphasize the liberal arts.

Do not in any way denigrate your students. While candidates should be able to address how they vary their approaches for diverse student learning styles and backgrounds, candidates sincerely committed to teaching look for colleagues who respect, at a minimum, the untapped potential of their students.

All of this information also pertains to phone

interviews. In addition, however, remember that the candidate cannot see who is speaking. In almost all the phone interviews I had there was some point when I had no idea who was talking, although I had researched each member's area of interest and expertise and wished sometimes to suggest points of joint interest.

CAMPUS INTERVIEW

Send the candidates as detailed a schedule as possible before they embark. Send them a college catalog, department and program materials, perhaps the packet sent to prospective students, and information about the community.

Be specific about type of talk(s) well beforehand. How long should it be? Who is the audience? If it is a teaching lecture, is it for a specific class? If so, is the topic fixed or open? Reserve the necessary audio-visual equipment for talk(s), and check to see they are working well before the talk begins (I have given a talk with slides without a remote and in a room without shades). Provide water and chalk or a white board marker.

Involve students in the interview process. If possible have a group of majors interview each of the candidates. This is useful both to the interviewers as well as the candidates. If your institution is teaching-oriented and the candidate "blows off" the students, this is a good sign that this one might not be your first choice.

Include a campus tour during the visits. This is another good opportunity for candidates to interact with a student(s). If possible have the tour led by a student in Asian Studies or the particular discipline. Or, you might arrange for a student who leads tours for prospective students to conduct the tour.

Even if Asian Studies is not involved directly in the search, arrange for candidates to meet some of the faculty in Asian Studies, as well as in the discipline. I had to ask for this myself at several of the schools where I interviewed.

Provide information, and perhaps have the candidates meet people in charge of study abroad and other programs of interest to the candidate.

If time permits, arrange for a realtor to show candidates some properties in the area.

A perk which I quite enjoyed, and which impressed me, was that one school rented me a car while I was at the interview, which I used during some free time to drive around the surrounding area. I realize that this is beyond the budget of many institutions, but someone at the panel suggested the possibility of offering the use of a college-owned car for a day or an afternoon.

AFTER ACCEPTANCE

I added this section primarily because of Jim Leavell's comments that new hires have been known to back out of a contract as late as the beginning of the fall semester. Here are some suggestions for showing enthusiasm for new hires, making them feel welcome and part of the community, which I have found useful at the jobs I have had.

Encourage as many faculty members as possible to call, send e-mails or letters expressing excitement that they have accepted, and not to hesitate to ask questions or ask for assistance.

Share department information with the new candidate, but don't imply they need to do a lot before arriving. For example, for one of my jobs I was added to the department listserv right after I accepted.

Offer help and information about mundane everyday things: banks, housing (including college rentals or buying assistance), public schools, and moving companies. Perhaps offer to help unload or arrange for low-cost student labor. One school had a college-owned room I rented at low cost for a week while I searched for housing.

A nice perk which I would have liked at all my jobs, was the option of a salary advance. Many schools do not issue the first paycheck until the end of September. This is usually six to eight weeks after a new hire has had to make a number of large expenditures, such as a security deposit or down payment. The school which offered this option takes \$500 out of each of the first four paychecks, and pays it in a lump sum (\$2000) in August.



Brian Dott

Hiring: The Nuts and Bolts **Joan O'Mara, Washington and Lee University**

MY SCORECARD

I have been part of six searches in East Asian Studies at my institution over the past twelve years. Several of them have gone as one would have hoped, because they were searches for Chinese or Japanese language faculty, and the department involved, East Asian Languages and Literatures, exists in conjunction with East Asian Studies and without a separate major; all members of the Search Committees were part of the East Asian Studies program and shared common goals. Several searches, however, have presented greater difficulties, in part because they were run through other departments whose curricular concerns were not the same as the concerns of the East Asian Studies faculty, especially our concern for maintaining balance within our own program. It may be helpful, or at least cautionary, to share a few caveats

that have come out of these latter search processes, as well as some practical procedural guidelines that have served us well in the former searches.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

If your search is being shared with another department on your campus, know where you stand at the outset. Have an understanding about what your role is to be, with your Dean and with the Chair of the department that will be conducting the search. You, or a member of your Asian Studies program, should be on the Search Committee, if the search is for someone who will serve in your program. If that is not to be the case, why not? And if not, how will that affect what is expected of you and other Asian Studies faculty during the search, in terms of time and energy? Should those expectations be spelled out? What effects are comments from you likely to have on the deliberation process?

The subtext here is that area studies programs are too often second class citizens at their own institutions, with input from area studies faculty permitted, even expected, but then given lip service and practically, or entirely, ignored in the final departmental deliberations, whether those deliberations be for hiring, or later, in the tenure process.

PRACTICALITIES OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Advertisements for an upcoming open position should be placed in a timely fashion in disciplinary publications, as well as in the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Newsletter and online listings. Remember that the later you set your application deadline, the later you will be interviewing, and the more limited your applicant pool may be. It is important to include in the job description the fact that the successful candidate will be expected to serve in an Asian Studies program, as well as in a disciplinary department. If it is important to your program that the successful candidate be able and willing to teach a broader range of courses than his or her particular field of research interest or geographical specialization might indicate, that fact should also be stated in the position listing. If your position is a language position, you may want to request that a teaching demonstration cassette (in VHS format, so that all that are submitted may be viewed easily on a VCR) be included as part of the application.

Initial screening of applicants' files by the members of the search committee should be carried out independently. Individual members of the committee should take notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and come up with individual short lists of eight to ten semi-finalists. One detail that I have found very useful to note in the screening of files is the undergraduate institution attended by the candidate. If the B.A. is from a good liberal arts college, that may be a better indication than a Ph.D. from the most prestigious graduate institution in that the candidate will understand the positives that can be had from teaching at your school. Obviously, this will be a less important factor if the undergraduate institution is outside the United States,

and such may often be the case with applications for language positions.

The search committee should then meet to compare notes and decide on a common short list of semi-finalist candidates, generally to be drawn from candidates who appear on two or more of the individual short lists. Those candidates should then be interviewed. If the opening is for a language position, it is important that some time be allowed during the interview for a brief presentation, or a discussion, in the language under consideration; if no one on the search committee speaks the language in question, arrangements should be made to tape that portion of the interview and have it evaluated by a native speaker. You may also want to let your candidates know in advance that this will be a part of the interview.

Ideally, personal interviews of semi-finalists should be conducted face to face, by two or more members of the search committee, at the annual meeting of a professional conference. The AAS annual meeting is a logical possible setting for that round of interviews, but, as with this past year, the dates of the annual meeting can be too late in the academic year to be a practical choice; even in the best of years, the AAS annual meeting falls later in the process than one would wish.

The alternate option for initial personal interviews of semi-finalists is the telephone interview, using a conference call format. Be sure that all members of the search committee are familiar and comfortable with the equipment and procedures you will be using. It is best, perhaps, to coordinate this “performance,” with prepared questions that different committee members will be ready to ask at certain times during the interview. It is not good to have “down” time during the conference call itself, with committee members floundering about what to say next. If you follow a set sequence of questions for each call in the series, it will also be easier later to compare the responses of the different candidates.

At the beginning of a conference call interview, members of the search committee should identify themselves and their disciplines. For language positions, don’t forget to provide a few minutes for discussion or a presentation in that language, and tape that segment, so that native speakers not on the search committee can evaluate it. Provide time for the candidate to ask, as well as to answer questions. Finally, it is probably better, at this stage, to be straightforward about the fact that you are a small liberal arts college, perhaps located in a small town outside of major metropolitan areas, with all of the pros and cons that that can mean in your particular situation.

PRACTICALITIES OF THE FINAL SELECTION PROCESS

When finalists are invited to campus, it is important to allow enough time, preferably longer than a one-day period, for the scheduling of meetings, lectures, and other activities. It is highly preferable, if at all possible, to have the candidates come in on a Thursday or Friday, and leave

Sunday morning, or to arrive on a Saturday and leave on a Monday or Tuesday. The Saturday night stay-over saves hundreds of dollars on airfare, which the Dean’s Office should appreciate.

Some things that can be scheduled for the extra Saturday or Sunday that a candidate may be with you include: a campus tour; time for a driving or walking tour of the area beyond the campus, so that the candidate can see the sorts of amenities that are in your area; time scheduled for the candidate to meet with a local real estate agent; and a group reception or dinner for the candidate and members of your Asian Studies Committee.

While on campus, the candidate should have meetings scheduled with each individual member of the Search Committee, with the director of the Asian Studies program (if that person is not also on the search committee), and with the Dean. A formal “public” presentation, based on the candidate’s research, should be scheduled, as well as a less formal, typical classroom lecture.

There should be a chance for the candidate to meet over dinner with members of the search committee, and also at a reception or dinner with members of the Asian Studies program. Finally, a chance should be provided for the candidate to meet with majors and other interested students, to ask and be asked questions without any other faculty present; this can perhaps take place over lunch. The latter opportunity is particularly good in helping candidates to see your campus and your program from a point of view other than that of the faculty. It will also not hurt your relations with your students, who will feel involved in the process and who never mind being treated to lunch!

Once all finalists have made their campus visits, feedback should be gathered, a decision reached, and an offer made, as quickly as possible. There may need to be negotiations between your candidate and your Dean, but once the offer has been accepted, the appointment letter from the Dean should state specifically that the person will be teaching for the Asian Studies program as well as for the disciplinary department. This can be an important detail to have included, for the sake of accountability when the time eventually comes for tenure and promotion decisions.



Joan O'Mara

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