WHAT CYBORGS CAN('T) DO ABOUT JAPANESE IDENTITIES:

JAPANESENESS AS A PRODUCT OF THE INTERNALIZED EURO-AMERICAN GAZE

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ABSTRACT

This art-based research project problematizes constructed postwar Japanese identity by unravelling the links between Japan's Eurocentrism, the country's active invitation of the Orientalist gaze, and the artificial amnesia of its colonial aggression towards other Asian countries.

Needing to take advantage of Orientalist projections by dominant Western powers, postwar Japanese national and cultural identity resorted to self-Orientalism. The "Japan Brand" Strategy— the government-owned production site of "Cool Japan" imagery and cultural policy, not only created a liberated and humane image of postwar Japan globally but it was also devised as a mechanism to induce a collective amnesia that allowed Japan to disregard its colonial past and engender a soft nationalism. This narcissistic discourse celebrates the rise of the Japanese economy, affirming the country's superiority while distancing itself from the imaginary "impoverished" continent of Asia. Through time, Japan's self-defined "pure originality"—which emerged as a counter-narrative to Japan's being infamous for its ability to imitate to the West— became internalized by the Japanese, along with the new marketable versions of Japaneseness. Japan's self-Orientalism was an unexpected side-effect of playing US's "Japan" (a subordinate's double identification) and its dependence on the dominant West.

Using *shanzhai* (meaning "fake" and the idea that nothing is original), my art project aims to rethink constructed Japanese identities as delinked from the idea of "originality" and devoid of internalized Orientalism. Employing speculative fiction tropes to communicate the contingency of Japanese identities, my art project defamiliarizes current discourses surrounding Japanese identity. Contributing to the fields of Japanese studies and visual cultures, my art project is a visual assemblage employing photography, videography, contemporary digital media, stock materials, and speculative fiction narratives to create a speculative world.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

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PREFACE

DREAMS COME TRUE VERY MUCH

Time begun to have flown backwards in time.

I was watching Japan sliding on the conveyor belt.

I was watching it fall over

the edge,

being stuffed into a box,

but the box never became full

and before I knew it, what was Japan,

had become a god;

a god in the form of rice.

"Eat me," the god said.

I was about to throw out the rice that kept saying "勿体ない、勿体ない."

The rice had my grandmother's hands; they were reaching out to me.

I tried to hold her soft hands—hands forbidden from making sushi—they

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sli

pped

out of

mine.

Rice in the doorway, waiting—

Throw the rice against the wall

permission to take off your shoes.

but then I felt compassionate.

The rice that is me that is god.

I gave it a hug: it Laughed

Time

begun

to

have

flown

backwards

in

time

Maari Sugawara, January 27, 2021

INTRODUCTION

"JAPANESENESS": A PRODUCT OF INTERNALIZING THE WESTERN GAZE

It was through STYLY, a Japanese platform that offers free VR/AR creations that I came across a sea of "Japanese" faces with Caucasian features—or perhaps they were Caucasian faces with "Japanese" features. This website, which is available only in Japanese, has a yellow button that invites me to generate up to fifty non-existent faces; "Make a face with AI!," the button reads. These non-existent faces are generated using Generative Adversarial Networks (GAN): a class of machine learning frameworks that use a set of original photos to create images that look "superficially authentic" to human observers.

My speculation that the faces are "Japanese" does not stem from a preconceived notion that physical features are inherently tied to identities. Most users score low on Dyske Suematsu's Alllooksame.com—a website offering a "test" consisting of digital photographs of Asian women and men, that invites users to guess whether the photograph is of a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean person. The space is produced by a Japanese company (Photo AC) which targets Japanese or Japanese speakers who wish to use these images for promotional purposes. Although the details of the models are not provided, the models on their other pages are specifically labelled as "#Japanese."

Figure 1. Screenshot of image from https://www.photo-ac.com/main/genface

The Japanese term "hāfu" refers to an individual born to one ethnic Japanese and one non-Japanese parent. It is a loanword from English (the term literally means "half"), a reference to the individual's non-Japanese heritage: "you are only 'half' Japanese." Japan's government and large parts of its society promote *nihonjinron*, a nationalistic adherence to a particular conceptualisation of Japanese identity which is ethnically and linguistically "homogenous and culturally unique"[1]. Many politicians even attribute Japan's economic success (being the only non-Western nation competing with "developed" Western nations, such as the US) to its self-proclaimed ethnic and cultural homogeneity.

Aspiring to be ethnically homogenous while wanting "whiteness"[2], Japan celebrates its ethnic purity, yet hāfus—which in most social contexts refer exclusively to Caucasian-mixed Japanese—are in many ways celebrated in mass media—a practice imbedded in social norms. This contradictory desire of Japan is reflected in the term, hāfu, which is in *katakana* (a Japanese syllabary system that Japanese textbooks explains to be for foreign loanwords). As Neriko Musha Doerr and Yuri Kumagai asserts, this textbook explanation regarding *katakana* frames Western words as "cool"[3], while *kango* (Chinese-origin words) are defined as Japanese. *Kango* is codified in Japanese national dictionaries rather than foreign loanword dictionaries.[4] Both the term hāfu and *katakana* reflect Japan's historically changing relationships to other countries, such as the US—the dominant power in the West—and China, an older neighbouring nation that much of Japan's religious, artistic, and moral civilization, as well as Japan's recent economic-political hegemon, is derived from. Such terms prove that Japan supports a dichotomous distinction between that which is Japanese and that which is foreign.

The sea of AI-generated faces represents the state of postwar Japan: a country caught in the complicit opposition of being one of the first to "modernize" via Westernization in Asia, yet still subordinate to Western countries. The imaginary faces represent Japan's "introverted urge to counter external, dominant Western cultures"[5] while exhibiting traits of whiteness, a mentality firmly rooted within the Japanese psyche.

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[1] Rod Fisher, "The Japan country report of 2013-2014 Preparatory Action 'Culture in the EU's External relations'," edited by Yudhishthir Raj Isar (2014), 4, https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/international-cooperation/documents/country-reports/japan_en.pdf.

[2] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1993): 6.

[3] Neriko Musha Doerr and Yuri Kumagai, "Power of language ideologies: Challenging the notion of foreign loanwords in Japanese-as-a-foreign-language classroom," *Writing Systems Research*, 6:2 (2014): 154.

[4] Idem, 151.

[5] Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Duke University Press, 2002), doi:10.1215/9780822384083.

This thesis is not based on ethnographic fieldwork; instead, it attempts to provide an ethnographic account of the broader term, "Japaneseness." My arts-informed research project explores and questions discourses surrounding the postwar Japanese national and cultural identity that has been deeply complicit with Western discourses and essentializes Japaneseness. Using speculative fiction narratives and conceptualizations of cyborgs as a metaphor to critique aspects of Japanese identities, my art project defamiliarizes and restructures our experiences with current Japanese socio-political environments.

As a strategy to create artworks that critique and allow a rethinking of the national and cultural identity of Japan, I am considering the following questions:

A. How can I, through the act of creating my artwork, use "alternative futurity"[6] as a concept, to "delink" and "relink"[7] my identity as a Japanese woman from "self-colonizing identification"[8]?
B. How can my exploration of my own future identities help me generate a subjective ontological understanding of being a Japanese woman living in North America in the here and now?
C. How can photography, videography, stock images and contemporary digital media be used to explore possibilities of "radical reconstitution"[9]?

My interdisciplinary project falls under the categories of digital animation, audio-visual installations, and prose-poetry. Using science fiction narratives, political and social possibilities are emphasized in the narrative of this film. By doing so, I aim to defamiliarize and restructure our experiences with current Japanese socio-political environments and our present. By presenting not only Japanese identities but identities as a whole as malleable, my project seeks to illustrate how the unified category of Japanese and humans are categorically interpellated and performatively constituted through discourses. Using *shanzhai* (meaning "fake" and the idea that nothing is original, Han), my art project rethinks constructed Japanese identities, delinking them from essentialized notions of "originality" and internalized Orientalism.

In the first chapter "Construction/Fake Memory," I disrupt the hidden historical interplay between Japan's Eurocentrism, the country's active invitation of the Orientalist gaze, and the artificial amnesia of its colonial aggression towards other Asian countries through a theoretical lens. This chapter is informed by Japanese studies, media studies, post-colonial studies, and critical race theory, and media studies. In the first section, "'Cool Japan': Erased Memory and

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[6] Soyang Park, Supervisor Comments, OCAD University, Aug 7, 2020.
[7] Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics,* Praxis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 229.
[8] Soyang Park, Supervisor Comments, OCAD University, Aug 7, 2020.
[9] Idem.

Japan's Self-Orientalism," through personal and global herstory, I highlight the deeply rooted consciousness of Japan's "complicit oppositioning between Japanese self-Orientalization and Western Orientalization"[10] to emphasize what is often swept under the rug. I investigate the Japanese government's interest in developing foreign-policy strategies based on essentialized notions of "Japan," focusing on "Cool Japan" policy. In "Japan's Self-Claimed 'Cultural DNA' and Nationalism," I analyze how Japan's self-Orientalism functions in order to construct an exclusive national and cultural identity. I will focus on the "Japan Brand strategy," which exploits Japanese popular culture as a mechanism for national mobilization to revitalize patriotic pride. In "'White' Japan and Asia as an Impoverished 'Other'" I discuss obscured racism in contemporary Japan and trace the processes of the construction of "whiteness"[11] within Japanese identity. I analyze how the strategic binary opposition between the "West" and "Japan" has been historically complemented by a third party: an imaginary undesirable "Asia." In the section, "Amnesia Institutionalized," I discuss how Japan's superiority, underpinned by the country's lingering asymmetrical power relations with other Asian countries, has been re-asserted with the notion of soft power—the "Japan Brand Strategy"— a strategy propelled specifically to induce amnesia towards Japan's wartime crimes. In "China as the Emerging 'Other' I discuss Japan's identification with the new Asian economic-political hegemon, China, and China's contributions to the construction of postwar Japanese identity. In "Constructed 'Memory'," I contend that the Japanese government's desire to maintain a sanitized and acceptable past, along with the content expectations Japan adopted encouraged by the dominant Western powers, governs the false "memory" implanted in the Japanese which contributes to the construction of Japanese identity. In "'Colonized Japanese Identities Live Forever: The Japanese State's Data Colonization," I critique the social and ideological biases manifested in both "whiteness"[12] and the male domination that informs postwar Japanese identity, as well as the agendas of digital technologies. I unpack how the Japanese state plans to use digital technologies as renewed forms of oppression in the post- "Moonshot Research & Development Program," AI-driven future.

The second chapter, "Deconstruction," discusses deconstructivist theories, speculative fiction, digital technologies, feminist theories, and translation theories to imagine futurities of Japan. In "*Shanzhai* (山寨) and Japaneseness: Deconstructing Orientalism," I use Byun Chul-Han's conceptualization of deconstruction in Chinese, *shanzhai*, to rethink Japanese identities as delinked from the idea of "pure originality"[13] and internalized Orientalism. In "Imagining Future(s) of Japan: Identities as contingent," I explain how speculative fiction tropes

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[10] Iwabuchi, "Recentering Globalization," 11.
[11] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[12] Frankenberg, *White Women,* 6.
[13] Tom Forester, "Consuming electronics: Japan's strategy for control," *Media Information Australia 67* (1993): 4-16.

communicate the contingency of Japanese identities. I introduce works by authors such as Yoko Tawada and Larissa Lai which support my use of critical science fiction narratives as a tool to disrupt current discourses surrounding Japanese identities.

The third chapter, "Reconstruction" discusses theories related to memory, technology, and translation. In "What Can Cyborgs (Not) Do about Japanese Identities?," I discuss the possibilities and limitations of Donna Haraway's "reconstructed imaginary." I draw parallels between her manifestation of cyborgs and aspects of constructed "Japaneseness" that aim to whitewash cultural "memories." Media and feminist theories related to memory and technology are discussed: the writing of Paolo Ricaurte, Julia R DeCook, and Pratistha Bhattarai contextualize my understanding of "data colonialism," enabling my discussion of the "Moonshot Research & Development Program." In the final section of the second chapter, I discuss how language and translation affect one's creative and critical directions which is another grounding theme in my thesis project. Referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Politics of Translation," I investigate the political dimensions of translation that eliminate the identities of the oppressed and give prominence to English and other hegemonic languages. I also look at how Yoko Tawada uses the concept of "poetic ravine" (詩的な峡谷) in her works to intentionally fall in the liminal space between language A and language B.

In the final chapter, I discuss the strategies in my art project. The artwork for my thesis exhibition, "Dreams Come True Very Much" is described in detail. I address the theoretical underpinnings and methodological aspects of the film, audio-visual installation, and prose-poems. In the conclusion, I discuss potential avenues to continue the research started within my thesis.

CONSTRUCTION/FAKE MEMORY
"COOL JAPAN": ERASED MEMORY AND JAPAN'S SELF-ORIENTALISM

Growing up in England in the ages between ten and sixteen, I was fascinated to find things of Japanese "origin" grotesquely localized in different parts of the world. Around the beginning of the present century, Japan's popular culture diplomacy was firmly institutionalized by the "Cool Japan" policy: a national project incorporated into the Japanese Intellectual Property Strategy, promoted by the state since 2002. This led to an emergence of the "Japan Brand Strategy," a framework and tactics devised by the annual Intellectual Property Strategic Programs to produce revitalized cultural imagery for Japan, capitalizing on the global success of Japanese popular culture.

During 2000s, the high point of the reception of Japanese culture, I watched Euro-American representations of Japanese cultural phenomena such as otaku culture, techno-culture, and bizarre sexual practices. Seeing the conventional, stereotypical image of Japan that I know too well did not surprise me. What captivated me is how Japan is actively distorted for others' convenience—mostly Euro-American countries. The overall response of Japanese viewers to Euro-American notion of Orientalized "Japan" is not anger, but pride; they narcissistically[14] observe this "exotic Japan" that satisfies foreigners. For instance, a weekly magazine article reported Western representations of bizarre Japanese cultural phenomena under the title "Such a pleasantly distorted image of the Japanese."[15] Japan's cultural power has a strong desire to take initiative from Western others in cultural representations of "Japan."

This active invitation of the Orientalist gaze also results from a rising boom in "Japan glorification" in contemporary Japan. Saburo Ienaga explains that this glorification has a long history, dating to the pre-1940s, when Japan was a "warfare state."[16] Japan waged war against its neighbors: China (twice: 1894-95 and 1931-45) and Tsarist Russia (1904-05). Japan also turned the Korean Peninsula into a colony in 1910. During this period, inoculated with militarism through its education system, the Japanese people believed that dying for the nation in the

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[14]Koichi Iwabuchi, "'Soft' Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global," *Asian Studies Review 26*, no. 4 (2002): 447-469.

[15] Hiroo Yamagara, "Ōbei mihōyakubon ni miru kono tanoshiku yuganda Nihonjinzō," *Shūokan, Asahi 24*, December 1993, 130-132.

[16] Saburo Ienaga. "The Glorification of War in Japanese Education," *International Security* 18, no. 3 (1993): 115.

battlefield was a supreme virtue.[17] Newspapers, magazines, and books were full of news and stories exalting martial values and romanticizing war, and the steady accumulation of chauvinistic information encouraged jingoism. [18]

This "Japan glorification" also goes hand in hand with the glorification of war in Japanese education and the country's historical revisionism. Although defeat in World War II transformed Japan into a "peace state,"[19] the popular self-praising consciousness imbued into the Japanese was not restructured overnight. Indeed, it has been encouraged by the government's conscious tilt toward nationalism and militarism and is reflected in the nation's flawed certification procedure for textbooks.[20]

For instance, the content of Japan's history textbooks has, for several decades, been an issue both in Japan's domestic debate and its international relations with North and South Korea, China, Taiwan, and other neighbouring countries. Textbooks in Japan have to pass a pre-publication screening. Since the mid-1950s, the textbooks increasingly reflect the ideology of the ruling conservative politicians, and the government has sought to exclude vivid depictions of the horrors of war, as well as Japan's responsibility for wars, and Japan's war crimes.[21] In the 1980s, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) undertook a campaign seeking revision of some 100 textbooks, with a "thrust toward greater respect, in effect, for State Shinto, big business, duties instead of rights, and the military instead of pacifism."[22] The minister of education also asked that high school textbook writers and publishers "soften their approach to Japan 's excesses during World War II, the horrors of the atom bombs… and the pacifist requirements of the Constitution (Article 9). More stress was suggested on patriotism, [and] the constitutionality of the Self-Defense Forces."[23] Ienaga cites Lawrence Ward Beer, who claims, "blistering attacks were leveled at Japan 's leaders by [other] Asians for insensitivity to East Asian memories of Japan's arrogant and inhumane treatment of its neighbors before 1945 and for outright dishonesty in the textbook presentation of historical fact."[24]

Today, there is a rise in self-praising discourses—a sign that the jingoistic sentiment lives on. Scholarly articles argue that such narratives have been increasingly embraced by media products since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. They boast how great Japan is, targeting domestic consumers. For instance, television shows such as "Rediscover Japan" and "*Nippon! Sugoi Desu*

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[17] Ienaga. "The Glorification of War," 116.
[18] Idem.
[19] Idem.
[20] Idem, 124.
[21] Idem.
[22] Idem, 113.
[23] Idem, 114.
[24] Idem.

Ne! Shisatsudan (meaning Japan surprises the world!)" revolve around foreign visitors being interviewed about how "cool" Japan is—all dubbed in Japanese. NHK's jingoistic "Cool Japan" program similarly focuses on making the most innocuous subjects seem like triumphs the Japanese should be proud of. Even travel shows focused on exploring other countries tend focus on how Japan is represented abroad. Universal Studios Japan opened a special "Cool Japan Zone" in 2016, featuring attractions devoted to "four popular brands from Japan that are renowned across the world"; the slogan claims, "Enjoy the Japan that the World Praises!"

Figure 2. The popular franchises from four Japanese anime and video games which appeared at Universal Studios Japan for "Universal Cool Japan 2020" from January 21, 2020, to June 28, 2020. The slogan claims "Enjoy the Japan that the World Praises!"

This self-praising rhetoric has been used to strategically and coercively overwrite the "memory"[25] of the Japanese who have a "collective, biological fear" of natural disasters, of earthquakes, tsunamis, and radioactivity. This includes myself. I came across the term "collective, biological fear" during a conversation with theorist and performance artist Ayumi Goto which was useful in thinking through Japanese nationalisms. The "Japan glorification" rhetoric also is a form of national coping that has only been egged on by the state of affairs in the continent, as Japan's influence in the region lessens compared to China (Japan's emerging "Other," which I will discuss later).

In discussing the process of the construction of postwar Japanese identity and its relation to self-Orientalism, the arguments in this section revolve around Japan's relation to the US and other Asian countries. I also discuss Japan's "two paralleling and complementing mental

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[25] Cassandra L Jnes, "Memory and Resistance: Doro's Empire, Mary's Rebellion, and Anyanwu as Lieu De Mémoire in Octavia E. Butler's Mind of My Mind and Wild Seed," *Women's Studies, vol. 47*, no. 7 (2018): 700.

genealogies"[26]: the nation's unequal power relation with US, which motivates Japan's self-Orientalism, and Japan's popular-cultural diplomacy, which induces "collective amnesia" in other Asian countries.

Since Japan's defeat the US has deeply penetrated Japanese culture. Considering the overconcentration of American military bases in Japan and the threats Okinawans are facing today, one can say that the US occupation of Japan persists. Yoshikuni Igarashi explains that "the tension between the desires to forget and to remember the past of defeat" in World War II has shaped the cultural productions of postwar Japanese society.[27] Norihiko Kato calls this "a sense of nihilism."[28] As Kato claims, Japanese people realized that Japan's dependence on the US may never end, and that reasonable political solutions to the country's problems are not forthcoming.[29] Kato asserts that this led to Japan finding itself in a "bizarre"[30] position.

This "bizarreness" steeped into the realm of everyday culture in postwar Japan. In Ivy Marilyn's analysis of domestic tourism campaigns of Japan National Railways during the 1970s and 1980s, she notes that the "Exotic Japan" campaign exhibited a cheerful appropriation of Western Orientalist images of Japan.[31] Such Orientalist images of Japan, including Buddhist temples, geisha, and Mt Fuji, were featured to promote the domestic consumption of the exoticism of Japanese traditional culture among Japanese urban dwellers. As the campaign humorously renders "Japan" its own exotic "foreign" object, we see an interplay between "the non-Japanese seen through Japanese eyes and Japan seen through Westerners."[32] Dorinne Kondo argues that this shift testifies to:

> [an] incorporation of Western elements and a Western gaze that beats the West at its own game, and subverts, as it reinscribes, Orientalist tropes. It marks a moment in historical, geopolitical relations, where auto-exoticism and the appropriation of the West in a refigured, essential Japan indexes Japan's accession to the position of powerful nation-states.[33]

This interplay shows that Japan's "pleasurable" consumption of Westernized images of its distorted self is not based upon Japan's being in a dominant position. It is, instead, one of a few tactics available to Japan: a means to maintain power. In this regard, Japan is not simply "Japan,"

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[26] Soyang Park, Supervisory Comments, OCAD University, February 7 2021
[27] Idem.
[28] Norihiko Kato, "Goodbye Godzilla, Hello Kitty," *The American Interest, Volume 02, Number 1* (2006), https://www.the-american-interest.com/2006/09/01/goodbye-godzilla-hello-kitty/.
[29] Idem.
[30] Idem.
[31] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29-65.
[32] Idem, 50.
[33] Dorinne Kondo, *About face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 84.

but a Japan playing America's "Japan": what John Caughie calls, in his analysis of US media domination of the world [34], the "subordinate's double identification" with see-er and seen.

Self-Orientalism—Japan is not being American but playing at being America's Japan. This game is played through objectification, being the object of the Western gaze. The subordinated Japan empowers itself by "objectifying the center and rendering it as its own other […] the permitted games of subordination"[35]. In this game, the subordinated adopts a "ironic knowingness that may escape the obedience of interpellation or cultural colonialism and may offer a way of thinking subjectivity free of subjection."[36] In this objectification, "Japan," as the object of Western cultural domination, is suspended; it positions itself outside the grounds of domination. It is not a double identification with subject and object, but a substitution of the unstable doubleness articulated in the relationship between games and tactics—a pleasurable game overlooked by the otherwise subordinated Japanese spectators. By suspending Japan's position as the object of domination, "Japan" is kept out of the colonizer's reach; this game attempts to claim that there is not a "Japan" that can be dominated by Western cultural domination.

Kato also asserts this: since the occupation, Japan has pursued a form of resistance that is an emulation of the American way; resistance infinitesimally close to imitation, while politically, the nation has bumbled alongside the United States in a path, possibly, toward what Kato calls the nation's "ruination"[37]. This environment was an ideal incubator for what he calls "cultural expressions of the power of voicelessness"[38], the ideology of the "Japanese Cool"—which strategically induces "collective amnesia"[39] of its own war crimes towards other Asian countries. As Daliot-Bul contends, this strategy was propelled in the 1970s, specifically by the necessity to soften anti-Japan perceptions, notably in Southeast Asia.[40] Igarashi explains that after Japan's devasting defeat in 1945, the process of reassembling the fragments of the nation as a "peaceful" country was achieved through nationalism. However, this was done subtly through the realm of everyday culture, not straightforward political discourse.

The wave of the "Japanese Cool" is an unexpected side-effect of Japan's history of being dependent on the US. This mechanism, which justifies Japan's cultural amnesia towards its own war crimes in neighbouring countries, is also perpetuated by Japan's "ally," the US, who further reifies the erasure of collective trauma from the era of Japanese colonization. For instance, as

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[34] John Caughie, *Playing at being American: Games and tactics In Logics of television*, ed. P. Mellencamp: (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 44-58.
[35] Idem, 44.
[36] Idem, 54.
[37] Kato, "Goodbye Godzilla," https://www.the-american-interest.com/2006/09/01/goodbye-godzilla-hello-kitty/.
[38] Kato, "Goodbye Godzilla."
[39] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy," 254.
[40] Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture Diplomacy," 420.

Soyang Park asserts, the violence imposed on the women who were abducted and coerced into sexual slavery against their will (also known as "comfort women") by Japanese imperialists was continued after the war when society forgot about them.[41] Park states that this amnesia derived from the geopolitical and neo-colonial economic climate that emerged in postwar East Asia under US and Japanese hegemony.[42]

The case of the US-led 1945-1948 International Military Tribunal for the Far East (also known as the Tokyo trial), which failed to address Japan's colonial responsibility, is an example of this postwar amnesia in Japan in relation to the sexual slaves' issues. The trial was "a political show based on a deal made between US and Japan" as US needed Japan to be an ally for its postwar project in East Asia.[43] The trial allowed huge political concessions to Japan: as many scholars have pointed out, there was an absence of colonial questions in the Tokyo trial and "there was hardly any discussion on Japanese colonial rule in Korea."[44] The tribunal did not prosecute crimes against humanity. The Allied Powers, including the US, were not critical of their own imperialist past, and thus were indifferent to colonial questions in general.[45]

Park also notes that Korea was subject to Japan-US political hegemony as Korea was economically dependent on the aid of industrialized Japan and the US in the postwar era. This prevented the Korean government from laying charges of wartime crimes by the Japanese government: Kim Jong-pil, a minister of Park Junghee's military dictatorship, signed the Japan and Korea Agreement in exchange for a huge loan from Japan to Korea. The agreement states that Japan's responsibility for any damages caused to Korean people were to be closed. Park echoes arguments by political experts and war crimes in Korea, that although the agreement should be reviewed, and it could be proven invalid, Japanese respondents to the sexual slaves' debate have used this agreement to deny responsibility for the wartime crimes.[46]

Much like the case of the Tokyo trial, the "Cool Japan" policy continues to induce amnesia in Japan and other Asian countries. It establishes Japan as a country with a clean record, situating it in a position to erase its colonial history. In both cases, the Tokyo Trial and the economy-driven "Cool Japan," the US leveraged the postwar position of both nations, implicating itself within both systems in order to accumulate power in the long-term.

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[41] Soyang Park. "Silence, Subaltern Speech and the Intellectual in South Korea: The Politics of Emergent Speech in the Case of Former Sexual Slaves." Journal for Cultural Research 9, no. 2 (2005): 181.
[42] Idem.
[43] Idem, 182.
[44] Young-hwan Chong, "The Tokyo Trial and the Question of Colonial Responsibility: Zainichi Korean Reactions to Allied Justice in Occupied Japan*," *International Journal of Korean History* (Vol.22 No.1), 2017, 79.
[45] Idem, 78.
[46] Park, "Silence," 182.

SELF-CLAIMED "CULTURAL DNA" AND NATIONALISM

Here, I analyze Japan's self-Orientalism to further investigate and question aspects of constructed postwar Japanese national identity. This stresses the essential difference between Japan and the West. In order to construct a self-claimed exclusive national and cultural identity, I also focus on the "Japan Brand Strategy"—what Nancy Snow terms "Gross National Propaganda"[47]—which exploits Japanese popular culture through a Western-Orientalist lens as a mechanism for national mobilization to revitalize patriotic pride.

As cited in Michal Daliot-Bul's "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age," the 2007 strategic program's explanation of the "Japan Brand Strategy" clearly reflects the function of cultural diplomacy as a cultural renovation strategy to recruit feelings for national ends:

> In order to build a "beautiful country of Japan" that is trusted, respected, and loved in the world, and for the Japanese themselves to re-acknowledge and re-appreciate the "attractiveness" of Japan, we must improve the "cultural creativity" of our country and as a nation establish and reinforce an attractive Japan Brand. Then, we must actively disseminate abroad [this image of] an attractive Japan.[48]

The rehabilitation of national pride in Japan becomes a major concern for the Japanese government. The strengthening of national pride through cultural renovation is the prerequisite for Japan to participate in the global arena, for Japan to be successful both economically and politically.

The "Japan Brand Strategy" seeks to tell Japanese people that Japanese technology can prosper due to its own "uniqueness," while being under the scrutiny of the Western world. Koichi Iwabuchi cites in his essay that one policymaker of the project emphasized the necessity to "revisit Japan to consider how to properly discern Japanese cultural DNA and strategically standardize it, to successfully input it into Japanese products and services."[49]

The government's interest in promoting essentialized notions of Japanese culture confirms Japan's "distinctive" cultural aesthetics, styles, and tastes using the term "Cultural DNA"[50]. This idea of "pure originality" primarily emerged as a counter-narrative to Japan's infamous ability to

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[47] Nancy Snow, 'Uncool Japan: Japan's Gross National Propaganda," *Metropolis, Issue 1024*, 7 November 2013, https://metropolisjapan.com/uncool-japan/.

[48] Michal Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age," *Social Science Japan Journal, vol. 12*, no. 2 (2009): 261.

[49] Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture,"428.

[50] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Against Banal Inter-Nationalism," *Asian Journal of Social Science, vol. 41*, no. 5 (2014): 447.

imitate the West. Throughout history, Japan has borrowed visual formations of foreign cultures—from Asian (mainly Chinese) to Euro-American cultures.[51] As a result, Japan has often been called "a nation of copiers," a decidedly pejorative connotation.[52] However, this self-claimed new "originality" eventually became internalized by Japan, along with the marketable version of Japaneseness. It is evident that this cultural policy promotes a specific sense of cultural identity, and such a claim can be interpreted as an attempt at re-enhance Japanese national identity by means of a celebrated ethnic essence.

This idea of Japan's "pure originality" is also emboldened by the myth of Japan being a homogeneous and "culturally unique"[53] country which is reflected in the primary issue of Multicultural Co-living policy discussions in Japan. Iwabuchi asserts that Japan's Multicultural Co-living policy principally deals with recent immigrants by keeping intact the rigid bi-polarized conception of "Japanese" and "foreigners," while disregarding long-time citizens with diverse cultural backgrounds: Zainichi (Korean descent), Ainu (East Asian ethnic group indigenous to Japan; the original inhabitants of Hokkaido and nearby Russian territories), Ryukyuans (East Asian ethnic group native to the Ryukyu Islands which stretch between the islands of Kyushu and Taiwan), Burakumin people (a former untouchable group in Japan at the bottom of the traditional social hierarchy); the list goes on.[54] This dichotomized, ahistorical construction of culturally coherent entities not only occludes socio-cultural differences and disavows marginalized groups existence as constitutive of the nation further, but strengthens the country's imaginary ethnic purity. Through the "Japan Brand Strategy"—the government-owned production site of "Cool Japan" imagery—we can presume that cultural nationalism has transformed into ethnic nationalism.

"WHITE" JAPAN AND ASIA AS AN UNDESIRABLE "OTHER"

Identities are shaped through the construction of "Others" whose differences from the "Self" are emphasized.[55] In this section, I trace the construction of whiteness within Japanese identity through my own observation and scholarly analysis. I focus on how the strategic binary opposition between the "West" and "Japan" has been complemented by a third party of an imaginary, undesirable "Asia." Scholarly analysis by Masao Miyoshi, H. D. Harootunian, Iwabuchi, and Daliot-Bul informs my understanding of what constitutes "Japaneseness."

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[51] Kazuko Kameda-Madar, "Copying and Theory in Edo-Period Japan (1615–1868)," *Art History*, September 2014, 709, DOI: 10.1111/1467-8365.12111.
[52] Idem.
[53] Fisher, "The Japan country report," 4.
[54] Iwabuchi, "Against Banal Inter-Nationalism," 447.
[55] Bukh; Suzuki; Hagstrom; Neumann.

As a Japanese who lived in England and is now based in Canada, I am categorized simply as "Asian." I realized that many Japanese living in Japan do not see themselves as such. This is not unexpected considering that the term "Asia," generally used to describe all the lands lying to the east of Europe, is elusive.

Nevertheless, what I found surprising is the fact that many Japanese associate the term "Asian" with "exotic" racial attributes. This is shown in Seow Boon Tay's survey conducted between 2005 and 2009, in which she asked Japanese participants to list, freely, any number of words they associate with Asia (figure 3). The result suggests that there is a strong association of "Asia" with highly visual content such as racial attributes, i.e., black hair, thin eyes, short people, and other anachronistic representations. Ironically, these are the stereotypical and racist descriptive features of Japanese people that exist in the West.

Table 5: Images of Asia

Category	Examples of responses	% of total number of responses	
		2005	2009
Country or area	China, North Korea, East Asia, Southeast Asia	8.4	26.1
Geographical attributes	Hot, rainforests, beautiful nature	7.5	12.5
Racial attributes	Black hair, yellow skin, small eyes, faces similar to Japanese	10.6	11.6
Food	Ethnic food, spicy food, "kimchi", rice	13.7	8.6
Exotic attributes	Exotic, multicultural, Eastern	5.3	6.9
Miscellaneous	Bicycles, soccer	3.1	5.3
Politics	Anti-Japanese demonstrations, terrorism, abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea, visits to the Yasukuni Shrine	10.6	4.6
Economics	Economic growth, free market economics	11.9	4.6
Societal or diplomatic ties	ASEAN, neighbors, near yet distant, friends	6.6	4.0
Traditional culture	Vietnamese "ao dai", tatami, incense	1.8	3.6
Religion	Islam, Buddhism	.4	3.6
Poverty	Street children, poor, low wages	3.1	3.0
Tourism	The Great Wall of China, Merlion, resorts	3.1	2.3
Negative adjectives	Dark, smelly, weak	4.0	1.7
Popular culture	Korean boom, Jackie Chan, Winter Sonata	5.3	1.0
Positive adjectives	Vitality, hardworking, spirited	4.4	.7
Language	Chinese	.4	0

Figure. 4: "Images of Asia" from Seow Boon Tay's "Asia: Through Japanese Lens Asian Identity among Japanese and Images of Asia on Japanese Television." Keio Communication Review No. 32, 2010.

Furthermore, the term "Japanese" is occasionally used in contrast with racial terms such as "black" and "white" in Japan, implying that some consider "Japanese" as a race. After its defeat in World War II, ruling elites and public intellectuals portrayed Japan as a *tan'itsu kokka* (homogenous nation) in public discourses. Yuko Kawai, in her article "Deracialised Race, Obscured Racism: Japaneseness, Western and Japanese Concepts of Race, and Modalities of Racism," gives the example of Shiga Shigetaka, the chief editor of the nationalist magazine Nihonjin, who stressed Japan's geography, landscape, and climate in defining *kokusui* (Japaneseness) and claimed that "the *Yamato minzoku* has created, developed, purified, inherited, and preserved it [Japaneseness] from ancient times until the present day."[56] Kawai claims that language was also a key element of the "homogenous" Japanese *minzoku* (ethnic group), exemplified in statements made by Ueda Kazutoshi—a key figure in constructing *kokugo*, Japan's national language at the turn of the twentieth century. Ueda called *kokugo* "Japanese spiritual blood," indispensable to Japan's *kokutai* (fundamental national character), comparing the Japanese language to blood—a biological material indispensable to life—pertained to the racialization of the Japanese as a group with a common language: a blood-tie.[57]

This logic underlines the exclusivity of Japaneseness. As such, minority groups in Japan, especially people of Asian descent, have endured discriminatory practices involving a complex dynamic of assimilation and exclusion. For instance, immediately after the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, the Kantō Massacre took place. The Japanese military, police and vigilantes massacred an estimated 6,000 Korean and 174 Chinese residents of the Kantō region.[58] The massacre occurred over a period of three weeks starting on September 1, 1923, the day when a massive earthquake struck the Kantō region. At the same time, a rumor quickly spread that some "*futei senjin* (malcontent Koreans)" utilized the chaos to set fires, poison wells and rape women in the disaster region, and numerous Japanese people organized themselves into vigilantes and lynched every suspect they encountered on the streets.[59] Although the massacre was denied by Japanese authorities almost immediately after it occurred, it was celebrated by certain elements in the Japanese public. Today, some continue to deny that the massacre occurred while some Japanese right-wing groups celebrate the massacre. This exclusionary sentiment lives on; Asian minorities, such as *zainichi* Koreans, have been pressured to adopt a Japanese-style name in their everyday lives, and racist comments are often casually made in public. This racism also relates to how many Japanese today fail to empathize with other oppressed non-Whites such as Asians in the West,

[56] Yuko Kawai, "Deracialised Race, Obscured Racism: Japaneseness, Western and Japanese Concepts of Race, and Modalities of Racism," *Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): 31.
[57] Kawai, "Deracialised Race," 31.
[58] Jiaying Shen, "A Great Convergence: The Mass Killing of Chinese in the 1923 Kantō Massacre," *Japanese Studies* 40, no. 3 (2020): 231-248.
[59] Idem.

and Black Americans. For instance, historic fights for racial equality such as Black Lives Matter unfold right under many of their noses today.

Although they lack awareness, some Japanese exhibit traits of "whiteness." In "White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness," Ruth Frankenberg asserts that whiteness "refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination"[60]. Frankenberg articulates the pressing need to identify this color-coded category, asserting that "naming whiteness displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance. Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their "seeming normativity and their structured invisibility."[61] Steve Garner, in his book "Whiteness: An Introduction," details an approach to analyzing whiteness in five points:

> "White" is a marked racialized identity whose precise meanings derive from national racial regimes; 2) Whiteness as an identity exists only in so far as other racialized identities, such as blackness, Asianness, etc., exist; 3) Whiteness has been conceptualized over the century or so since it was first used, as terror, systemic supremacy, absence/invisibility, norms, cultural capital, and contingent hierarchies; 4) Whiteness is also a problematic, or an analytical perspective: that is, a way of formulating questions about social relations; 5) The invocation of white identities may suspend other social divisions and link people who share whiteness to dominant social locations, even though the actors are themselves in positions of relative powerlessness.[62]

Frankenberg and Garner both stress that the power of whiteness resides in its normativity, its invisibility, its cultural capital, and its parasitical relationship to conceptualizations of other racialized identities. Their theorization of whiteness supports my understanding of postwar Japanese identity, which fails to recognize its own race and wants to achieve whiteness. I aim to hyper-visualize the power and privilege that whiteness holds, which is sometimes internalized, unmarked, and invisible.

Japan's whiteness, along with its high-handed attitude towards "Asia," can be traced back to prewar Japan's two major approaches toward Asia: *Datsua Nyūō* (breaking away from Asia and entering Europe), and *kōa* (co-prosperity with Asia). Seow claims, since the establishment of the *Datsua Nyūō* slogan, which took precedence in Japan toward the end of the 19th century, Japan sustained its perception of the imaginary entity of "Asia" as an inferior region to distance itself from the rest of the continent, and justified its role as the leader of the region by constructing

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[60] Frankenberg, *White Women,* 6.
[61] Idem.
[62] Steve Garner. *Whiteness: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2-3.

the regions of "Asia," "Japan," and the "West."[63] The concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was mooted in 1940 by the foreign minister of the time, Matsuoka Yosuke. While appearing to call for Asian countries to stand in solidarity as allies against the "West," it focused once again on Japan's role as a leader in the region. Eventually, the concept became another form of justification for Japan's high-handed attitude towards its Asian colonies, and further strengthened Japan's sense of purpose in reigning over Asia.[64]

As Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian assert, "Japan's alienation from the non-West is based on Japan's refusal to articulate its relationship to the non-West, especially Asia, both in the past and the present. To this day, Japan has not accepted the responsibility of accurately accounting for its actions during World War."[65]

AMNESIA INSTITUTIONALIZED

Here, I discuss how Japan's sense of superiority over other Asian countries has been re-asserted through the "Japan Brand Strategy" which was executed specifically to induce amnesia in regard to Japan's war time crimes to other Asian countries.

Iwabuchi attests in his article that on a global scale, the strategy was propelled by a desire to soften anti-Japan perceptions, notably in Southeast Asia;[66] Iwabuchi points out, in the 1970s, when Japanese economic clout induced friction with the US and aroused anti-Japanese sentiments and movements in Southeast Asia, a renewed "Cool Japan" policy began to take action to soften the anti-Japan mood.

By developing, packaging, and selling an essentialized notion of Japanese culture, the "Japan Brand Strategy" created a "liberated" and "humane" image of postwar Japan. Daliot-Bul contends that this had a particular effect upon younger generations in other Asian countries who had not experienced earlier Japanese imperialism.[67] By building the new Japan brand around a cultural "essence" found in Japanese tradition and culture, the policy ignored, in an ethnocentric fashion, that for millions in Asia Japan's cultural tradition was associated with its history of imperial aggressiveness in the region.[68]

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[63] Boon Tay, Seow. "Asia: Through Japanese Lens Asian Identity among Japanese and Images of Asia on Japanese Television", *Keio Communication Review* No. 32 (2010): 105.
[64] Idem.
[65] Miyoshi, Masao, and H. D. Harootunian, "Japan in the World," *Boundary 2* 18, no. 3 (1991): 1-7.
[66] Iwabuchi, "Pop-Culture Diplomacy," 420.
[67] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy," 264.
[68] Idem.

As Daliot-Bul states, unlike the image of "Japan" as it emerges from contemporary popular culture products, the new national imagery promoted by the "Japan Brand" is not of cutting-edge culture, but of a country with a "clean record," in which Japan's present seamlessly emerges from a past with no shadows.[69] He claims that this is an effort at political capitalization, coercively manipulated out of an otherwise disinterested consumer trend. By binding Japan's past, policy makers in Japan believe that the success of Japanese popular culture in Asia can be used to induce a "collective amnesia" with regard to Japan's colonial past and to launch Japan into a new political future in the region.[70]

CONSTRUCTED "MEMORY"

Postwar Japan's relation to its past is filled with tension. As Igarashi states, Japanese society rendered its traumatic experiences of the war and its defeat comprehensible through narrative devices that downplayed their disruptive effects on Japan's history.[71] But Japan as a nation has also been downplaying the atrocities (and their effects) committed by the Empire of Japan in Asian-Pacific countries during the period Japanese imperialism, primarily during the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II.

In this section, I contend that the Japanese government's desire to maintain a sanitized and acceptable past, along with the content expectations Japan adopted encouraged by the dominant Western powers, governs the false "memory" implanted in the Japanese that contributes to the construction of Japanese identity. As Cassandra L. Jones notes, "individual or group memory selects certain landmarks of the past—places, artworks, dates; persons, public or private, well known or obscure, real or imagined—and invests them with symbolic and political significance."[72] Memory is divergent, reiterative, and multiple—it is in a sense, a borrowed concept. Memory does not exist outside of the boundaries of history.[73]

As discussed in the introduction, postwar Japanese identity is "attained." It is inherently under the influence of the dominant power of the US. It is also underlined by Japan's desire to imbue sanitized history. This can be understood through what media philosopher Bernard Stiegler

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[69] Idem.

[70] Idem.

[71] Igarashi, "Bodies of Memory," 1.

[72] Cassandra L Jones, "Memory and Resistance: Doro's Empire, Mary's Rebellion, and Anyanwu as Lieu De Mémoire in Octavia E. Butler's Mind of My Mind and Wild Seed," *Women's Studies, vol. 47*, no. 7 (2018): 700.

[73] Igarashi, "Bodies of Memory," 5.

defines as "tertiary retentions"—exteriorized forms of information that are passed on to construct their cultural and national identities.[74]

Stiegler, concerned with the ways in which contemporary digital media networks produce a conditioning field for human experience, cognition, and behavior, claims that the "colonization"[75] of tertiary retentions by economic or industrial forces influences the formation of internalized perception. He asserts that the internalized perception then enables the formation of individual and collective identity. He describes a "retentional chain reaction" in which the increasingly dominant presence of industrialized tertiary retentions occurs when "the symbols, images and sounds available to us are increasingly provided by commercialized culture industries."[76] They begin to condition our individual and collective forms of secondary retention—our selves, and cultural memory.

As Shunya Yoshimi states, there has been a strong linkage between television and nationalism in contemporary Japan. TV entered households in the early 1960s and became an overarching medium: linking individuals with the state, defining the national consciousness, and dominating people's imaginative views of both the past and the present of Japan.[77]

In other words, what Stiegler calls "the replacement of collective imaginaries and individual stories,"[78] with the forms of homogenized memory we find in commercial spaces—such as the "Cool Japan" images which circulate on the television, internet, or media—impacts not only the constitution of our individual memory, but also, in turn, our process of perception and selection. "It patterns what we choose to pay attention to and what we care for and what we care about."[79] Stiegler states that the particular, coerced attention of the audience is conditioned by the retentional systems. He suggests that the expanded influence of industrialized tertiary retentions holds power over the constitution of a sense of self, as well as our capacity to envision our collective future(s). Individuals constitute themselves in relation to a group through the inheritance of a pre-individual reality, memory, or history. In Stiegler's terms:

> "The I, as psychic individual, cannot be thought except to the extent that it belongs to a we, which is a collective individual: the I constitutes itself through the adoption of a collective history, which it inherits and with which a plurality of Is identify."[80]

Hence, individuation is a complex dynamic of subject formation in which the individual, in the

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[74] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Beardsworth, R, Collins, G (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994): 58.
[75] Idem.
[76] Idem.
[77] Yoshimii Shunya, "Television and Nationalism: Historical Change in the National Domestic TV Formation of Postwar Japan." *European Journal of Cultural Studies 6, no. 4* (November 2003): 459–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494030064002.
[78] Idem.
[79] Stiegler, "Technics and Time, 1," 58.
[80] Idem.

process of self-constitution, draws from a collective reservoir of "memory." The Japanese are under the influence of Japan's circulation of an essentialized notion of Japan, which citizens download from the repository of ahistorical and acceptable "memory" in the media in order to constitute their national and cultural identities.

"COLONIZED" JAPANESE IDENTITIES LIVE FOREVER: THE JAPANESE STATE'S DATA COLONIZATION

My project critiques the social and ideological biases manifested in both "whiteness"[81] and male domination that inform postwar Japanese identity as well as the agendas of digital technologies. "Dreams Come True Very Much" is informed by the "Moonshot Research & Development Program" proposed by the Cabinet Office of Japan, a project currently under development. There are three aspects to this program that I address in my project: the underlying nationalism, Japan's "subordinate's double identification"—Japan playing America's "Japan"—and the colonization of life (removing death from life) as the ultimate form of violence. In this section, I unpack how the Japanese state plans on using digital technologies as renewed forms of oppression in the post- "Moonshot Research & Development Program," AI-driven future.

Dubbed J F Kennedy's lunar program, also known as the Apollo project, this program is modelled on large-scale projects such as the European Commission's programme Horizon Europe and the US National Science Foundation (NSF) programme. It seeks to deepen Japan's partnership with Euro-American countries to boost its faltering global research profile and keep ahead of China—Japan's emerging "Other"—while tackling domestic issues such as Japan's shrinking and rapidly aging population, coupled with the biggest debt in the developed world relative to the size of its economy. The Japanese government proposes to create "Society 5.0" by 2050, wherein a single person controls up to ten avatars at once to "maximize their productivity," to "be more resistant to stress," and to "improve individuals QoL."[82] The proposal states that it will be possible to "extract human thoughts," and that by "analyzing the brain information" they will "model the thinking itself of individuals—such as human brain recognition and decision-making—and reproduce it on a computer to artificially improve the model."[83]

There are two aspects to this program that I shed light on in my project: the underlying nationalism, and Japan playing America's "Japan"[84] and the colonization of life. Essentially, the

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[81] Frankenberg, *White Women,* 6.
[82] Cabinet Office, "Moonshot International Symposium Initiative Report," https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/stmain/mspaper3.pdf.
[83] Idem, 13.
[84] Caughie, "Playing at being American," 44-58.

government is attempting to multiply Japanese national identity: with a life's worth of data from every citizen, the Japanese state can practically eliminate the death of the Japanese people, as information lives forever. Identity is information with self-awareness. The government uploads the individual's data up to the point of their physical death to a machine that thinks it *is* the individual; thus, Japanese national identity lives on; it can be kept fully intact—in the sense that identities that are saved as "Japanese" data will therefore always be "Japanese"—solving the issue of the nation's population decline without taking immigrants. In this scenario, a Japanese person, or at least a Japanese person's identity, can work forever for the nation. The sets of data (people's identities) will be used by the State to perform tasks. Japan is a self-proclaimed homogenous nation; this program would solidify that claim even further. The colonization of life (removing death from life), is perhaps, the ultimate form of violence.

This colonization of life can be understood through what Paola Ricaurte calls "data colonialism,"[85] the "commodification of human life as data and its establishment of an order mediated by data relation."[86] As Judy Waijcman has argued, the desire to create and control technology is fundamentally a realm dominated by whiteness and maleness, and thus technology itself may inherently be patriarchal.[87] Ricaurte asserts that in the patriarchal world, where "data extractivism" assumes that everything to be a data source, uneven distributions of power materialize as digital colonization, algorithmic violence, gender violence, class divides, and racism, among other forms of violence.[88] She contests that data-centered economies foster "extractive models of resource exploitation, the violation of human rights, cultural exclusion, and ecocide," and that "data colonialism" materializes especially in "multiethnic countries with high levels of social inequality outside of Western context"[89]—which Japan fits into.

Further, Ricaurte claims that these countries are at greater risk of double or triple marginalization through digital technologies due to the process of colonization that reproduces injustice within countries and enacts violence on gendered and racialized bodies, which erases "alternate visions of the world"[90]. She asserts that this leads to technology continuing to operate as a renewed form of oppression.[91] She explains how governments and public institutions act as central forces in the process of internal and international data colonization at the systemic level by:

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[85] Paola Ricaurte, "Data Epistemologies, the Coloniality of Power, and Resistance," *Television & New Media, vol. 20*, no. 4 (2019): 350-365.
[86] Idem.
[87] Judy Waijcman,"Feminist theories of technology," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34 (2010): 143–152.
[88] Ricaurte, "Data Epistemologies," 350-365.
[89] Idem, 353.
[90] Idem, 353.
[91] Idem, 353.

"1) developing legal frameworks, 2) designing public policy, 3) using artificial intelligence systems for public administration, 4) hiring technological services, 5) acquiring products for public administration and surveillance purposes, 6) implementing public policies and digital agendas, and 7) facilitating education and the development of labor forces."[92]

Ricaurte's analysis of the modes of oppression mediated by data, offers an insight into possible futures of Japan(s), where "historical forms of colonization"[93] are likely to be amplified.

The nationalistic nature of Japan's "Moonshot" program was also straightforwardly highlighted at the "Setting 'Moonshots' on Target: U.S.-Japan Strategies for National Technology Investment," a panel organized by key thought leaders behind this program. Patricia Falcone, a Deputy Director for Science and Technology and Chief Technology Officer at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, stated at the panel: "likeminded allies like Japan and the US can build ties," so when they are "in crisis, they can bring the shared strength of their system of science and technology to national needs."[94] Many of the issues Falcone explored in the paper "U.S.-Japan Technology Policy Coordination: Balancing Technonationalism with a Globalized World," which emphasizes the urgent necessity for Japan and the US to "effectively balance the imperatives of technonationalism and globalization" to compete with China—one of "the main protagonists in this technologically driven competition."[95]

CHINA AS THE EMERGING "OTHER"

Today, Japan's relations with China, their emerging socio-political hegemon, have become a nationalist focal point for both Left and Right, insofar as both sides demand that Japan resist China as a means to protect Japanese national interests. Shogo Suzuki asserts that the convergence of both the Japanese Left's and Right's images of China to indicate that the PRC is the emerging "Other" in both sides' attempts to construct Japan's identity.[96] The common Other had been the US, as idealists of both the Right and Left agreed that the US was "an arrogant hegemon"[97] that forced Japan to adopt policies that were in direct opposition to their respective images of a desirable Japanese "Self."

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[92] Idem, 357.

[93] Idem, 350.

[94] "Setting 'Moonshots' on Target: U.S.-Japan Strategies for National Technology Investment," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 28 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/28/setting-moonshots-on-target-u.s.-japan-strategies-for-national-technology-investment-event-7335.

[95] James L. Schoff, "U.S.-Japan Technology Policy Coordination: Balancing Technonationalism with a Globalized World," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 29 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/29/u.s.-japan-technology-policy-coordination-balancing-technonationalism-with-globalized-world-pub-82176.

[96] Shogo Suzuki, "The Rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's Construction of Identity: Is China a Focal Point of Japanese Nationalism?" Pacific Review, vol. 28, no. 1, 2014;2015, 97.

[97] Idem, 95.

However, Suzuki claims that both the Japanese Left and Right now use the Chinese "Other" toward different ends, i.e., the idealist Right camp points to the PRC's use of the "history card and high-handed manner" in territorial disputes to "highlight Japan's weakness and subservient identity"[98], thus pushing for their project of rearming Japan and embarking on a more independent security policy. China is now confronted as a matter of principle to overcome the "emasculated" identity that has characterized Japan's postwar state.[99] This emasculation of Japanese identity is a result of Japan's "makeover" by the US. After Japan's defeat, the US transformed itself as a new superpower in the mid-twentieth century. Japan was reimagined by the US; Japan is no longer "threatening," it is now "inoffensive."[100] This went hand in hand with the shift of Emperor Hirohito's status in the US, which was directed by MacArthur and the Truman administration to "westernize" the emperor who was universally hated in the US during the war. He was transformed from an "archetypical Oriental villain" who possessed deviant masculinity, to an emasculated "symbol of openness to Western ideas and culture," and "a paternalistic figure, leading the pliable, immature Japanese through the process of political and social maturation."[101] He became the face of Japan where the Americans' could project their hopes for smooth and successful occupation.

By contrast, the Left in Japan uses a "bullying China" to highlight Japan's "moral" and "peaceful" nature, thus emphasizing the need for Japan not to stray from its post-1945 pathway of development. China has become the powerful "Other" that Japan feels wariness towards, which is evident in Japan's unprecedented scale of investment in projects such as the "Moonshot Program," in which the primary motive is to compete with China along with its "ally," the US. The "Moonshot Program" informs narrative of my art project, "Dreams Come True Very Much."

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[98] Idem, 97.
[99] Idem, 98.
[100] Hal Brands, "The Emperor's New Clothes: American Views of Hirohito After World War II," The Historian (Kingston) 68, no. 1 (2006): 28.
[101] Idem.

DECONSTRUCTION
SHANZHAI (山寨) AND JAPANESENESS

In this section, I discuss Byun Chul-Han's conceptualization of deconstruction in Chinese, *shanzhai,* to rethink Japanese identities as delinked from the idea of "pure originality"[102] and internalized Orientalism, and to imagine futurities of Japan(s).

Throughout history, Japan has borrowed visual formations from foreign cultures, mainly Chinese to Euro-American, in order to establish its own cultural configurations.[103] As Kemeda-Madar claims, the nation has been called a "nation of copiers" with a pejorative connotation, as the act and works resulting from *utushi* (copy, duplicate, replica, etc.) have been denigrated as lacking in originality.[104]

As I discussed in "Japan's Self-Claimed 'Cultural DNA' and Nationalism," Japan's self-Orientalism, accumulated through its popular-culture diplomacy, functions as a mechanism in order to construct an exclusive national and cultural identity. The government's interest in promoting essentialized notions of Japanese culture confirms Japan's "distinctive" cultural aesthetics, styles, and tastes using the metaphor of "cultural DNA."[105] This idea of "pure originality" primarily emerged as a counter-narrative to Japan's infamous ability to imitate the West; however, this self-claimed new "originality" was eventually internalized by the Japanese.

For instance: in 2019, for the era's name, Japan's officials selected characters from "ancient Japanese poetry"[106] instead of Chinese classics for the first time. This event highlights Japan's eagerness to achieve a specific sense of exclusive cultural identity. The officials emphasized that the characters came from the "original Japanese classic," the Poem of Manshu; however, there were textual criticisms by scholars who point out the anthology's intellectual sources comes from Chinese poetry. This is an example of Japan's effort to establish the country's self-claimed distinctive "originality," to discern itself from its history of borrowing visual formations from foreign cultures, mainly China—Japan's socio-political hegemon. In my art project, using *shanzhai* (Chinese deconstruction) as a methodology, I explore probable Japan(s), and rethink

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[102] Tom Forester, "Consuming electronics: Japan's strategy for control," *Media Information Australia 67* (1993): 4-16.

[103] Kazuko Kameda-Madar, "Copying and Theory in Edo-Period Japan (1615–1868)," *Art History*, September 2014, 709, DOI: 10.1111/1467-8365.12111.

[104] Idem.

[105] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Against Banal Inter-Nationalism," *Asian Journal of Social Science, vol. 41*, no. 5 (2014): 447.

[106] Elaine Lies and Malcolm Foster, "New Japanese imperial era 'Reiwa' takes name from ancient poetry," Reuters, March 31 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-emperor-idUSKCN1RD13X.

versions of Japanese national and cultural identities as something without an "original," to undermine the essentialist logic behind them.

The expression *shanzhai* (山寨), literally means "mountain fortress," a modern Chinese neologism meaning "fake." The word *shanzhai* has been present in Chinese language since ancient times in reference to mountain villages or stockades. Silvia Lindtner explains that the story of the expression's current incarnation as "imitation" began with the appearance of forged cell phones sold under names such as *Nokir* and *Samsing* on the market.[107] This was made possible by a relaxation of regulations in 2006 that allowed Taiwanese company MediaTek to import mobile phone chipsets. As a result, any person could start a production line of cellphone by assembling components. Over the course of 2008, *shanzhaiji*—meaning items that imitate more expensive models, cheap, and reliable, were widely distributed.

The expression *shanzhai* does not mean crude; indeed, it is hardly inferior, as *shanzhai* sometimes exceed the "original." The *shanzhai* identity's inherent ambiguity—*almost the same but not quite*—brings with it a dimension of "disruption of authority"[108] as it creates gaps in the systems of knowledge through which systems of domination are exercised. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace"[109]. His insight helps to explain the power of *shanzhai* identity that draws from both deconstructing and legitimizing the "authentic" targets it mimics.

As philosopher Byun Chul Han asserts in his book, "*Shanzhai*: Deconstruction in Chinese," if "truth" in the West operates through "exclusion" and "transcendence," Chinese thought "uses a different technique that operates using inclusion and immanence."[110] Han, starting from Hegel's frustration with the Buddhist notion of emptiness, points out that emptiness in Chinese Buddhism means the negativity of decreation and absence. In contrast to Western notions of essentialism, deconstruction in Chinese is a starting point, not a reaction—it breaks radically with being and essence. Han connects this orientation to the Chinese awareness of time and history, as Chinese thought "does not recognize the kind of identity that is based on a unique event."[111] In other words, in Chinese thought, the original is always already a trace, and "the trace always lets the artwork differ from itself."[112] "In classical Chinese, the original is called zhen ji [...] This

[107] Lindtner, Silvia. "Hackerspaces and the Internet of Things in China: How Makers are Reinventing Industrial Production, Innovation, and the Self." China Information 28, no. 2 (2014): 145-167.
[108] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 122-123.
[109] Idem.
[110] Byung-Chul Han, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese,* (Boston, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017): 29.
[111] Idem.
[112] Idem 2-3.

literally means 'the authentic trace'."[113] Han asserts that the fundamental notion in Chinese thought is not the unique Being, but the multiform, multilayered process.

Han then gives the example of the ancient or classical Chinese work of art, which is always subject to transformation and whose authorship is much less clearly determinable. Often, a large part of the painting is left empty so that collectors can later add their seal stamps, situating the painting as trace in a conversation with others, and turning it into an open field of dialogue. Thus, Chinese thought breaks out of a monological notion of art: both individual and collective works are open to transformation. Han claims that "the Chinese artwork is empty and flat. It is without soul and truth."[114] In Chinese thought, if one has become what is considered to be the master's equal, this is proof of one's own mastership—there are no negative notions attached. For instance, Xie He 謝嚇 (c. 500–535), stated that a good painting transmits and conveys earlier models through copying.[115] According to Xie He's Sixth Law, there is no clear-cut distinction between "painting" and "copying"; in fact, it refers to "copying" as an element of "painting."

Han dares hope that *shanzhai* may bring in *shanzhai* democracy, since the *shanzhai* movement releases anti-authoritarian, subversive energies. Employing Han's theorization of *shanzhai* as a methodology, my thesis project explores Japanese identities as something without an original, as *shanzhai* "disrupts fixed invariable essences or principles"[116].

IMAGINING FUTURES OF JAPAN(S): IDENTITIES AS CONTINGENT

In my narrative-based project, I use *shanzhai* to rethink Japanese identities as delinked from the idea of "pure originality"[117] and internalized Orientalism. My work uses critical science fiction narratives as a tool to disrupt current discourses surrounding Japanese identities. The static and deterministic structures of homogenous Japanese identity remain prevalent in contemporary Japan. By presenting not only Japanese identities but identities in general as malleable, contingent, and open to rearticulation, my work aims to illustrate how the unified category of Japanese, and humans in general, are categorically interpellated and performatively constituted through the discourses that constitute their lives.

My narrative resists the notion of a constant, static Self. This partially comes from my own experience as a Japanese living abroad who, consciously and subconsciously, performs different

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[113] Idem, 10.
[114] Idem, 14.
[115] Idem.
[116] Idem, 4.
[117] Tom Forester, "Consuming electronics: Japan's strategy for control," *Media Information Australia 67* (1993): 4-16.

"I"s depending on the sociocultural contexts. I am constantly "re/organizing my sense of Self, Other, and the relationship between Self and Other."[118] As Wolff-Michael Roth and Hitomi Harama assert, "identity is a site of continuous struggle, arising from a multiplicity of situations and group-memberships leading to our experience of multiple marginalities, and which is, therefore, a source of monstrosity."[119] Stuart Hall also contents, "identities are never unified and increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting, and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation."[120]

To present identities as mutable, I use "Extrapolation: Neoliberal Speculative Fiction"[121] and "Dark DeSign"[122] as methodologies. Whereas "Extrapolation: Neoliberal Speculative Fiction" uses speculative fiction stories to extrapolate today's free-market system to an extreme, weaving the narrative around hyper commodified aspects of human, "Dark DeSign" uses darkness and satire as an antidote to naive techno-utopianism.

As Fredric Jameson contends, the purpose of science fiction is "not to give us 'images' of the future…but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience with our own present, and to do so in specific ways distinct from all other forms of defamiliarization."[123] The science fiction stories within my projects critique aspects of Japanese identities, but are not meant as plausible speculations about the future of Japan, or a post-"Moonshot" cyborgian world .

An example of an author who uses science fiction to look critically at the present to speculate future(s) is Larissa Lai. "Salt Fish Girl" appropriates techno-Orientalist tropes in order to critique racist, sexist, and imperialist attitudes. Her narratives explore what it means to be gendered and racialized in an age when technology transcends geopolitical boarders and exists both outside and inside of the body. The non-human beings function sometimes as metaphors for the new "disposable" Asian worker in the era of globalization, sometimes as second-generation Asian immigrant in North America. Her strategically techno-Orientalized characters are not part of the exotic backdrop in some Westernized cyber-fantasy; they are at the center of the novel, leading the narrative.

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[118] Wolff-Michael Roth & Hitomi Harama, "(Standard) English as second language: Tribulations of self*," Journal of Curriculum Studies, 32:6*, 769.

[119] Roth & Harama, "(Standard) English as second language," 758.

[120] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In Questions of Cultural Identity, by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 1 - 17. SAGE Publications, 2012, 4.

[121] Dunne Anthony and Fiona Raby, "Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming" (Cambridge; The MIT Press, Mass, 2013): 73.

[122] Idem, 43.

[123] Frederic Jameson, "Progress Versus Utopia; Or, can we Imagine the Future," Science Fiction Studies 9 (2), 192, 151.

[123] Idem, 152.

RECONSTRUCTION
WHAT CYBORGS CAN('T) DO ABOUT JAPANESE IDENTITIES

In this section, I discuss how much potential Donna Haraway's cyber-fantasy of cyborgs really holds to dismantle categories of differences for people of color: specifically for Japanese women. Although Haraway's "reconstructed imaginary"[124] encourages a departure from traditional categories of difference, various critics claim that it is "fraught with a Western, patriarchal violence."[125] Julia R DeCook asserts that technology—including the cyborg, the transhuman, and the posthuman as identities that exist in a utopia, in a beyond—is a myth that is being perpetuated and shifted by those who already benefit from hegemonic paradigms of what counts as being human in the first place. In my project, I draw parallels to Haraway's manifestation of cyborgs to aspects of constructed "Japaneseness," aspects which come from a white-washed, amalgamation of information accumulated to rewrite cultural "memories." To contextualize my understanding of "data colonialism," I draw from writing of Paolo Ricaurte, Julia R DeCook, and Pratistha Bhattarai to enable my discussion of Japan's "Moonshot Research & Development Program."

In her seminal work, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," Haraway claims that the cyborg, "a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular, historical, cultural practices,"[126] is one that transcends Western dichotomies such as nature versus culture, body versus mind, female versus male, and animal versus human. She suggests that a woman of color "might be understood as a cyborg identity, a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities and in the complex political-historical layerings of her 'biomythography'"[127], calling for more integration of feminist theories of women of color in analyzing identity and difference.

However, various critics have pointed out that Haraway's cyborgs' theory fails to adequately represent feminist issues and concerns, despite the fact that her depictions of cyborgs seem to offer such a promise. In DeCook's critique of Haraway, she claims that "the cyborg body is one that is littered with not only epistemic violence in regard to the foundations on which it is grounded (a Western philosophy of the self as well as Western views of science and technology),

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[124] Soyang Park, Supervisory Comments, OCAD University, February 7 2021.
[125] DeCook, Julia R. "A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto: The Overwhelmingly Western Ideology Driving Technofeminist Theory." Media, Culture & Society, 2020: 1.
[126] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991): 51.
[127] Idem, 468.

but also in regard to class, race, sexuality, and ability."[128] She calls Haraway's argument a futile attempt to "dismantle the master's house with the master's tools."[129]

In "'Colonized Japanese Identities Live Forever: The Japanese State's Data Colonization," I introduced Paolo Ricaurte's argument that the technological revolution of this century may have further reified and cemented differences between races, nationality, gender, along with other categories of difference. This can be supported by DeCook's argument in which she claims that the epistemic groundings upon which much of science and technology and cyborg are built upon, are with violence. Technology and the desire to create and control machines is a realm dominated by Man, and thus technology itself may inherently be patriarchal.[130]

Decook explains that during the time Haraway's manifesto was written, the transhumanist movement started to formally organize, attempting to disseminate its ideology into the world. Today, the rise of the networked societies and the ability to shift and shape identities in cyberspace make the idea of the cyborg womxn more possible than ever. For instance, the government of Japan is proposing the "Moonshot Research & Development Program" in which they assert a near future where Japanese multiply themselves into both physical and virtual avatars.

There is also a question about the accessibility to technology upon which the cyborg identity is built. For instance, according to the U.N.'s International Telecommunication Union, a gender gap in internet usage is particularly serious in the least-developed countries, as one in seven women were using the internet compared with one in five men. DeCook also gives an example of the current state in the US, where there is a severe divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not, and this unequal access exacerbates the social inequalities that they have often created (Shapiro, 2010). She claims that technology cannot exist outside of the material confines of space: "Even those who do not participate in the same uses of technology and who are unable to experience its benefits and thus, its potential, are affected by the changes in behavior, social norms, economics, and identity that it produces."[131]

DeCook also cites Pratistha Bhattarai's argument in which Bhattarai argues that technology and cyborgs, since it is created by humans, carries with it the same limitations as humanity in terms of its ability to provide transcendence of our categorizations of race, class, gender, and ability.[132] Bhattarai claims that in fact, since the algorithm, or what she calls "source code," is written from the epistemological standpoint and values of those who create it (white males), they are already

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[128] Decook, "A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto," 4.

[129] Audre Lorde, *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In: Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 110–114.

[130] Decook, "A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto," 4.

[131] Idem, 5.

[132] Paratistha Bhattarai, "Algorithmic value: cultural encoding, textuality, and the myth of "source code," Catalyst*: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience 3(1) (*2017): 1–28.

imbued with certain assumptions that come with categories of differences. Bhattarai claims that even investments in algorithms that seem benign reproduce a certain cultural logic of power in terms of knowledge, labor, and bodies.[133] The idea of source code, of algorithms, of data being the genesis of action is naïve— "because their agency is enabled and constrained by a larger network of cultural and economic encodings that render them executable,"[134] illuminating again, that attempts to make technology and the tech world more inclusive and diverse, as well as the attempts to use the category of cyborg as transcending difference, are merely the "master's tools" disguised as revolutionary action.

DeCook asks: "If the tech industry and tech world is heavily dominated by whiteness, by maleness, then in what capacity do those who do not fit into hegemonic notions of humanity (white, cis, hetero, male) figure into these infrastructural equations?"[135] Epistemic sites of thought in the theorization of the cyborg exist within the same epistemic paradigms upon which all science and technology are built upon (colonialist, Western, white), and thus are limited in their capacities to fully conceptualize a utopia for womxn of color.

To summarize, DeCook, along with Bhattarai and other theorists argue that Haraway's conceptualization of cyborgs has continued to allow for the centering of whiteness and maleness, and a techno-utopic worldview where technology is seen to be emancipatory, rather than oppressive. DeCook attests that Haraway did encourage the embrace of new technologies as a means of liberation—however, today, we see the ways that technology continues to reify existing power structures, notably white supremacy, and misogyny. Haraway's notion of the cyborg is deeply Western in its theorization, and leaves behind those (womxn, people of color, the disabled, queer persons) who do not exist in Western conceptualization of human-ness.

In my satirical projects, cyborg—originally a military invention that held in its very essence the idea of war—functions as a metaphor to critique the whiteness of Japanese identity. I parallel cyborgs with what constructs "Japaneseness," which is propaganda. Like hardware, it is manufactured, mass-produced, then advertised, much like the empty idea of a whitewashed "Cool Japan," using detailed reconstructions of the selective appropriation of products and culture in order to create a new cultural imagery for Japan. By creating this parallel, I critique the aspects of constructed "Japaneseness" that come from whitewashing and creating false "memories," much like how viruses infiltrate data bases. This data, now infected, is then used to construct whitewashed Japanese cultural and national identity.

The cyborgs in my narratives are not detached from the realities of violence that derive from race, class, gender, and ability. In fact, they carry with them the same limitations as humanity,

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[133] Idem.
[134] Bhattarai, "Algorithmic value," 21.
[135] Idem.

since the biased epistemological standpoints and values are imbued in the fundamentals of technology. For instance, in my narrative-based film, "Dreams Come True Very Much," how the cyborgs of Maari Sugawara (me) interact with their subjective realities is based on one set of data that constitutes one identity.

POLITICS OF TRANSLATION: "POETIC OF RAVINE" (詩的な 峡谷) AS A TOOL FOR DEFAMILIARIZATION

Here, I discuss how cyborgian subjective reality along with strategic translation becomes a tool for defamiliarization. I explore the political dimensions of translation by discussing theories by Gayatri Spivak, Wolff-Michael Roth and Hitomi Harama. I also introduce Yoko Tawada's use of the "poetic ravine" (詩的な峡谷) which allows her writing to fall into the liminal space between language A and language B.

What Tawada calls the "poetic ravine" is an in-between, non-conformist space. It is a "third" place, or, to borrow Homi Bhaba's term, a space that resounds with the echoes of both languages—an ideal space for translators, or those who drifts in liminal spaces—between categorizations of differences. I use Tawada's "poetic ravine" as a methodology. For me, strategic translation functions as a tool to critique essentialist notions of identity. It also helps me visualize the link between languages as well as national and cultural identities. In order to bring attention to the political aspects of language and translation; to exploit literal and figurative layers of signification; and to draw attention to language itself—its fluidity, and its sociopolitical nature—while highlighting that "loss" in translation is inevitable, I employ a writing style the defamiliarizes the relationship between the word and its meaning. In my narrative-based project "Dreams Come True Very Much," wordplay extends and deconstructs idioms and proverbs to resist essentialist notions of identity.

For instance, I translate Japanese idiomatic expressions while exploiting the literal meaning. Inspired by Tawada's use of wordplays, the expression "souma tou no you ni kioku gayomigaeru (走馬灯のように記憶が蘇る)," which literally means "memories revive like a lantern," means, figuratively, "life flashing before your eyes before death." The word for lantern(走馬灯) consists of three kanjis; to run (走), horse (馬), light, lamp, torch (灯). By taking grammatical concepts literally, I play with the idea of the Avatar-*M*s seeing horses running around them, as they fight "Japan," which takes a form of a woman and strangles them.

puts all her strength around my neck.

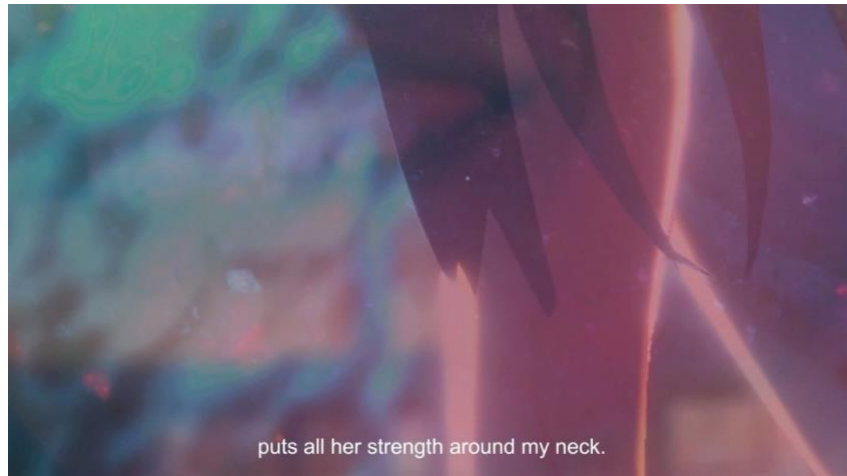Maybe it is not the woman's fault that I had fallen.

Figure 3. Film stills from *Dreams Come True Very Much* (2021)

I also play with words that have the same reading compounds. For instance, in the opening of "Dreams Come True Very Much," where the Avatar-*M*s are "watching Japan sliding on the conveyor belt…and before [they] knew it, what was Japan had become a god," images on the screen depicts not only the metamorphosizing *kami* (神: god), but *kami* (髪: hair), *kami* (紙: paper), and *kani* (蟹: crab). My intention is to make the audiences reflect on the language itself, or question the "naturalness" of the languages we use. Gayatri Spivak, to decipher these metaphors or idiomatic expression that get lost in the translated text, calls for the development of "love and affinity" to the text by the translators, and states the translator must "surrender" to

the text. Thus, the task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow.[136]
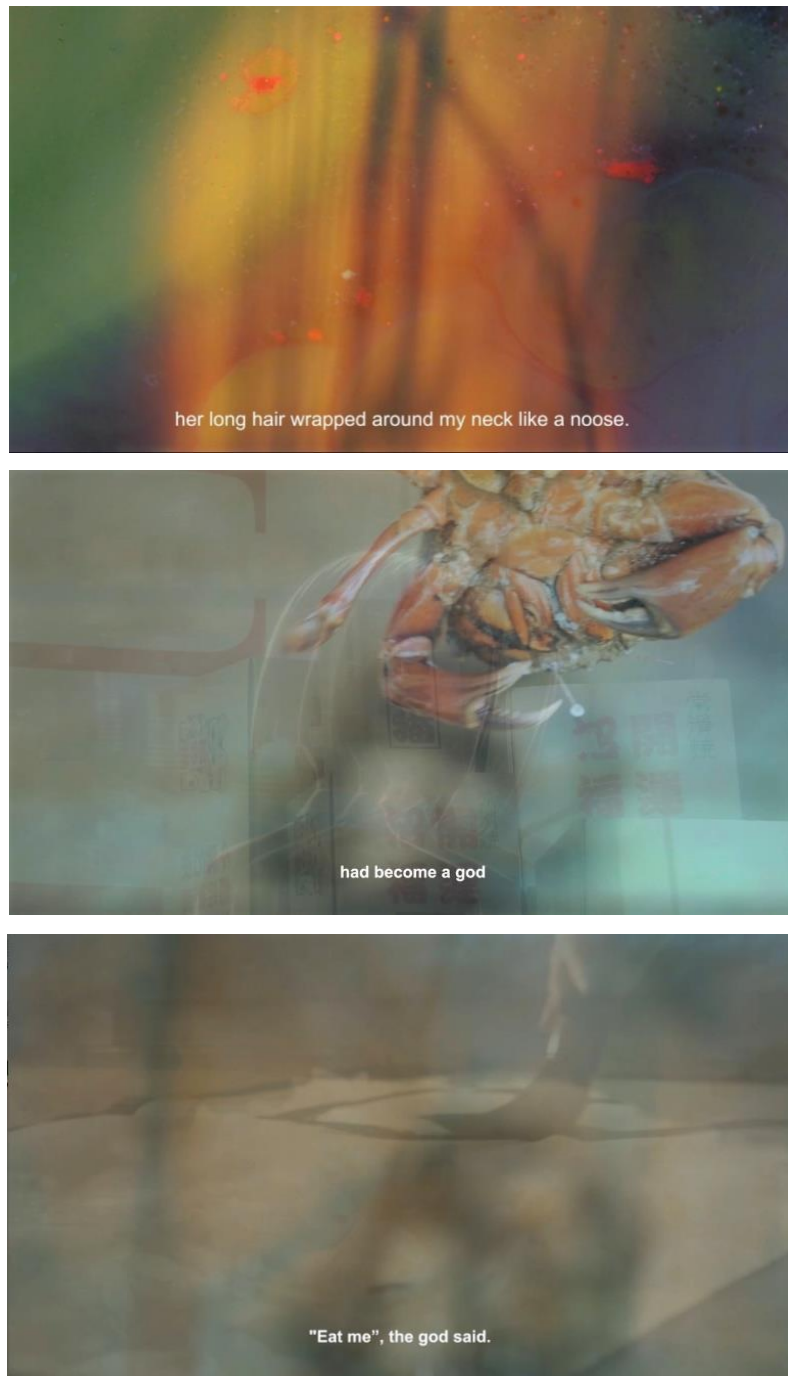

Figure 4. Film stills from *Dreams Come True Very Much* (2021)

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[136] Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation" in Tutun Mukherjee ed. *Translation: From Periphery to Centerstage* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1998): 95-118.

My poem and some parts of this thesis were first written in Japanese then translated to English. The idea of writing the poem in Japanese first, came to my mind after I exchanged emails with Ayumi Goto, a Japanese Canadian artist, who gave me insights into how languages affect one's creative and critical directions:

> "i have a friend/colleague from Tokyo who did her phd in the same department as me. she was working on sex trade work and Asian diasporic illegal work in Yokohama. her research was so important, yet she disclosed to me that she never discussed her research in Japan. this concerned me because of how her input might support non-Japanese citizens working in very vulnerable positions. i wonder sometimes how one's language can be used for self-censure, especially as a Japanese woman working on topics that would contest the social status quo. だから英語と日本語使いながら自分の研究を素直に辿いてください。"

Goto's remark relates to Japan's aforementioned ethnocentric and patriarchal socio-political structure, that disavows marginalized groups existence as constitutive of the nation. This structure silences the subalterns—womxn, non-Japanese citizens, and other minority groups—in order to establish Japan as a country with a clean record. Her colleague's episode also proves how intense *haji* (the concept of publish shaming) is in Japan. This sensitivity towards shaming is not "natural" but is constructed: Japanese schools imbue rigorous notions of propriety into children from an early age. Such sensitivity to public shaming is so intense in Japan that imaginary gaze alone tends to suffice to generate shame which occasionally leads to self-censorship. What underlies *haji* is the code whereby individuals are expected to not violate norms.

The episode led me to consider what languages do to me, and what I can do to languages. It is with language that we construct our ideas of the world. In a sense, one is confined to the language(s) that they use. For instance, the state usually imposes one language with the aim of more effectively administering its subjects and unifying the nation. As a way of freeing myself from the oppression that both languages impose on their users, during my writing process of the poem and this thesis, I switched between the languages that I use to the one I am most comfortable with, depending on the context. As Roth and Harama state, switching between two languages has been "deeply uprooting, self-transforming,"[137] and has an impact to my experience of self. Using another language brings with it a drastically-changing sense of identity, as using more than one language further complicates the constantly-mutating nature of identity. My relationship with the languages I use is stated in my work:

> *When I write in English, there is a hole, its mouth is wide open, waiting to eat me.*
> *Perhaps it is not a feeling—maybe, there is a hole sucking me in.*
> *Like a vagina.*

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[137] Idem, 763.

Except nothing comes out.

I wrote this in Japanese.
What does that say about this piece, and 私?
言語は私に何をして、私は言語に何をする？

BODY OF WORK

INVENTORY AND FLOOR PLAN OF THE EXHIBITION

1. *Dreams Come True Very Much*, 2021
    1. *Dreams Come True Very Much (part 1)*, 2021, Animation, 1:49 ■
    2. *Dreams Come True Very Much (part 2)*, 2021, Animation, 1:19 ■
2. *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts*, 2021, Video installation, projector, canvas, inkjet print 24' x 16' ■
3. *When I use English: there is a hole, waiting to eat me, its mouth wide open. Like a vagina. Echo comes out.*, 2021, Audio-visual installation, projector, size variable, 3:58 ■
4. 蕩 *(dong),"* 2021, Video installation, projector, 4:00 ■
5. *Untitled*, 2021, Video installation, projector, wooden Noh mask ■
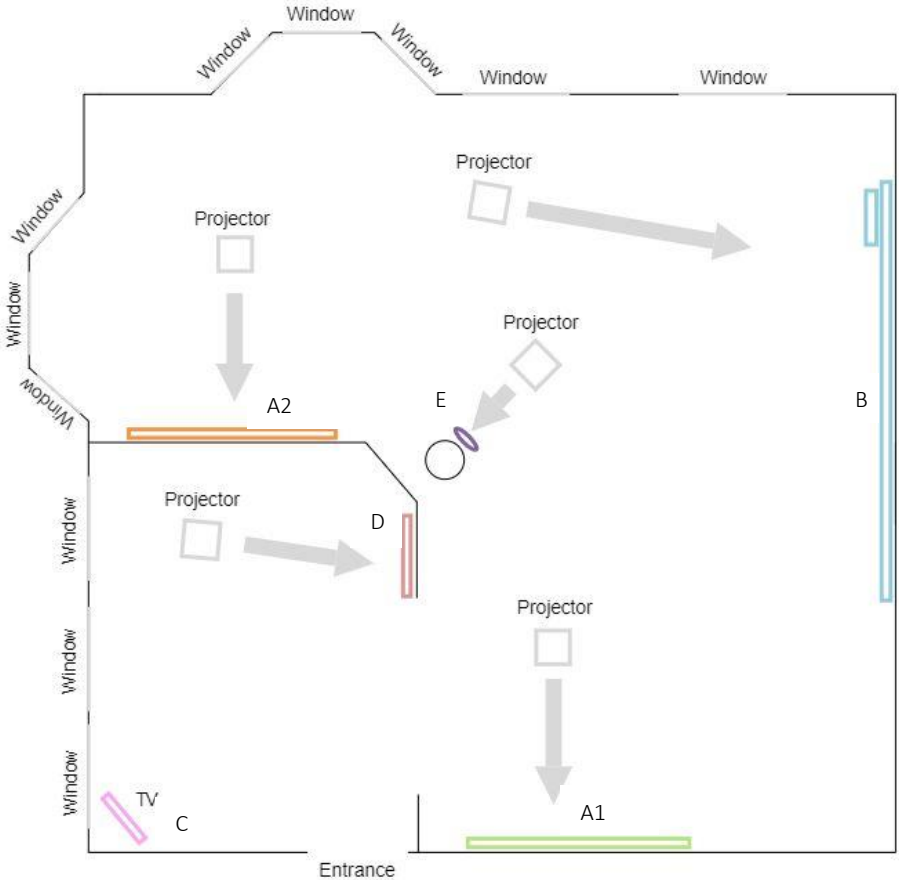

Figure 5: Floor plan for Maari Sugawara's MFA thesis exhibition *Dreams Come True Very Much*

DREAMS COME TRUE VERY MUCH

Figure 6. Installation View of the exhibition *Dreams Come True Very Much*, 2021

My thesis exhibition "Dreams Come True Very Much" consists of five components: a short film (which is split into two), two video works, an audio-visual installation, and a projection mapping of AI-generated "Japanese" faces onto a Noh mask. The film *"Dreams Come True Very Much"* serves as the basis for the overall narrative, introducing the Avatar-*M*s and setting featured in other works.

Most of my projects are digitally projected images. This mode of presentation suggests transience or impermanence; the audience cast shadows onto the projection's surfaces. These shadows ostensibly become part of one's experience of the artwork.

The projects are located in order to create a circle that mirrors Avatar-*M*s' existence, her *raison d'être* is perpetuity; there is no end, the video of her continues to play, much like the avatars in the post-"Moonshot" world, where there is not death and only existence. Although there is an overarching narrative structure to this exhibition, this exhibition itself has no beginning, middle, or end. For instance, projected images fade into one another and the themes echo each other. Each grounded in a socio-political context, my projects resonate with one another.

To create an intimate feeling, commonplace consumer products such as plastic boxes, water bottles, and a TV are placed in the exhibition space. Also, to hint at one of the underlying themes

of my work—3.11, which still leaves scar after a decade—the space is punctuated by translucent plastic boxes that are stacked up and scattered throughout the space.

Figure 7. Installation View of *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts*, 2021

DREAMS COME TRUE VERY MUCH: THE ANIMATION

I was watching Japan sliding on the conveyor belt.

Figure 8. Film still from *Dreams Come True Very Much*, 2011

By presenting, not only Japanese identities but identities as a whole as malleable, this short film seeks to illustrate how the unified categories of Japanese and human are categorically interpellated and performatively constituted through discourse. This film critiques the social and ideological biases manifested in both "whiteness" and male domination that inform postwar Japanese identity as well as the agendas of digital technologies.

The backstory of the project is informed by the "Moonshot Research & Development Program" proposed by the Cabinet Office of Japan, in which the government asserts a near future where Japanese people will multiply themselves into both physical and virtual avatars. Emphasizing the political and social possibilities of AI in post-"Moonshot" world, my work unpacks how the Japanese state plans to use digital technologies as renewed forms of oppression. My work seeks to defamiliarize and restructure our experiences with the current Japanese socio-political environments and our present. There are three aspects to this program that I address: the underlying nationalism, Japan's "subordinate's double identification"—Japan playing America's "Japan"—and the colonization of life (removing death from life) as the ultimate form of violence.

Set in a virtual space, the narrative follows a theme of yearning and longing for "Japan(s)" in the minds of the Avatar-*M*s—cybernetic avatars of myself. The story takes place in a post-"Moonshot" future, where Japan has vanished after an unspecified man-made catastrophe; no one has seen Japan ever since. The Japanese, shamed by their history, are scattered around the world. Before Japan vanished, the government established the "Moonshot" program to create "Society 5.0," a notion of a society that integrates cyberspace and physical space to realize economic growths. Each Japanese was suggested by the government to have ten avatars, and most Japanese multiplied themselves to "improve productivity" and become "more resistant to stress"[138]. The government uploaded individuals' cognitive information, from birth to the point of bodily death, to machines. Such machines are programmed to think that they *are* the individuals. Thus, Japanese national identity lived on fully intact, as the data (identities) that were saved as "Japanese" will always be "Japanese." Japanese people, or at least Japanese identities, work forever for the state. Although the program is no longer supported, the avatars live on in the virtual world—including Avatar-*M*s, the ten copies of myself. In the virtual world, her cybernetic avatars dream of "Japan(s)."

By presenting not only Japanese identities but identities as a whole as malleable, this film aims to contrast and disrupt essentialized discourses surrounding Japanese identity by presenting identities in general as malleable and open to rearticulation. It draws from Stuart Hall and Judith Butler's theory of identities as never unified or fixed. I present the identities of both the avatars and "Japan(s)" as contingent and mutable in this film, depending on recognition and context. For instance, the appearance of the avatar's body changes, and sometimes multiplies: their subjectivity is mutable; they adapt to and reflect whatever context they are in. The mutability of the avatar is supported by Stuart Hall's argument of "identification as a construction, as a process never completed—always 'in process'…identification is … conditional, lodged in contingency"[139]. The shapeshifting "Japan(s)" sometimes takes the form of a woman, sometimes of rice, sometimes of a god.

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[138] Cabinet Office, "Moonshot International Symposium Initiative Report," https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/stmain/mspaper3.pdf.
[139] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'*?" In Questions of Cultural Identity* (California: SAGE Publications, 2012): 4.

The bright patterns of her clothes covered my eyes,

Compassion for the rice that is me that is god.
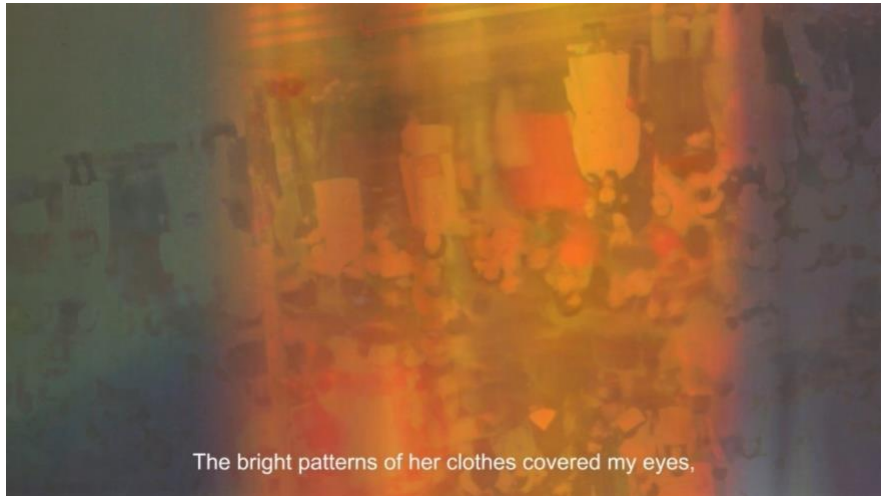
had become a god

Figure 9. Film stills from *Dreams Come True Very Much, 2011*

How languages affect one's creative and critical directions is another grounding theme in this project. This poem was first written in Japanese and translated to English, and is marked by metaphors translated from Japanese wordplay, which is often lost when translated.

Editing wise, the film is shot in a VR world I created, a conceptual representation of the consciousness of the Avatar-*M*s. The VR world was sculpted and animated using open-source 3D modelling Japanese software including STYLY, VRoidStudio and VWorld. Using *shanzhai*-ed open-source textures and materials sourced from Google poly, I modelled the space that resembles the inside of the Avatar-*M*s which were made from my imagination, drawing on references from the SF genre as seen in film, anime, and popular culture. This film serves as the basis for the overall narrative and visual vocabulary of the thesis exhibition, introducing the characters Avatar-*M*s and settings featured in the other works.

INHABITING DISTANT GHOSTS

There has always been a ghost that haunts those who forget and those who leave rice in their bowls.

Perhaps it is Japan.

I feel its presence.

In the morning, the teacups are clean,

the dust on the shelves are wiped,

and the garbage is neatly put away.

At night, I can hear the click-clack of footsteps

echoing as if something is walking through a hectic station.

Sometimes, it leaves the floor drenched,

the shelves overturned.

It makes the doors rattle

when there is no wind

and occasionally shakes the ground.

Maari Sugawara, January 27, 2020

Figure 10. *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts,* Video installation, projector, canvas, inkjet print, 24" x 16"

The substanceless-ness of "Japaneseness" follows me around like a ghost. Here, I visualize the "collective, biological fear"[140] of earthquakes, tsunamis, and radioactive substances released into the sea. Such are the fears that haunt the Japanese people. It is perhaps, the strongest biological bond I have with Japan. The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (3.11)—the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan—killed over ten thousand people. From that point on, the collective "memory" of 3.11 was added to the "collective, biological fear" of being Japanese; and for me, of being.

After 3.11, the media embraced nationalist narratives. Soft nationalism has been coerced to overwrite our "memory,"[141] our "collective, biological fear."[142]

At the time of 3.11, I was sent to boarding school in England. Back home, my father—originally from the Sendai Prefecture—was, at the time the tsunami hit, in the affected area. On the news, hundred of evacuation sites were washed away, along with cars and even houses. Though my father is now safe, my family, for a week, could not contact him.

For almost a decade, I've felt a sense of ownership over the "memory" of 3.11. Some would consider me a person who "abandoned Japan." Yet 3.11, through time, has become a link—an indirect trauma that connects me, someone who was outside of Japan at the time of the incident, and is still situated outside of Japan, with Japan.

The sociologist Kiyoshi Kanebishi documents ghost stories, the relationship between those whose loved ones passed away and the dead. Because the official record of the 3.11 disaster is largely "male-dominated," Kanebishi resorted to studying the letters survivors write to the dead and the dreams of women and children.

"Just like Noh plays, where the world of the dead and the living is woven together," Kanebishi suggests—amidst this strong sociopolitical pressure for Japan to erase the past of trauma in the name of reconstruction— that we "not bury the dead, but live in eternity, and move forward in time with the dead at our own pace."

The diptych consists of photographs taken outside of Japan: one on a ferry and the other on a beach—moments when I was reminded of Japan. Here, the visceral nature in photography's subjectivity becomes an invitation for viewers to be sympathetic for my reflection of what has happened. I have an indirect experience of 3.11; the viewers are now looking at me reflecting on my indirect relationship (connection) with 3.11 (Japan).

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[140] Ayumi Goto, Advisory Comments, OCAD University, December 28, 2020.
[141] Cassandra L Jnes, "Memory and Resistance: Doro's Empire, Mary's Rebellion, and Anyanwu as Lieu De Mémoire in Octavia E. Butler's Mind of My Mind and Wild Seed," *Women's Studies, vol. 47*, no. 7 (2018): 700.
[142] Ayumi Goto, Advisory Comments, OCAD University, December 28, 2020.
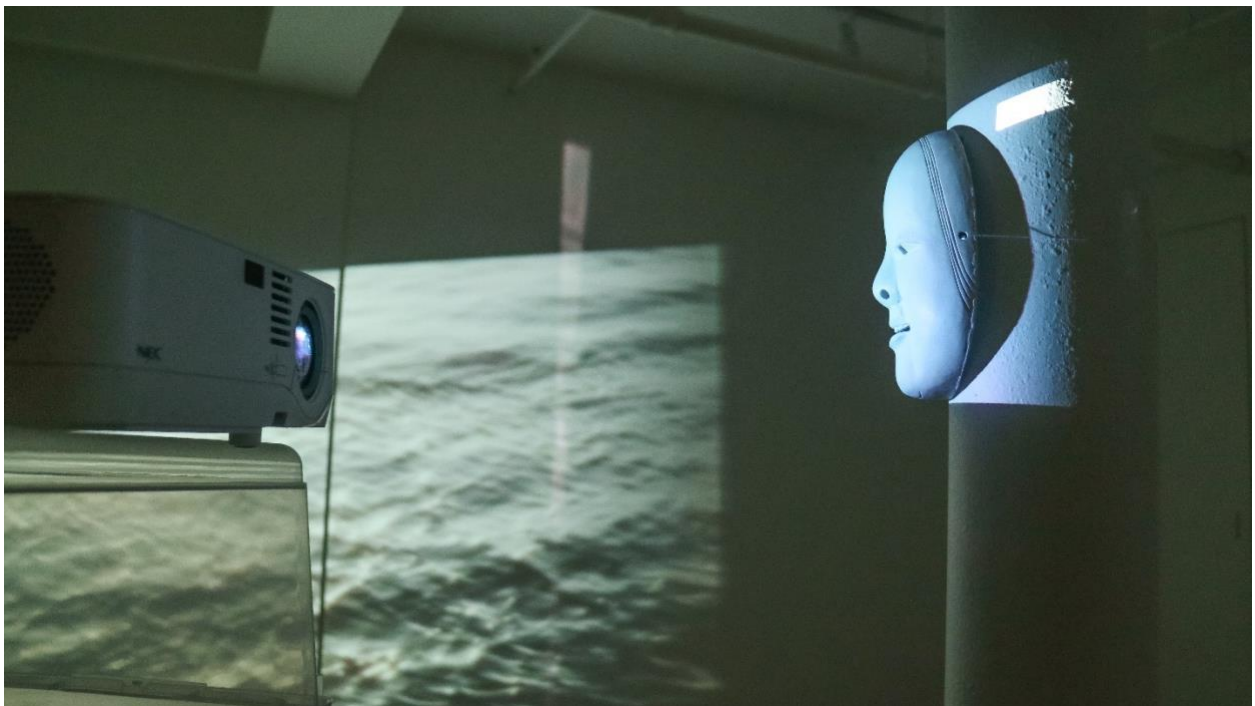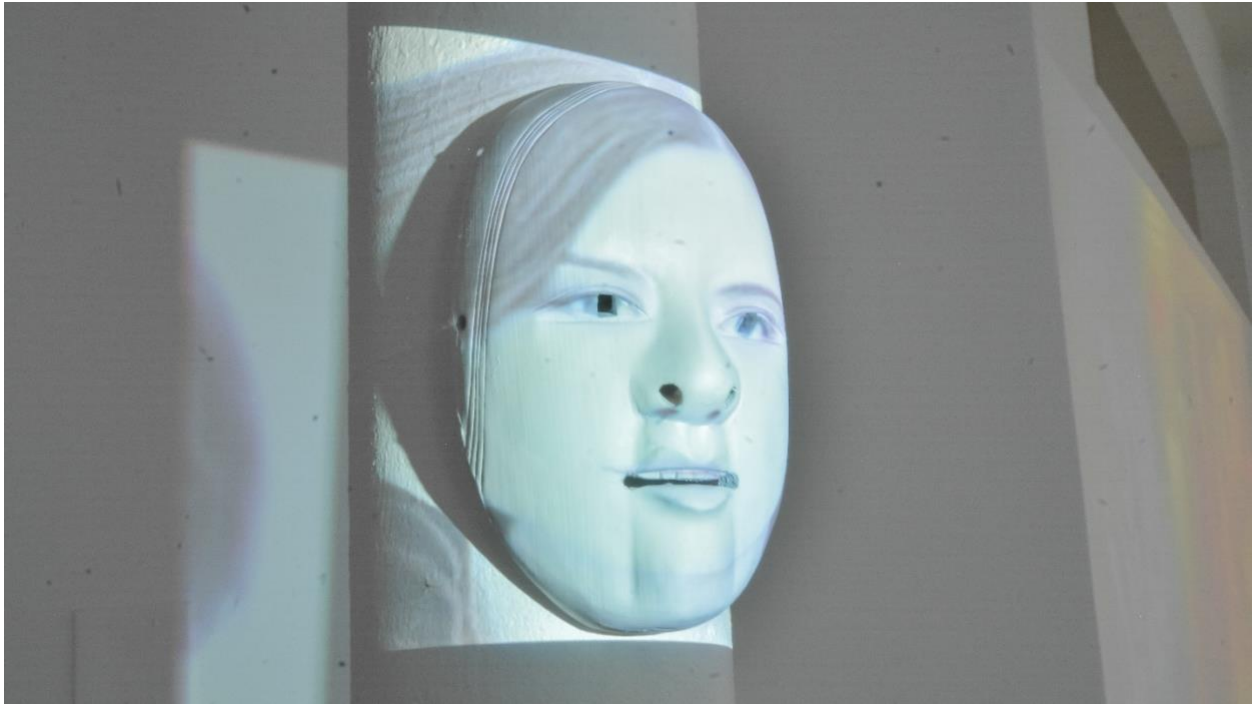
UNTITLED

Figure 11. Installation View of *Untitled,* looped video, wooden Noh mask purchased on Etsy, mask size: 9.05" x 5.51" x 2.75," 2021

This audio-visual installation consists of morphing "Japanese" faces generated using Generative Adversarial Network (GAN, a class of machine learning) projected onto a Noh mask of a girl worn exclusively by men. The images of faces are sourced from a Japanese platform, "AC Photo," where you can download "Japanese" faces with Caucasian features. These imaginary whitewashed "Japanese" faces are projected onto a "ko-omote" Noh mask. There is a sequential relationship between my short film, "Dreams Come True Very Much; the Japanese state-owned identities, forced to live forever post- "Moonshot," are colonized identities shaped by the Euro-American gaze and maleness.
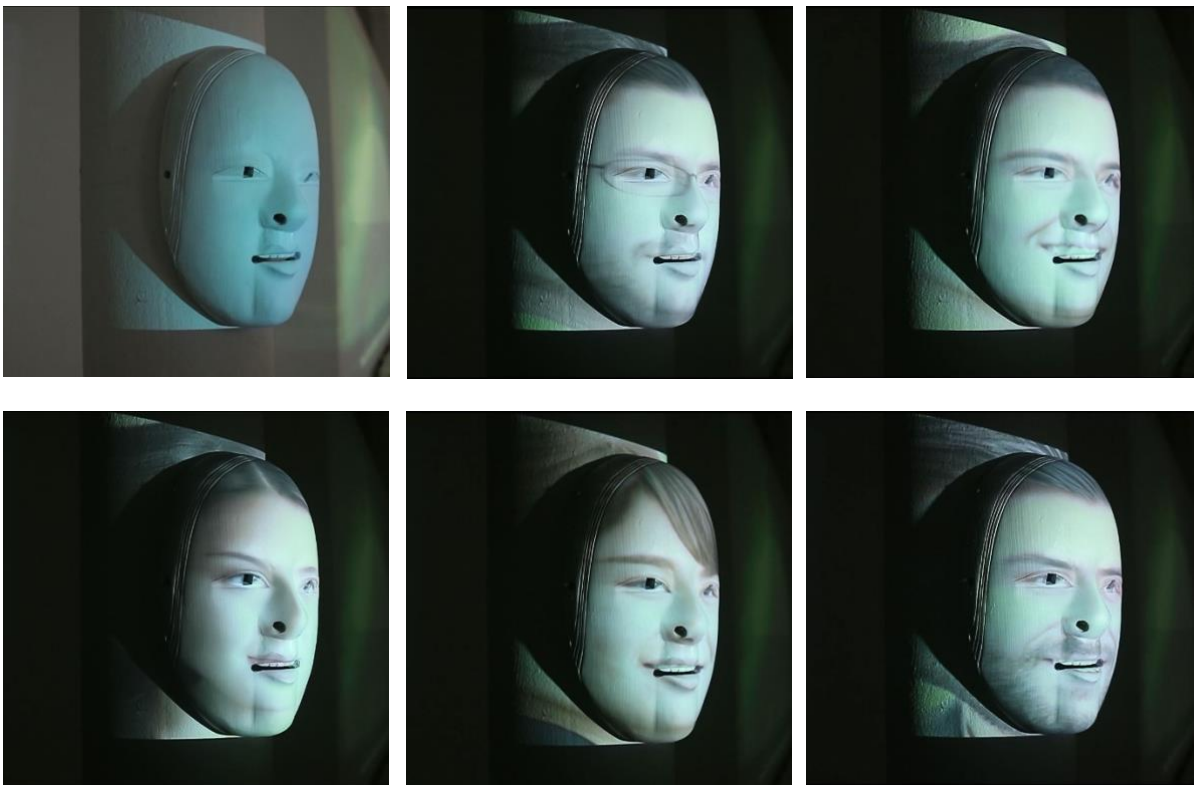

Figure 12. Installation View of *Untitled,* looped video, wooden Noh mask purchased on Etsy, mask size: 9.05" x 5.51" x 2.75," 2021

Figure 13. Documentation of wooden Noh mask purchased on Etsy,
mask size: 9.05" x 5.51" x 2.75," 2021

Noh is a form of classical Japanese-dance drama that evolved from of Chinese Nui Opera in the 8th century, one of the arts along with "Zen" that Japonisme first discovered centuries ago. Noh masks are known to be deceptively expressionless. It is said that when worn by expert actors during performances, they convey various emotional expressions despite their fixed physical properties. I bring forth stereotypes of East Asians having "mask-like" faces, and specifically stereotypes of Japanese in Western societies.

After 1945, Japan rapidly grew into an industrialized nation and became a leader in technology—a trademark of Western supremacy—which in turn led to the construction of techno-Orientalism. In a reversal of the traditional aesthetics of Japan, "the association of technology and Japaneseness now serves to reinforce the image of a culture that is cold, impersonal and machine-like and authoritarian culture lacking emotional connection to the rest of the world"[143]. After techno-Orientalism, Japan's new identity in the West was thus labeled as "Japan, Inc." or "sub-human," a discourse which aimed to portray the Japanese as lacking feeling or emotion.[144]

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[143] David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995): 168.
[144] Idem, 172.

For instance, using the gestures of Japanese businessmen as their model—"robot-like bowing and expressionless laughter"—the German band Kraftwerk in the 1970s used android or machine-like gestures on the stage.[145] At the height of Japan's economic growth (*kokusaika*), Japan's "dehumanized" technological powers, such as robots, cyborgs, video games, and anime, were seen as postmodern equivalents of Noh.

Layering of the faces and *tatemae* (a term meaning "built in front," "façade"), I create a parallel between technology and Noh theatre, both of which are heavily dominated by maleness and exclude females. To further contextualize my project, the following is the breakdown of the history of Noh through a feminist lens:

Given Noh's six hundred year history, women's involvement in Noh theatre's hisotory is very brief as women have only been allowed to perform on stage professionally since 1948. Eric C. Rath, in his essay "Challenging the Old Men: A Brief History of Women in Noh Theatre," explains that the profession of Noh acting used be accessible to a range of social groups including women in its earlier times.

Although little has been written about women who performed before the twentieth century, women have greatly contributed to Noh's development. Tokugawa shogunate (noble classes of Japan) policy, established in the early modern period, had tremendous implications for all women performers, as the policies relied on exclusionist genealogical discourse centering on patrilineal bloodlines, and the equation of blood with professional expertise. As a result, the rules excluded women and any performer without Yamato blood from the performing arts. According to Rath, the obsession with the creation of such genealogical texts remained throughout the seventeenth century; bloodlines were mapped out in lineage charts and family histories, and performers competed in invoking the glories of their particular lineage to contend for legitimacy in their profession. Since then, Noh became patronized almost exclusively by the shogunate patronage as an exclusive samurai pastime that commoners, including all women, were forbidden to see or participate in.

In this regard, female Noh masks represent Japan's historic patriarchy, and the AI generated "Japanese" faces are a digital version of how Japan utilizes patriarchy to serve elitist male subjectivity. According to mask expert Nakamura Yasuo, female masks in Noh theatre began to appear around the period of Kan'ami and Zeami, the time when Noh developed into a male-

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[145] Toshiya Ueno, "Japanimation and Techno-Orientalism,"Seventh International Symposium on Electronic Art ISEA94 September 16-20 (Rotterdam: Tripti, 1997): 95.

dominated art. It was a period when performers became concerned with representing femininity, yet would not allow a place for women to perform.

By projecting the AI generated faces onto the Noh mask of "ko-omote," a fake face of "naïve, beautiful, young girl" to be worn exclusively by men, I highlight how the performances I have noted above serve to perpetuate patriarchy, essentialism, and nationalism. The mask that I am using in this project, which has no wearer, aims to provide a counter narrative to both Western Orientalist images of Japan and Japan's self-Orientalism. Through its layers of *tatemae*, this project aims to obscure the essentialized narratives surrounding Japanese identities by suggesting that everything is performative. There is never "authenticity" behind masks. Behind a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask is a mask.
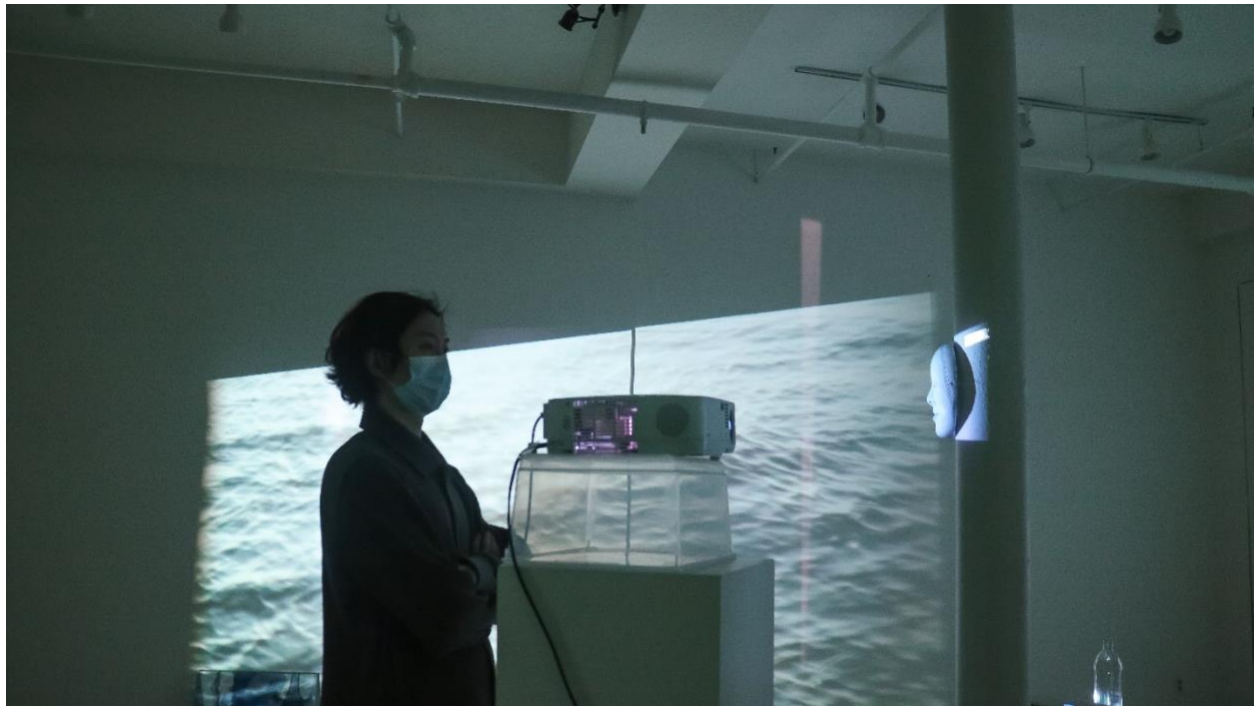

Figure 14. Installation View of *Untitled,* looped video, wooden Noh mask purchased on Etsy, mask size: 9.05" x 5.51" x 2.75," 2021
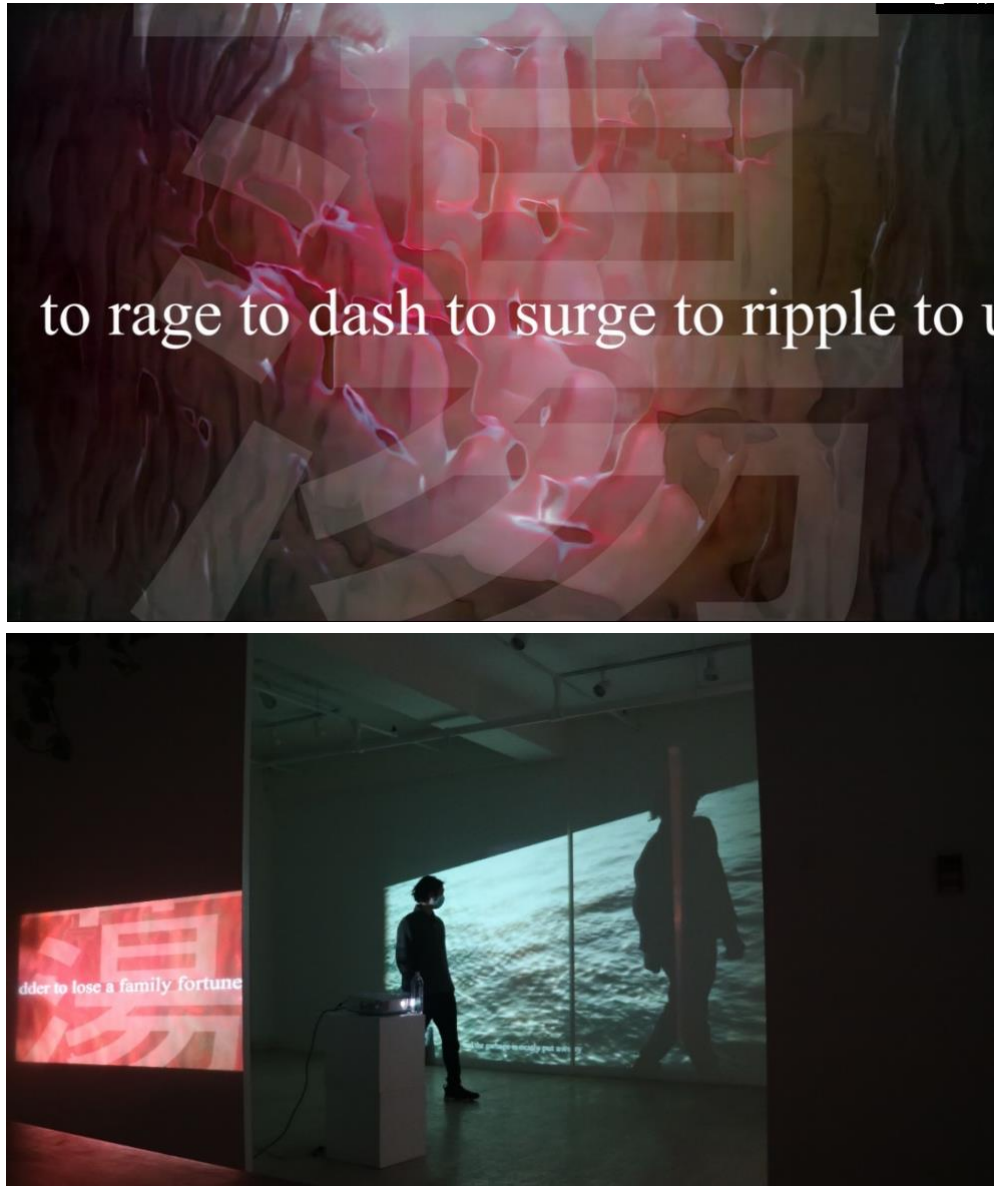
蕩 (DONG)

Figure 15. Documentation of *Dong,* 2021

"蕩 *(dong)*" is a video in which Cantonese text is accompanied by images taken in Toronto, New York, and Tokyo Chinatowns that morph into one another. I worked collaboratively on this project with a Hong Kongnese-Canadian translator, writer, and my partner, Sheung-King Tang, who worked on the translation of the Chinese character that appears on the screen.

As a Japanese person who grew up in England and Canada away from family, with no access to Japan-towns or Little Tokyo, Chinatowns have acted as surrogates for me from a young age. In

this work, I explore how the Western gaze has shaped not only Japan but other diasporic spaces around the world, focusing specifically on Chinatowns which are the largest Asian neighborhoods in North America. Chinese migrants, to protect themselves from "feared" local residents, have developed parallel civic societies; for example, in San Francisco, Chinese merchants, in 1906, hired American architects to dream up an oriental city of "veritable fairy palaces…a conscious, east-meets west attempt to change the community's image…and ensure its continuing survival."[146] Chinatowns have been shaped according to similar principles ever since.

In this work, a chain of images taken in Chinatown morph into one another. Defying the essentialized Orientalist gaze, the possible meanings of the character, "蕩" glide cross the screen. In Western philosophy, deconstruction is understood as a reaction to structuralism, but *shanzhai* (deconstruction in Chinese) is a starting point, not a reaction. This is seen through the character, "蕩" which can mean anything from "swing," to "lack of control," to "slut," to "travel around," to "make one's way to home." The meaning of "蕩" is contingent, its definition is continuously deferred. "蕩" can also mean "wonder" and "remove": there is no "original" meaning; the meaning of the word expands—it contextualizes the texts around it and vice versa.

With the absence of "蕩" (the "original" character) in the video, the inaccessibility of the "original" allows the translation to be constantly renewed. Tawada notes that "there is never the correct translation as translation is never a copy of the original." Translation is always interpretative, and there is an inevitable "loss" in the process. The current politics of translation gives prominence to hegemonic languages, but when it is effectively used by the translator, it liberates language from fixed meanings.

Gayatri Spivak calls for the development of "love and affinity" to the text by the translators, to decipher the expressions which get lost in between source to the translated text. One must "surrender" to the text and facilitate "love" between the source text and the translated text, as a resistance to dominant cultural hierarchies, to convey meanings. By juxtaposing the meanings of the character with morphing images, I guide viewers to what Tawada calls the "poetic ravine": a space which resists essentialist notions and resounds with the echoes of two languages. The understanding of this work lies between the viewer's subjectivity, the text, and the image itself. As Tawada says, "translation is not the image of the original but rather, the meaning of the original is given a new body." This becomes an invitation for viewers to imagine the revived meaning(s) of the character. "蕩," with this "new body," is now a product of "love and affinity"

[146] Bonnie Tsui, *In American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods*, (New York: Free Press, 2009), 2.

Figure 16. An example of how these photographs taken in Chinatowns morph into one another

WHEN I USE ENGLISH: THERE IS A HOLE, WAITING TO EAT ME, ITS MOUTH WIDE OPEN. LIKE A VAGINA. ECHO COMES OUT.
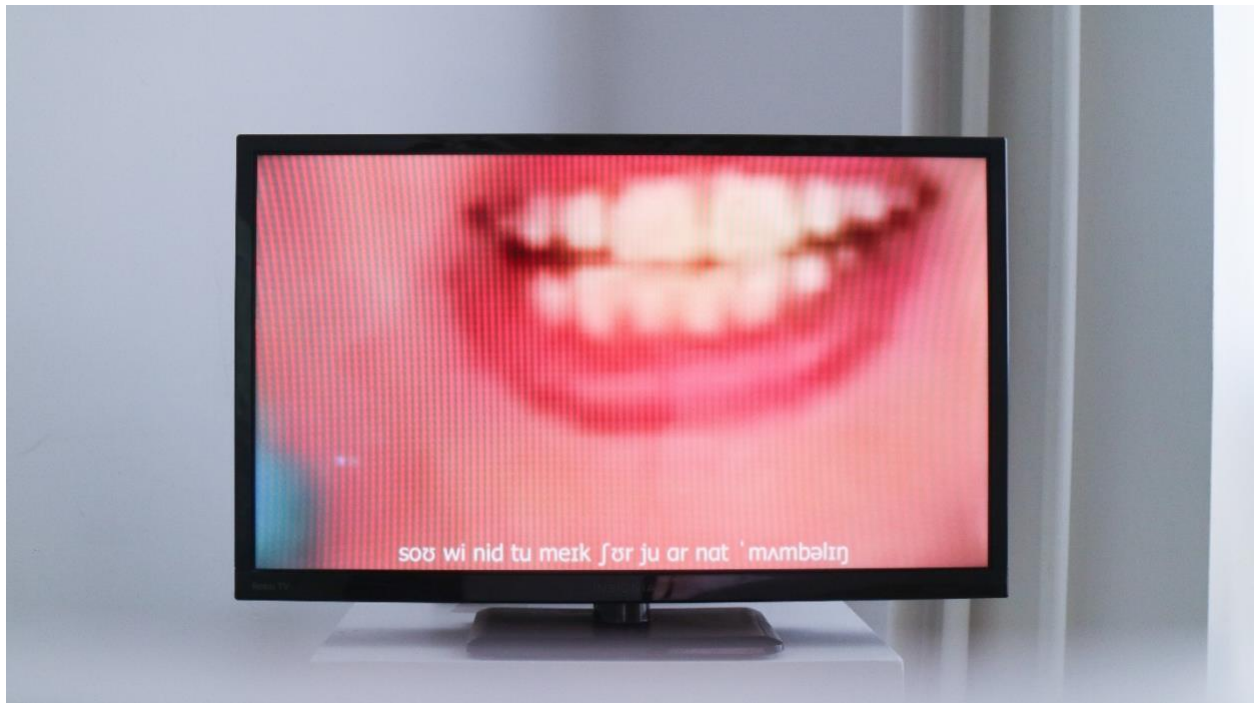

Figure 17. Installation View of, *When I use English: There is a Hole, Waiting to Eat Me, Its Mouth Open. Like a Vagina. But Nothing Comes Out.* looped video, TV, 2021

Figure 18. Still from *When I use English: There is a Hole, Waiting to Eat Me, Its Mouth Open. Like a Vagina. But Nothing Comes Out.* looped video, TV, 2021

English language acquisition, especially ESL (the standardization of the English language), as a business (often expensive, standardized, test-based, and low-quality), is a neo-colonial gesture. It concerns itself less with language learning and more with cultural assimilation and affirming Western society's superiority.

This work satirizes the homo-hegemony of "Good English" and ESL teaching. Chinese words and free stock images overlay a video of ESL teaching, extracting meaning from words that are coming out of the ESL teacher's mouth. The images mirror the substanceless-ness of ESL teaching. The content of this video prioritizes standard pronunciation to the extent that sounding like an English speaker becomes more important than having a fundamental understanding of how the world works.
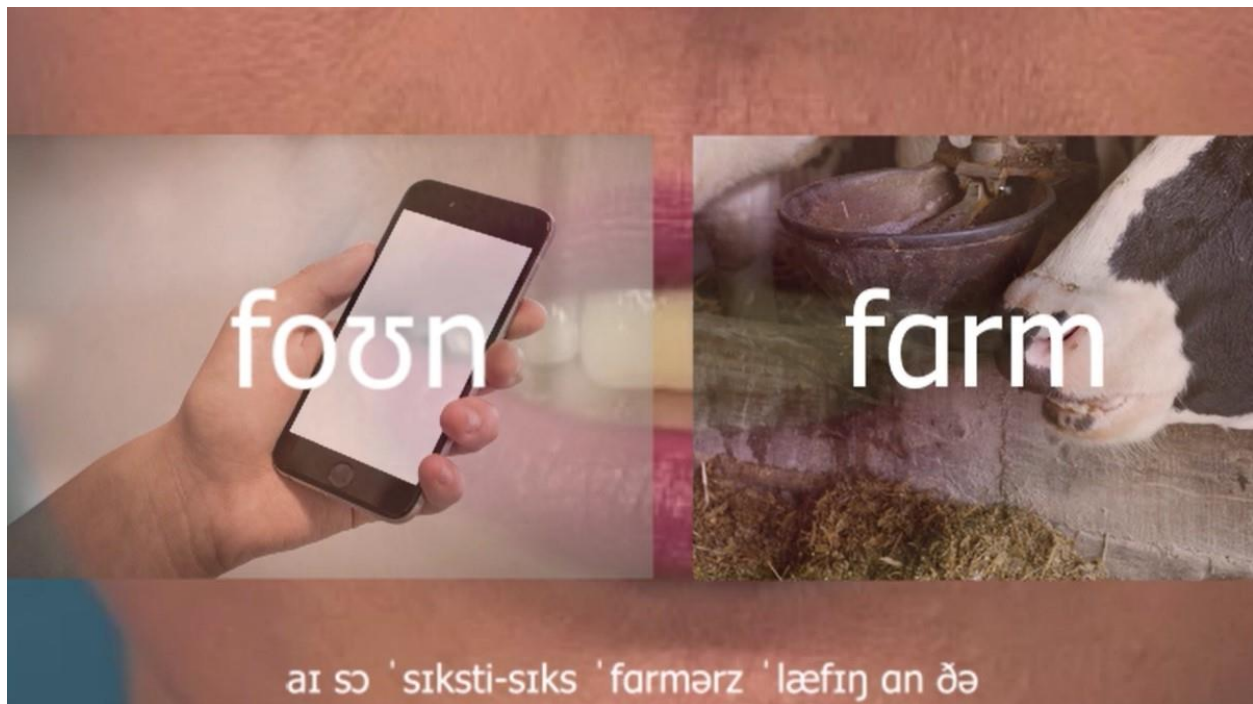

Figure 19. Still from *When I use English: There is a Hole, Waiting to Eat Me, Its Mouth Open. Like a Vagina. But Nothing Comes Out.* 2021

For instance, in the video, Georgie Harding (the ESL teacher) asks her clients to do a "little exercise" when they are getting out of bed, getting dressed, or in the shower. "Say the following phrase five times: I saw sixty-six farmers laughing on the phone/farm (I have no idea which one she is saying), in front of the mirror, while checking that you are not using a Mandarin, Japanese, or Russian mouth position." The video is originally sourced from a video titled "Great English

Pronunciation – Move your mouth for clear English." In this video, she says that "many of [her] non-native speaking clients come to [her] ...They are not opening their mouth. They are hardly moving their lips."

As Jay Lemke argues, "language, dialect, register, and voice are used as identity-markers, coming to an environment with its own hegemonic mono language, subjects many non-native English speakers to symbolic violence as daily experience." Roth and Harama point out that ESL students find themselves in remedial classes in Western contexts situated in discourses that contribute to the construction of ESL students as "lesser beings" and as academically low-performing students. In a standardized English context, ESL individuals' dialects and registers are incommensurable with the homo-hegemony of "Good English." The experiential and intra-linguistic resources that students bring with them are no longer valued: ESL students' pre- and extra-school discourses are denigrated as "misconceptions" and "alternative frameworks" that have to be eradicated by means of "conceptual change."

Figure 20. Still from *When I use English: There is a Hole, Waiting to Eat Me, Its Mouth Open. Like a Vagina. But Nothing Comes Out.* 2021

Using defamiliarizing techniques, my work highlights the "soft, discreet, and glaring terror" residing inside the acquisition of a new language, especially for ESL individuals. In this artwork, the mouth of the ESL teacher fills up the screen. The ESL teacher's voice is quiet, requiring the audience to listen attentively. The subtitles are spelled out in International Phonetic Alphabet

(IPA); "a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages" (IPA Home, 2017), rendering the text almost unintelligible, adding pressure to the audience by situating them in the ESL learner's subjectivity. According to the International Phonetic Association, IPA "creates a standard for pronunciation among learners and instructors" and "helps learners understand how each sound is correctly pronounced."

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Figure 21. Installation view of *When I use English: There is a Hole, Waiting to Eat Me, Its Mouth Open. Like a Vagina. But Nothing Comes Out.* 2021

CONCLUSION

As night falls, the enthralling feeling comes again.
Japan and I wrestle and strangle each other once more, but this time the horse with the
patterns multiplies and runs even faster, circling around us.

Gathering up my courage, I say to Japan, "You don't exist."
The woman smiles and says, "You know that that is not true."
It is so easy to put things into words, I think to myself, but wonder if it is really that easy.
"You don't like it when I don't act the way you want me to," I say to Japan. "I'm done with
this," I tell her, and she stops strangling me.

She stands up and looks back at me with her mouth agape.
I try not to think about Japan as I stroll along without knowing where I am going.
I walk. I have no legs. There is no floor. I try not to think about the woman and soon I
forget the word for her.

Once in a while, I can feel something like me looking at me.

Maari Sugawara, January 27, 2020

In my work, my alter-ego Avatar-*M*s present identities as malleable and open to rearticulation, which is my response to rethinking constructed Japanese identities as delinked from the idea of "originality," and devoid of internalized Orientalism. I used "alternative futurity"[147] as a concept to create artworks that critique and allow a rethinking of the national and cultural identities of Japan, and to explore possibilities of "radical reconstitution"[148]. The avatars and shapeshifting "Japan(s)" imply the notion of subjects without any fixed origin or end. Both "Japan(s)" and the avatars are vulnerable to reinterpretation and rearticulation, thereby undermining the essentialist logic behind categories of differences which has shaped postwar Japanese identity. In doing so, I depict identities in an ongoing process of change and oscillation.

This idea of delinking from the notion of "originality," a notion that has been deeply complicit with postwar Japanese discourses, is also reflected in my use of *shanzhai* as a methodology. My projects use my own works along with stock images and contemporary digital media that do not have an "original." This is my attempt at generating a participatory narrative experience where "originality," to the experiencer, becomes obsolete.

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[147] Soyang Park, Supervisor Comments, OCAD University, Aug 7, 2020.
[148] Idem.

In the process of my art-making, I have expanded my technical skills and have acquired some 3D animation techniques; however, I was not able to explore VR work as much as I hoped, and there are still many paths that I have not yet tested. I wish to further experiment with mediums such as VR, AR and sound art in the future.

My art-based research on unravelling the links between Japan's Eurocentrism, the country's active invitation of the Orientalist gaze, and the artificial amnesia of its colonial aggression towards other Asian countries was extremely valuable. It pushed me to consider what I can do as a Japanese individual towards Japan's silence in regard to its own historical crimes and its colonial responsibilities. My research has also brought awareness to how it affects my own identity as a Japanese person and allowed me to reflect, critically, on my experience living in the West.

I was not sure how to make references to Japan's past, especially its colonial past, which remains largely unspoken in Japan. Instead of making direct references to the colonial history and wartime atrocities, I decided to depict Japan's collective amnesia as something that "haunts," my project does not directly describe historical facts. So, I included ghostly elements in my thesis. This decision shaped the conceptual thread that holds together my work in this space, works that are impossible to hold; they are projections, composed of light and much too large, their light fades at the edges, they merge into one another, they meet. I intended to create an exhibition that possessed a dematerialized presence. I wanted it to feel ethereal, imagined, yet grounded in reality, like memories. As I cannot speak or depict on behalf of those who were victimized; this creative decision seemed to me the most empathetic display of the uncanny experience of what lies buried underneath constructed Japanese identities.

My narrative-based works took a more autobiographical approach. In my work, I recurrently evoke the image of "Japan," perhaps as a "home"—but positioned as an imaginary place rather than a fixed point of origin. The concept of "Japan" in my project is intertwined with my personal memories; however, these memories are constantly being taken over by cultural "memories," and such 'cultural memories' are overshadowed by whitewashed cultural "memories" manipulated by state-promoted cultural policies and discourses. The final product is a dream world that is grounded in reality. It is nightmarish and yet still familiar (to me at least). The end result is a mixture of the subconscious and conscious—my representation of new forms of Japanese identities that aim to encompass complementarity, formless forms of "Japanese-ness."

I realize that my research interest may be too large an investigation to undertake within this thesis. My work took the first step to an onto-epistemological expansion of Japanese consciousness that acknowledges its Euro-American influence or domination; however, there were a few scopes that I was unable to investigate as much as I wanted to. For instance, I could

not experiment as much as I wanted to with the sound and the text element in my short-film. I plan to continue my theoretical research on translation studies and language in order to create a space where the text (narrative) and the images on the screen (projected semiology) continuously and meaningfully invite and deny meaning. I wish to generate an experience to examine how the experiencer's understanding of language re-adjusts itself to adapt to a language system that this preordained artificial circumstance presents.

Through a discussion with Professor Jay Irizawa about this project, I decided that, in the near future, to continue this project, I will consider the following questions:

- Are there technologies that have alternate views we can consider as outside of Western thoughts? Can we redevelop such technologies?
- Is there a Japanese indigenous technology of analog digital origins that Western philosophy and its gaze is absent in this constellation? Can we reframe the philosophy behind the development of such analog technologies for the present, and futures?

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL IMAGE DOCUMENTATION

Figure 22. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 23. Documentation of 蕩 *(DONG), 2021*
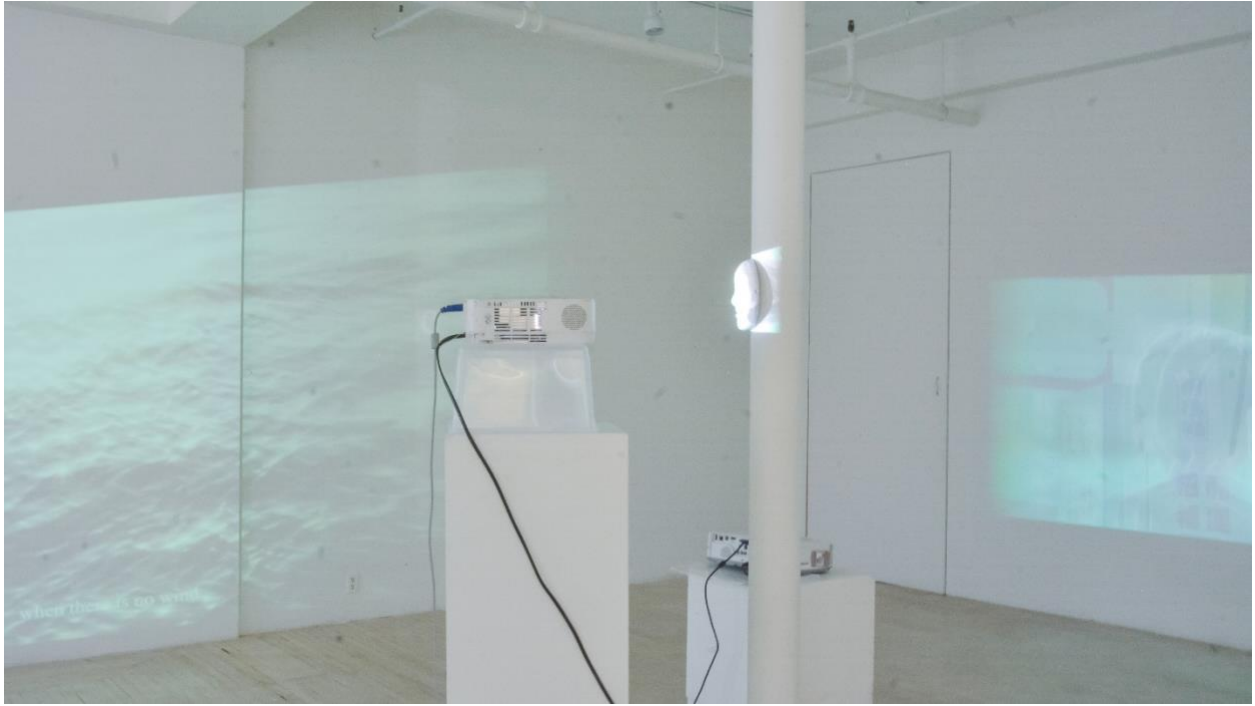
Figure 24. Documentation of *Untitled,* 2021

Figure 25. Documentation of Inhabiting Distant Ghosts, 2021

Figure 26. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 27. Documentation of *Dreams Come True Very Much* (part 2), 2021

Figure 28. Documentation of *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts,* 2021

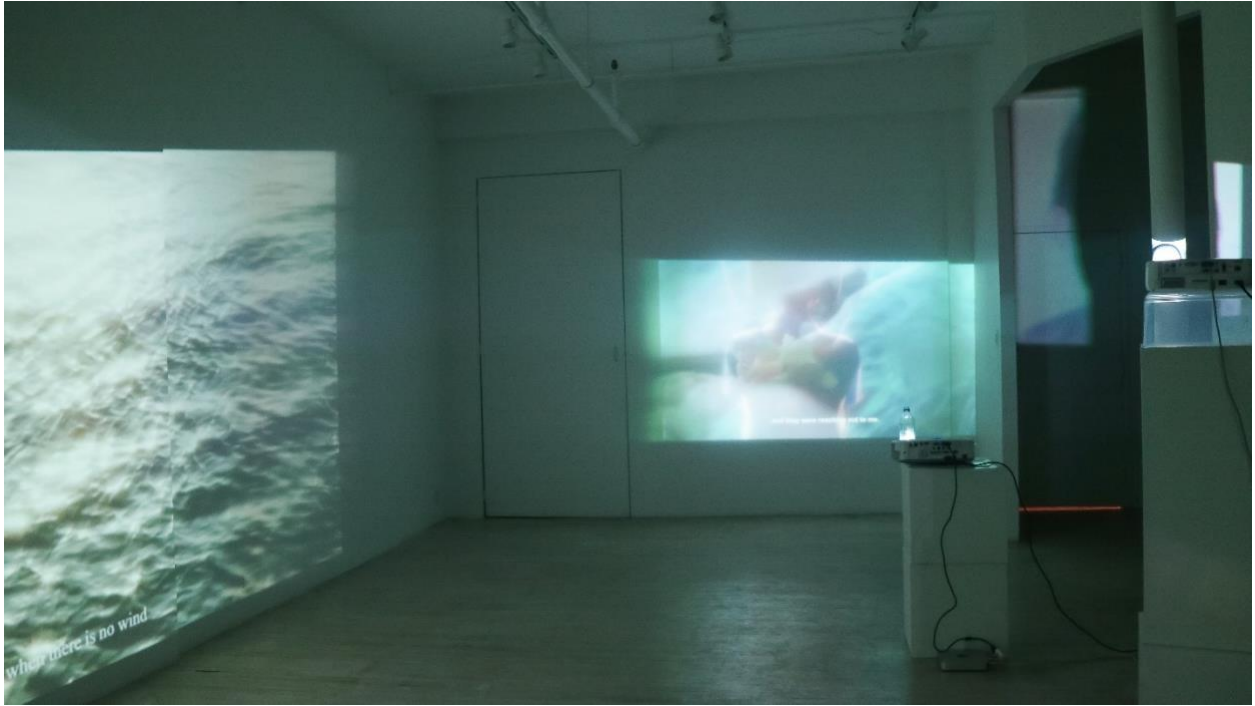Figure 29. Documentation of *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts,* 2021

Figure 30. Partial view of the exhibition

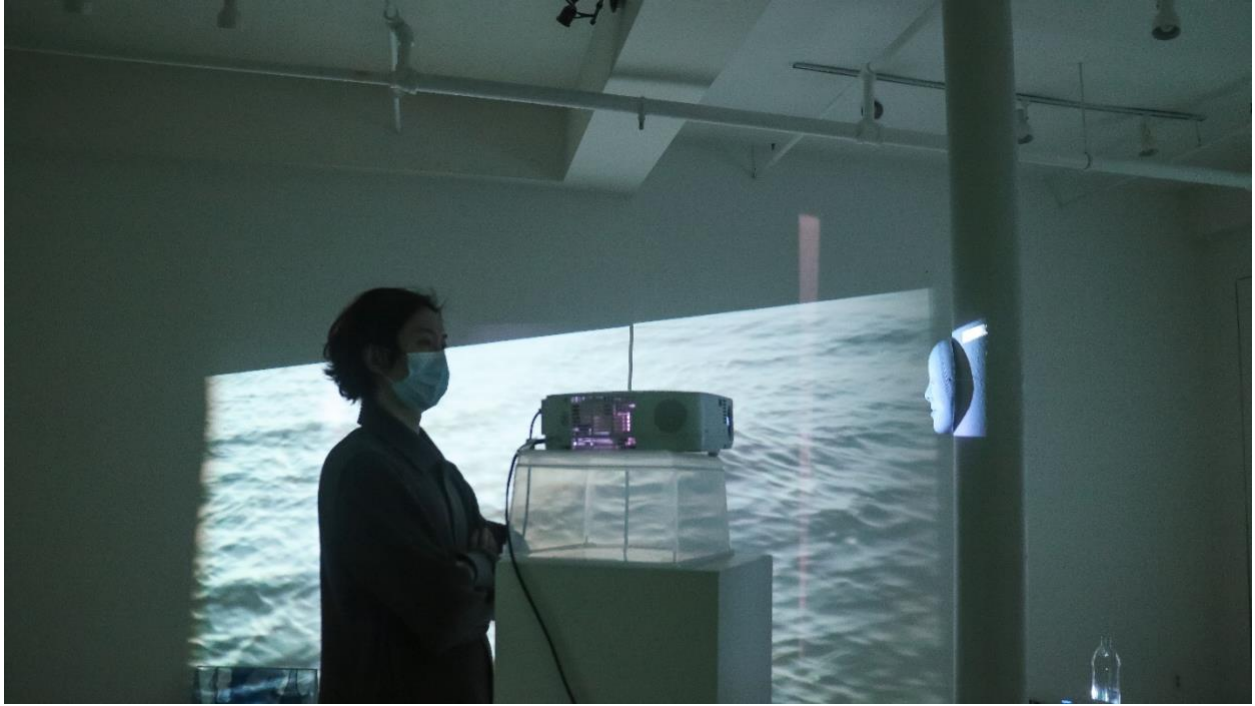Figure 31. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 32. Documentation of *Untitled*, 2021

Figure 33. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 34. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 35. Partial view of the exhibition
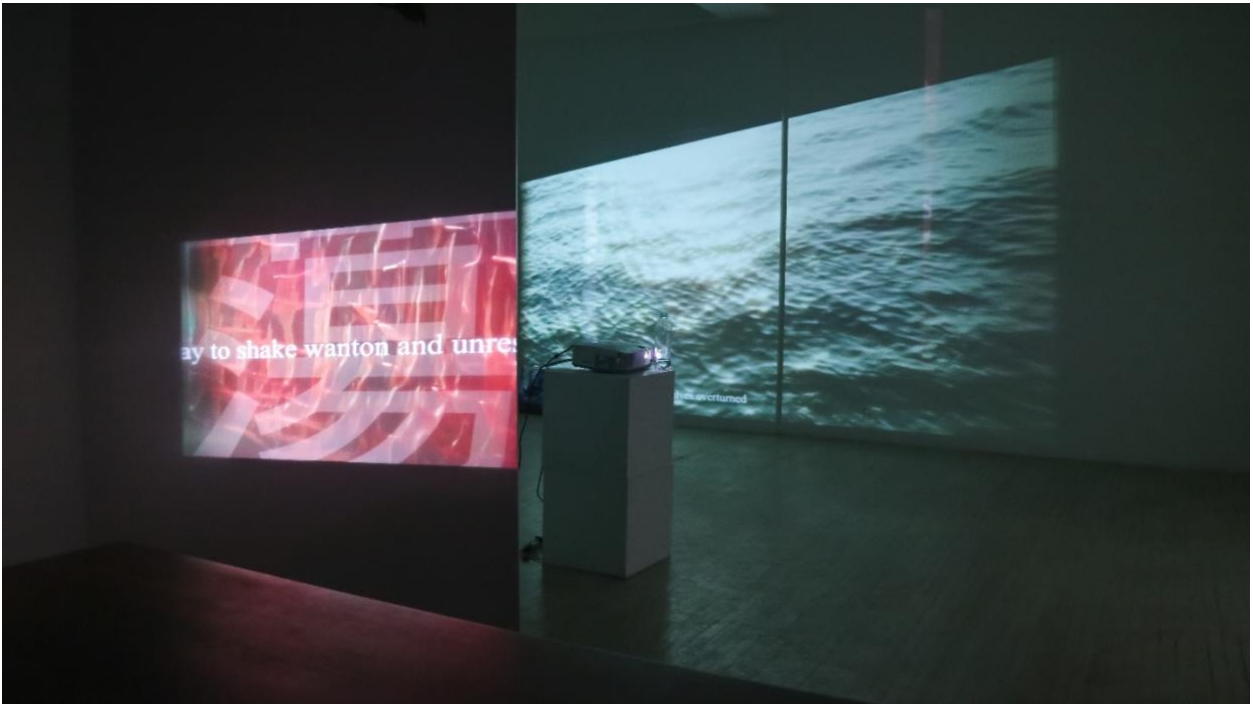
Figure 36. Partial view of the exhibition

Figure 37. Partial view of the exhibition

APPENDIX B: ACCOMPANYING DIGITAL MATERIAL

1. *Dreams Come True Very Much (part 1)*, 2021
   Animation, 1:49
   Dreams_Come _True _Very _Much_part1.MOV
2. *Dreams Come True Very Much (part 2)*, 2021
   Animation, 1:19
   Dreams_Come _True _Very _Much_part2.MOV
3. Documentation of *Inhabiting Distant Ghosts*, 2021
   Video installation, projector, canvas, inkjet print 24' x 16', 1:27
   Inhabiting_Distant_Ghosts.MOV
4. *When I use English: there is a hole, waiting to eat me, its mouth wide open. Like a vagina. Echo comes out.*, *2021*
   Audio-visual installation, projector, size variable, 3:58
   When_I_use_English_there_is_a_hole.MOV
5. 蕩 *(dong)*, 2021
   Video installation, projector, 4:00
   Dong.MOV
6. Documentation of *Untitled*, 2021
   Video installation, projector, wooden Noh mask, 9:06
   Untitled.MOV

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