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Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT

This is the thirty-sixth issue of *East Asian History*, printed in July 2010. It continues the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*. This externally refereed journal is published twice per year.

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ISSN 1036–6008
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Cover image  O Chi-ho 呉之湖, South-Facing House (Minamimuki no ie 南向の家), 1939. Oil on canvas, 79 x 64 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea
LANDSCAPE’S MEDIATION BETWEEN HISTORY AND MEMORY: A REVISUALIZATION OF JAPAN’S (WAR-TIME) PAST

Julia Adeney Thomas

It was an awkward moment. Kuraishi Shino 倉石信乃, curator of photography at the Yokohama Museum of Art 横浜美術館, looked at me across the low conference table in his office and said, “we were shocked by your essay”. 1 The word “shocked” made me blanch. I imagined doors slamming all across Japan as the tight-knit museum world closed ranks against me, the pernicious outsider. Admittedly, my essay had been critical. 2 Although I had praised the Yokohama museum’s boldness in exhibiting photography from the 1940s when other museums that summer ignored the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, I had focused mostly on the exhibition’s striking ellipses. Nowhere were there images of Japan and the West exchanging blows; nowhere were Japan’s fighting forces on the Asian continent depicted. Looking at the museum’s walls, one would have been justified in thinking that Japan’s war had been an exercise in civil defense conducted primarily by women, that the occupation had been merely a construction boom, and that, throughout it all, Japanese culture remained unchanging and beautiful. Violence, masculinity, nature, and the eventfulness of history itself had been reserved, in that 1995 exhibition, for Western nations. In short, I had criticized Photography in the 1940s (1940 Nendai no shashin; 1940 年代の写真) for confirming the official view of Japan’s timeless innocence rather than challenging it.

But I had already had my say in print, and there was no point in reiterating my criticism in person. Kuraishi went on: the exhibition that he and his colleagues were planning for the fall of 2004 would be different. With a large display of landscapes, they would respond, in part, to my critique. Immediately, I made plans to return to Japan.

1 Conversation with the author, Friday, 30 July 2004 at the Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan.
The exhibition that I returned to see in the autumn of 2004, *Paradise Lost: The Politics of Landscape, 1870–1945* (Shitsurakuen: Fûkei hyôgen no kindai, 1870–1945 失楽園: 風景表現の近代), proved a deeply intelligent meditation on the problems of history and memory in contemporary Japan—but it did not engage the criticisms in my article directly. The reason for this, as I will argue, is that the status of history and memory had altered quite dramatically in Japan in the years between the exhibitions.\(^5\)

The 2004 Yokohama show deftly intervened in the current discussion, where the issue is no longer the suppression of history but the elevation of an official form of collective memory.

Let me describe this transformation briefly. In 1995, when the Yokohama Museum exhibited 1940s photography, Japan’s official amnesia in relation to its wartime past had been bolstered by the claim that Japanese national identity rested on an ahistorical, essentialized, unique culture. By this view, both history and memory were epiphenomenal to deeply rooted traditions defining what it meant to be Japanese. Events occurred; people recollected past experiences, but neither eventfulness nor reengeance secured a true understanding of national identity. However, in the decade or so since the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat, the ground has shifted. Japan’s official amnesia is being replaced by what might be termed “official collective memory”. Right-wing groups with strong government ties such as The Japan Conference (*Nippon kaigi* 日本会議)—a lobby group that includes hundreds of Diet (*Kokkai* 国会) members as well as businessmen, Shinto priests, and academics\(^4\)—and *Nippon kaigi*’s allies, such as the Liberalist History Research Group (*jiyûshugi shikan kenkyûkai* 自由主義史観研究会), aim to revive pre-war patriotism, rewrite the “MacArthur Constitution” of 1946, and restore “national pride”.\(^5\) This effort to recover lost virtues and reestablish a “normal state” with military capabilities necessarily recognizes Japan as a country transformed by past events, a nation that in the view of these powerful elites has changed for the worse.\(^6\) To aim to recapture an old identity is to accept identity’s historicity. This is a significant change.

But it is not really history that these new right-wing groups want, but memory. Discarding the old view of an unchanging national identity, the rightists will occasionally deploy the tactics of historians, or, rather, the tactics of positivist historians, insisting on archival documents, narrow questions of fact, and irrefutable proof, especially when issues like the rape of Nanjing or the so-called “comfort women” are raised.\(^7\) But, the overwhelming tenor of their public statements echo the emotion-laden pleas of collective memory, the desire for “therapeutic discourse”, as Kerwin Klein calls it, to heal the traumas of Japan’s last century and a half.\(^8\) The claim of the Japanese rightists inside and outside government today is that the national past must be recollected through the prism of ethnic sentiments.

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\(^3\) In my earlier essay, I discussed the beginnings of a “memory shift” in Japan in the 1990s when most of the effort of recollection was fueled by the left. Today much of this energy comes from the right. Thomas, “Photography, National Identity, and the ‘Cataract of Times’,” pp.1487–88.


\(^5\) *Jiyûshugi shikan kenkyûkai* was founded in 1995 by scholars Fujioka Nobukatsu 藤岡信勝 and Nishio Kanji 西尾幹二. Right-wing efforts include comic books, written in part by Nishio, depicting Koreans and Chinese as depraved, childish potential enemies.


\(^7\) The Japanese right wing’s tactics resemble those of the Americans for Academic Freedom pleading for equal time for all points of view in classrooms, or the hackers of “intelligent design” demanding that schools teach the “debate” over evolution. See David Horowitz, “In Defense of Intellectual Diversity,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50.23 (13 February 2004): 2–13. For a brilliant attack on such tactics, see Joan Wallach Scott’s demonstration of the way the right-wing uses these seemingly moderate standards against theoretically informed interpretation in “Against Eclecticism,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 16.3: 114–37.

\(^8\) Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations*, special issue: Grounds for Remembering, 69 (Winter 2000): 127–50, at p.141. Klein’s emphasis on monotheistic religions concerned with “presence” limits the usefulness of his analysis to Western instances in some ways, but his analysis of the epistemological structure of the “memory industry” is applicable everywhere. As Klein argues, “one of the reasons for memory’s sudden rise is that it promises to let us have our essentialism and deconstruct it, too” (p.144).
In several ways, their claims mimic the “ethics of memory” advocated by philosopher Avishai Margalit. Just as Margalit insists that so-called “natural communities of memory” bear an ethical burden to recall,9 with love and care, events that impinged on those natural communities, so too Japanese rightists claim that it is essential to national identity to cherish the memory of Japanese who went before, even the Class A war criminals honored at the Yasukuni Shrine (Yasukuni jinja 難国神社).10 Nations must love themselves; they must eschew “burdens of the soul” bred by recollecting past misdeeds—“burdens of the soul” being a phrase used by Mitsubishi lawyers defending their clients against the claims of Korean slave laborers. Again, just as Margalit says that there is no moral imperative to remember the past of others outside one’s own natural community—indeed, Margalit argues that it is impossible to do so in any important way11—so too Japanese rightists deny any imperative to take into account the experiences of Chinese, Koreans, and others because, as they argue, “each has a different historical consciousness”.12 In effect, right-wing officials and their allies have historicized Japan, but in a way that draws heavily on the epidemiology and emotional power of popular forms of collective memory. Identity no longer rests on claims to a unique, changeless culture; instead, it is secured through a carefully crafted remembrance based on selected archives and awash with self-love, injured dignity, and proud ethnicity. It is this pernicious new identity that curators at the Yokohama Museum of Art critiqued with their 2004 landscape exhibition Paradise Lost.

The Exhibition

The curators at Yokohama were highly cognizant of the political nature of their enterprise. Although, on the face of it, few genres seem as innocuous as landscape, in the hands of these skilled interpreters, landscape became militant. The director of the museum, Yukiyama Kōji 雪山行二, opens his preface to the catalogue with the statement,

Landscape is not vacant space which exists without any relation to the human beings who look at it. Landscape is space which becomes manifest only when the human gaze is first turned toward it; it is a cultural product fabricated within history . . . . This means that [our] general theme ... is an inquiry into the social and political context behind the gaze.13

In exploring the years between 1870 and 1945, the museum assembled an immense display of over 310 paintings, photographs, drawings, etchings, and books, supplemented by nearly 30 films.14 Its social and political inquiry rested on two radical redefinitions. First, the curators deliberately expanded the conceit, fundamental to their own institution’s mission, of “Japan and the West”, and, second, they redefined landscape (jitōkei 風景)
to encompass far more than countryside. Together these two innovations generated a form of subjectivity very different from the unique cultural identity reified in the 1995 exhibition and also very different from the prideful, solipsistic identity celebrated by Japan's rightists today. Let me explore each of these redefinitions separately.

**Japan and the West**

The Yokohama Museum of Art, designed by Tange Kenzo 丹下健三 during Japan's “roaring ’80s”, and opened to the public in November of 1989, is charged with displaying and collecting art that reveals the mutual influence of Japan and the West after 1859, the year when European and American ships were first allowed to enter the port at Yokohama. The trope of “Japan and the West” has been, for over a century, a way of placing Japan among the Great Powers and pulling it “out of Asia”, (datsu-A 脱亜) as the slogan from the 1870s had it. This trope held that Japan was equivalent to the West in power and prestige (or should be), and yet retained its unique cultural essence despite the vicissitudes of modernization. “The West” provided Japan with a mirrored identity: Japan saw itself as comparable to other leading nations and yet, also, as their opposite. Furthermore, this lens on the world dismissed the massive continent hunkered down between the peninsula called “Europe” and Japan’s green archipelago. After World War II, the convenience of treating the Asian continent as invisible and focusing once again on Japan’s relationship with “the West”, particularly the United States, cannot be gainsaid. This worldview helped to make the fifteen years of war vanish, and it had informed the 1995 exhibition of 1940s photography.

In 2004, despite this institutional legacy, the Yokohama Museum of Art set out to undermine the presumption of a neat and tidy “Japan” juxtaposed against a neat and tidy “West”. In *Paradise Lost*, images from the heart of Europe were placed next to paintings from the French colonies in what today we call Vietnam and Cambodia. Like wise, Japan bled into Asia with paintings by non-Japanese imperial subjects in colonized Korea (officially annexed in 1910), and paintings by Japanese artists in the puppet state of Manchuria (created in 1932). In a museum dedicated to comparing Japanese and Western art, the inclusion of landscapes made in, about, and by colonial subjects rendered the categories of both “Japan” and “the West” significantly less stable. According to Kuraishi, there had been some resistance among the curators, particularly painting curator Kashiwagi Tomoo 柏木智雄, to taking this tack, which necessarily involved working with colleagues in museums on the Asian continent. Ultimately, however, this bold expansion of the museum’s working premise was embraced by the entire staff.
O Chi-ho’s 1939 oil painting *South-Facing House* (Minamimuki no ie 南向の家), borrowed from the South Korean National Museum of Contemporary Art 韓国国立現代美術館, exemplifies the limitations of “national identity” for understanding art as our sights expand beyond the dichotomy of Japan and the West (Figure 1). O (1905–1982) was born as Japan was establishing its formal protectorate in Korea. He went to Japan in 1925 to study for six years at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts 東京美術学校 with the painter Fujishima Takeji 藤島武二. In one sense, then, O is Japanese in that his training was entirely in Japanese schools with Japanese masters under Japanese colonialism. In another sense, he is thoroughly Korean. When he returned from Japan in 1931, he joined the Group for a Green Country (Nok Hyang Hoe 緑郷會), which called for the rejection of Japanese sentimentality and the celebration of so-called “Korean colors”. *South-Facing House* exemplifies the use of bright, radiant colors that are said to sparkle in the crisp air of the peninsula. Korean artists claim a long history going back to the Koryo dynasty (936–1392) of painting outdoors from nature, a practice that never attained popularity among Japanese artists. It could also be argued that this painting subtly critiques the Japanese occupation, using the bright “Korean” palate while delineating Korea’s containment as represented by the figure of the girl in the red dress. She stands, boxed in, first by the door frame and second by the tree and its shadows.19 However, Korea and Japan are not this image’s only references. From the blue and violet shadows, it is clear that O has been heavily influenced by Impressionists, perhaps Russian as well as French, whose work he would have seen while in Tokyo.20 His painting is therefore legible in Western terms to eyes untutored in Korean or Japanese traditional art. What the inclusion of multiple perspectives does in this painting, and in the exhibition overall, is to eliminate the possibility of a single and simple identity: O’s work is simultaneously Japanese, Korean, and European.

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**Figure 1**


22 Including Paul Delance, La Tour Eiffel et le Champ de Mars, en janvier, 1889. Oil on canvas; and Louis Tauzin, l’ile Seguin vue de Meudon, 1890. Oil on canvas.

23 Including Alfred Sisley, Les Rameurs, 1877. Oil on canvas; Camille Pissarro, La Charrette de Paille, 1879. Oil on canvas; and Claude Monet, Fécamp, Bord de la mer, 1881. Oil on canvas.

24 Paul Gauguin, Les Drames de la mer, Bretagne, 1889. Lithograph on paper; and Paul Gauguin, Pastorales, Martinique, 1889. Zincography on yellow paper.

25 For example, Kishida Ryûsei, Yoyogi jukin [Near Yoyogi], 1914. Oil on canvas; and Nakajima Kiyoshi, Ginza A, 1936. Colour on paper.

26 Tomita Keisen, Okinawa sandai [Three Scenes of Okinawa], 1917. Hanging scrolls.

27 For example, Yanase Masamu, Mantetsu Fushun tanko [South Manchuria Railway, Fushun Coal Mine], 1940. Poster.


In this image, and in the exhibition in general, identity with its exclusionary practices and its capacity to congeal, and often conceal, difference is replaced by bricolage, a layered and open subjectivity mutating over time. The dissolution of the neat dichotomy between Japan and the West through the inclusion of colonial art dispelled identity—the foundation of collective memory—and replaced it with more fluid forms of self-understanding. Japan today is not identical to a Japan of the past, nor is “the West” constant. The exhibition demonstrated that “paradise”, such that exotic, colonized lands were ever paradise, helped form “Japan” and “the West” although this seeming Elysium is now lost to them both. As the show illustrated, the abstract categories of “home” and “Other” are cobbled together more through chance and choice than they are determined by biology, birth, and geography. However, a subtle dissimilarity remains in the subtitles of the exhibition. Strictly speaking, the Japanese and English versions are not direct translations. Fukei hyogen no kindai emphasizes landscape’s expressiveness without mentioning politics, while the English counterpart—“the politics of landscape”—does not refer to kindai or “the modern”.

Expanding the Definition of Fukei

If the exhibition demonstrated that the categories of “Japan” and “the West” were larger and more unruly than previously indicated, it also expanded the definition of “landscape” in three important ways. In part, Japanese terminology made this easier. While the English-language term “landscape” has conventionally designated pastoral or wilderness scenes and an adjective such as “urban” must be added to describe images of cities, the Japanese term fukei, written with the characters for “wind” and “view”, encompasses urban landscapes as well as countryside. In referring as easily to cityscapes as to rural or mountain vistas, fukei provided an organizing principle for moving gracefully from the metropoles of Paris and Tokyo to their colonial hinterlands. Accordingly, the exhibition opened with scenes from the heart of Paris, and worked its way out to the light-filled country canvases of Sisley, Pissarro, and Monet, before traveling still further to Bretagne and Martinique with Gauguin. The same was true of the Japanese grouping. Paintings and drawings of Tokyo were followed by a set of hanging scrolls of Okinawa by Tomita Keisen and by posters advertising Manchuria as Japan’s new frontier. New York city also became a landscape, with modernist photographs of skyscrapers preceding documentary images of Depression-era hinterlands such as those by Dorothea Lange. Had the exhibition included work from American protectorates such as Hawaii and the Philippines, the parallels would have been even stronger. Fukei surveys the entire
environment of power from metropolitan strongholds to remote outposts. This conceptualization renders the genre an important way of thinking about the places where history is made and remade, rather than treating landscape as embodying archaic timelessness and eternal values as it might in literati and Romantic traditions.

Second, the definition of landscape was expanded to encompass Surrealism suggesting that “place” is psychological as well as geographical. Just as power organizes physical geography, so too it infiltrates the geography of our minds. Looming shapes sprout in depopulated, inhospitable terrains. The show included paintings by Max Ernst and Salvador Dali and photographs by Maurice Tabard, Hans Bellmer and Claude Cahun. Japanese Surrealism was represented by many works including, perhaps the most famous, Aimitsu’s Landscape with an Eye (Me no aru fukei 眼のある風景) done in 1938 (Figure 2). As with O Chi-ho’s painting of the sunny yard, Aimitsu’s Landscape with an Eye represents a challenge to identity, synthesizing international Surrealism with Japan’s indigenes traditions, including a respect for the irrational (manifest, for example, in Zen). Art historian Gérard Durozoi argues that Aimitsu welds “a visionary gift like Max Ernst’s to his knowledge of ancient painting”. The curatorial insistence at Yokohama on equating the topography of the psyche with the topography of the earth, while downplaying representations of the body, has the effect of universalizing and denationalizing the subjectivity that engages the world. In effect, these images presented mind and land without bodies, erasing ethnicity as a means by which the viewer can engage the scene. This curatorial tactic suggested that mental states transcend boundaries and that wherever one stood in the 1920s and 30s, one surveyed a political landscape of fraught sensuality and impending darkness.

Third, the Yokohama curators broadened the concept of fukei not only to encompass the entire terrain from cities to countryside and to

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**Figure 2**

Aimitsu 豊光, Landscape With an Eye (Me no aru fukei 眼のある風景), 1938, Oil on canvas. Collection of The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

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30 Among the Japanese works were oil paintings by Terada Masaaki, Yoru (Nemureru oka) Night (Sleeping Hill), 1938 and by Koga Harue, Sōgai no keshō [Make-Up Outside the Window], 1930.


32 Ultimately, the Japanese Imperial state suppressed Surrealism because of its supposed alliance with communism. Surrealists arrested and tried in 1941 were forced by a judge to declare, “I practiced surrealism as a means to impose the proletarian and communist revolution, denying the emperor and aiming to destroy the Japanese empire”. Gérard Durozoi, History of the Surrealist Movement, trans. Alison Anderson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) p.336, footnote 15.

Miryam Sas provides a full and nuanced picture of the Japanese literary Surrealists’ successes and failures as political actors in Fault Lines: Cultural Memory and Japanese Surrealism (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999).
incorporate the psychological environment of modern life, but also to include battle scenes and bombed-out ruins. Any association of landscape with pretty scenery, with the banal and the picturesque, was swept away, especially in the final rooms of the exhibition, where paintings and photographs combined to produce a grim vision of World War II. For example, Mukai Junkichi’s large 1938 canvas, *Shadow* (*Kage* 影), shows the shadow of a bomber speeding over the grey-brown Chinese city of Suzhou 蘇州, but the muted colors and ominous atmosphere dispel any sense of triumph (Figure 3). This painting’s ambivalent point of view further confuses our sense of who we are to identify with since it is unclear whether we are looking through the eyes of a perpetrator in the bomber or of a defender. The theme of aerial destruction was reiterated in oil paint and tempera in the Surrealist canvases of Yves Tanguy and John Armstrong where an uneasy fascination with death is evident in Tanguy’s shrouded airplane in *L’alphabet du vent* (1944) and in Armstrong’s strange death-like flower in *Analysis of Easter* (1940).33

However, as a whole, the collection in the final rooms dispensed with ambivalence and lurid fascination. For instance, Robert Capa’s photographs present the unrelieved grimness of the devastation caused by the Japanese bombing of Hankou 漢口.34 Yamahata Yosuke’s 山縣庸介 photographs of Nagasaki immediately after the atomic bombing are likewise unambiguous. Indeed, photographs, found throughout the exhibition, were particularly effective in underscoring Yokohama Museum director Yukiyama’s focus on the political and social context of landscape, because of their dual association with print journalism and fine art. In one case, this connection was made overtly. George Rodger’s famous image for *Life* of a small boy strolling beside corpses from the Belsen concentration camp was displayed as it appeared in the magazine with its over-printed caption.35 Placing photographs beside paintings created a dialogue between the two media, with the paintings underscoring that photographs are crafted images and the photographs emphasizing that paintings are located in politically resonant times and spaces. Together, these media—along with the smattering of books, drawings, engravings, and films—suggest that the landscape image is not a charmed world apart from human struggle, but a world trampled by many feet, molded by many hands, and profaned as well as enjoyed.

By redefining “Japan and the West” and by expanding the concept of “landscape”, the Yokohama curators moved viewers through the hopeful vistas of the late nineteenth century to the wasted terrains of the mid-twentieth, telling a complex story of optimism, complicity, and loss, and locating that story in political and social history as well as in individual artistic vision. This exhibition, I argue, revealed changes within the Yokohama Museum of Art and changes in the larger culture.
Let me now return to my premise that today Japan’s rightists are asserting an official form of collective memory bolstered by historical positivism. The Japanese Conference, the Liberalist History Research Group, and other groups with close ties to political leaders in the Liberal Democratic Party are trying to shift the sanctioned foundation of Japanese identity from rarified culture (which the 1995 Yokohama exhibit upheld) to a new basis in eventfulness and recollection (which the 2004 Yokohama exhibit challenged). Although affirming history and memory might seem to offer fruitful avenues for negotiating differences about the past, negotiation is not the intent of these politically active groups. Instead, rightists, inside the government and out, work to produce not just their own version of truth, but also an epistemological structure that precludes the possibility of taking other views of the past seriously. It is this structure, rooted in the claims of identity, that I want to analyze so that I can explain why the *Paradise Lost* landscape exhibition succeeded as a critique of it.
What happened, I think, was this: in the 1980s and 1990s, a form of popular collective memory flourished. Survivors of World War II in Japan and elsewhere challenged the willed amnesia of Japanese government officials who controlled the content of textbooks, public museums, and memorials. Unresolved issues such as the brutality of the invasion of China, the scandal of kidnapped comfort women, and mistreatment of prisoners of war became embodied in the frail figures of elderly men and women telling their stories. Their claims to truth—and their demands for recognition, apology, and reparations—rested in their withered limbs, creased faces, and the recollections of their youth. Many Japanese people responded sympathetically to their powerful appeals, research revived, films were made, and international forums were held. As historian Jordan Sand writes, “the major [Japanese] journals in the late 1990s have featured more discussion of World War II than at almost any time since the end of the war” and, as historian Sven Saaler notes, by the turn of the twenty-first century most Japanese citizens came to think of the 1931–45 war as a war of aggression.

The force of this emotional onslaught and the ensuing public discussion, combined with the brief interlude when some Japanese officials, including some prime ministers, began to issue statements of remorse and apology for Japanese aggression on the continent, galvanized Japan’s rightists inside and outside government. In a stroke of strategic brilliance, nationalistic government officials and right-wing organizations instinctively grasped that the power of memory lay in what might be called the “logic of identity”—the proposition that truth is a revelatory project where the purpose is disclosure, rather than an interpretative project where the purpose is the production of meaning. And revelatory seems the right word here because it suggests that truth is not the product of will and agency, but the result of an uninterrogatable experience. Indeed, remembered experience and the emotions accompanying it become politically powerful precisely because of the understandable reluctance to question the veracity of aged and damaged victims. Memory has come to demand uncritical acceptance, often lapsing into the “complacency and self-indulgence” faulted by historian Charles S. Maier. Japan’s rightists, recognizing the power of this logic of identity, twisted it for their own purposes. They pursued a double-pronged effort to secure their own revelatory truth through a nationalist version of memory whereby the state itself must be recollected with loving care, and also through a positivist version of history that acknowledged some of the conventions of modern research.

Japan’s struggle in the 1990s did not, in other words, replicate the clash between therapeutic memory and cosmopolitan history that occurred in Western nations in the 1980s, a clash analyzed by many, including Maier and Klein. The rightists did not simply posit warm sentiment and popular experience against rational research and professional history. Instead, they
pursued—and still pursue—a particular combination of the two. And so the official approach to the past has moved not from (universal) history to (ethnic) memory, but from timeless culture to a peculiar alliance of history and memory where both practices are construed to produce revelatory truth. Let us look closely at the Japanese right’s use of history and then turn to their use of memory.

Fundamentally, the positivist approach to history equates truth with what can be found in the archives. As E.H. Carr and Marc Bloch argue, positivists like Acton and Ranke (whose teachings greatly influenced the development of the discipline of history in Japan) fetishized facts and documents, placing history in the service of the status quo. Instead of being an instrument for the critique of power, this form of history corroborates the powerful.\(^4\) For Japan’s rightists, this approach means that the recollections of many victims can be dismissed as insufficiently documented. Much like those who would cast doubt on the Holocaust by arguing that wholesale murder of all Jews was never stated as official Nazi policy, the Japanese rightists tend to focus on the incongruities between public papers and private recollections, between documents and bodies. On the one hand, no file from the time of the Nanjing Massacre holds proof that Colonel Chō Isamu 長勇 issued orders in the name of General Matsui Iwane 松井菊松 for the murder of all Chinese prisoners; on the other hand, there stands an old Chinese survivor with stories of 1937 and the scars of bayonet wounds.\(^4\) On the one hand, national textbooks avoid mentioning that it was Japanese troops forcing Okinawans to commit suicide; on the other, an old man recounts the harrowing moment when his mother strangled his younger sister to death on Japanese army orders.\(^4\) On the one hand, no single document supports the official creation of the comfort women system; on the other, a weeping Korean woman recounts a tale of kidnapping and sexual slavery in the Japanese Imperial Army.\(^4\) Even, as in this case, where plenty of evidence exists of the official role in malfeasance, resistance continues to focus on minor points such as the activities of private enterprises in forced prostitution, suggesting that these private activities somehow absolve the government of responsibility for its encouragement and collusion. Although researchers have discovered much in the archives to substantiate major crimes against humanity, this logic of identity between documents and history creates an ever-receding horizon of proof, raising endless doubts about the veracity of survivors who themselves assert a logic of identity between truth and their personal memories. Reconciliation, even recognition, is nearly impossible in these circumstances. The appeal to archives is, in fact, partly specious because the bonfires of defeat in August 1945 had sent vast quantities of documents to the heavens. Furthermore, even today the Japanese government, in contrast to the German and Austrian governments, refuses to open what remains of the archives in many cases.\(^4\) However, the appeal to the


\(^{45}\) Charles Hawley, “Germany Agrees to Open Holocaust Archives,” (Spiegel Online: 19 April 2006), <http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,4119583,00.html>, viewed 20 April 2006.
archives, no matter how spurious, suggests the rightists’ new acceptance of the authority of modern research in crafting a version of the past.

Problematic though the purged archive is, of even greater concern in Japan and elsewhere is the general proposition that the modern discipline of history consists of vetting factoids and that out of the accumulation of these facts will come meaning. As sociologist Ueno Chizuko suggests, “… after the death of the big ideologies, historiography is retreating to a querulous positivism”. Historian Joan Wallach Scott similarly notes the widespread denial, for the sake of discrete facts, of the “necessary interconnection between the theoretical and the empirical”. In other words, the problem, most emphatically, is not merely “selective positivism” in Japan but positivism tout court everywhere. While facts are vital and evidence is crucial for both historians of revelation and those of interpretation, positivists assume that these facts from the past, these documents in the archives, come already equipped with meaning for us today; that somehow historical documents produced in their own time for their own audience automatically and forthrightly answer contemporary questions. If, as the positivists assume, the past’s detritus is necessarily coherent and comprehensible, it follows that once a document is produced, truth is revealed; judgment, imagination, and political arguments about the workings of power and representation are unnecessary. While it may be, as Charles Maier suggests, that “no savvy historian … adopts a naive positivist stance”, there are many less-than-savvy historians who believe that the past is to be “retrieved and relived, not explained”. The result is lucidity without light, and yet so powerful is this logic of identity between archive and truth in a world that distrusts theory and wishes to relieve itself from the responsibility of crafting meaning that even some “conscientious progressive historians” fall into the trap, as Ueno Chizuko argues, because “they share a logic that privileges documentary sources above all else”.

While positivist history is useful in brushing aside the assertions of aging victims, in trying to make collective memory an official undertaking Japanese rightists have relied even more heavily on the second “logic of identity”: the logic that equates truth with heartfelt pride in the nation. After all, pitting demands for archival proof against broken hearts is not an effective strategy for mobilizing their own nationalist supporters. It is essentially a holding action, admitting the importance of eventfulness without harnessing events to a rousing narrative. Therefore in addition to positivistic appeals, the rightists now elevate the nation as a glorious but misunderstood victim whose “memories” must be guarded and preserved with the same respect and care previously accorded individual recollections. As they see it, the ethical imperative of collective memory rests not with any person or “natural community” (as Margalit calls it), but with the state itself.
There are many examples of this effort. Rightists in the Liberalist History Research Group, posing, as Jordan Sand points out, “as outsiders challenging the educational establishment,” attempt to end the “masochistic history” that thrusts “demeaning” depictions of Japan’s past actions on defenseless schoolchildren.\(^{51}\) Likewise, rightists defended Koizumi Junichiro’s visits to the Yasukuni when he was prime minister even though they caused international consternation. The Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Sakurai Motoatsu 桜井本篤, justified these visits as deference due to “the war dead, to reflect that today’s peace and prosperity are founded on their sacrifices”, as though without millions dead, the Japanese economy would not have grown in the last fifty years.\(^{52}\) This view is reflected even more virulently in the new museum on the grounds of Yasukuni asserting that the soldiers died in a righteous cause.\(^{53}\) Naturally, the claim that the Japanese state itself is an aggrieved and honorable victim must take into account the actions of the wartime emperor, Hirohito. In addition to his comments on Yasukuni, Ambassador Sakurai describes the former occupant of the imperial throne as having “pursued world peace consistently and made strenuous efforts to avoid war, as is widely known.”\(^{54}\) This new assertion of the unfailing righteousness of past actions was also evident in 2005, on the sixtieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat, when the lower house of the Diet reissued the resolution of remorse it had passed ten years earlier on the fiftieth anniversary, but removed the words “invasion” and “colonial rule” to make Japan’s activities seem benign.\(^{55}\) Through these and other efforts, the rightists assert a “logic of identity” between truth and the loving memories of the Japanese state. While Margalit has asserted that “the relation between a community of memory and a nation is such that a proper community of memory may help shape a nation, rather than a nation shaping the community of memory”, in Japan and elsewhere the process is reversed.\(^{56}\) Powerful official forces backed by national institutions are attempting to reshape communities of memory.

In effect, what Japanese rightists have been trying to do over the past decade is to mobilize the similarities between positivist history and collective memory to claim authority twice over, through documentary identity and ethnic-state identity. The memory industry may have sprung initially from a loss of faith in the nation-state, but it is currently an adjunct to state policy and right-wing nationalism in Japan and elsewhere.\(^{57}\) Despite resistance, official collective memory now absorbs both the authority of remembrance arising from the experience of victims (particularly agents of the state) and the authority of positivist history rooted in official documents. What is needed is another way of mediating between history and memory, a mediation that resists appeals to the logic of identity and rests on the understanding that the meaning of events emerges through interpretation not revelation.

\(^{51}\) Sand, “Historians and Public Memory in Japan,” p.118.
\(^{54}\) Sakurai, “Visits to the Japanese Shrine”.
\(^{56}\) Margalit, The Ethics of Memory, p.101.
\(^{57}\) Charles Maier argues that memory’s resurgence is due to the “diminution of what we believe politically possible, our age of failing expectations” where the nation-state, along with other Enlightenment projects, no longer compels our loyalties. “A Surfeit of Memory,” p.143.
Landscape and Proximity

"Landscape" might seem precisely the wrong genre for this task. Many historians argue that landscape is exclusively a trope of memory. The title of Simon Schama’s Landscape and Memory suggests as much. Likewise, historian Thomas Laqueur writes that “landscape, precisely because it is so resolutely atemporal, so resistant to closure, so open to all manner of reverie, stands in sharp contrast to history. Space is the ground of remembering—against time.” Whatever the truth of landscape’s atemporality (and cultural geographers and environmental historians would beg to differ), distinguishing between landscape and landscape images seems crucial here. Landscape images cannot be called atemporal since each one dates from the moment of its creation and often carries with it that era’s distinctive style. By glancing at the way a terrain is represented on canvas, silk, or paper, we can often place it roughly in time, even without consulting the wall label noting the date of creation. And yet, since the image depicts space, it still alludes to a site, perhaps even an identifiable place, where things happened and where recollection and reverie might occur. The aestheticized space in landscape images may heighten and formalize the emotional connection with the past. In short, it could be argued that landscape images co-mingle space, as organized inside the frame with reference, in some cases, to a particular locale, and time, as the moment of the image’s creation and the moment at which it is viewed. The landscape image is thus both commemorative (an evocative template for memory) and historical (a primary document from the past). Especially when displayed in an exhibition like Paradise Lost, with its strong chronological momentum, landscapes are precisely suited to mediate between memory and history.

In siding neither entirely with the emotion of memory nor entirely with the facticity of history, the landscape genre in Paradise Lost mimicked the structure of the rightist’s official collective memory, and yet, in highlighting places rather than peoples, the genre capably undermined the rightists’ crucial appeals to ethnic identity. Other artistic genres might have harnessed the combined power of memory and history, but they also might have presented more obstacles when it came to subverting the claims of an exclusive subject position for the viewer. For instance, figurative works and images of religious significance raise questions of who—human or divine—is being depicted and who the viewer might ideally be, whether kinsman, countryman, or foreigner, worshiper, or heretic. An interior scene, be it a cozy domicile or a decadent seraglio, proposes an intimacy between artist and viewer. With some images, the viewer is assumed to be male. Abstraction and much of post-war art constitutes a universal space where the viewer is presumed to be cosmopolitan and versed in art history. With all these genres, recognition or alienation depends on whether
the viewer identifies with the subject position that is prescribed by the image and reinforced by the exhibition of which the image is part. On the other hand, landscapes, depicting open spaces into which any of us might stumble, seem to lend themselves less readily to questions of identity—who is this and are they like me?—and more readily to questions of motion and practice—where is this place and how should I move in it? Naturally, this is not invariably true, and the Yokohama curators, as I have already shown, had to choose their images carefully and expand the concepts of “Japan”, “the West”, and ふけい to undermine claims to identity.

In the context of Paradise Lost, a landscape like O’s sunny painting beckons us with its multiple points of entrée and creates an indeterminate emotional position for the viewer. Our eyes can circle to the right or to the left, up or down. Neither the small featureless person in the red frock nor the happily dreaming dog demands to be the center of attention in the way, for instance, that the face in a portrait does. The branches of the tree and the latticework of their violet shadows decline to dictate the movement of our eyes. Like our meandering gaze, our affective position in relation to this scene is also indetermined. Are we looking through the eyes of a casual passer-by, a colonial administrator, or a family member? Are we to feel a pang of nostalgic longing, a sense of acquisitiveness, or the comfort of a homecoming? Is it our home or someone else’s? The painting in this context insists only on proximity: we are close by. In an interesting sense, then, this image and most of the others in the exhibition were not celebrations of the “homelessness” of modernity, but rather a meditation on the idea of place as simultaneously home to some and as foreign to others. An exhibition highlighting Korean struggles against Japanese colonialism might posit an entirely different interpretation of O’s work, but landscapes, as presented in Paradise Lost, hold many memories, several histories, and suggest our dual identities as homebound and as passersby.

The curators were not oblivious to the more restrictive understanding of landscape whereby seeing and possessing are necessarily linked, creating a proprietary identity for the viewer. As they were well aware, it has often been argued that the gaze of the artist and the gallery-goer reenacts imperial conquest; to see a distant shoreline is to claim it for oneself and one’s country. Closer to home, modern nation-states develop symbolic landscapes redolent with patriotic possessiveness; landscape images help constitute the imagined, closed community. A particular case in point are mountains, frequently associated with national pride and prowess so that painting or photographing these emblems of greatness, like climbing them, can function as acts of patriotic celebration. One can imagine that exhibitions dedicated to elevating imperial grandeur or fervent patriotism could use some of the very same images in Paradise Lost to glorify the state.


63 As Simon Schama puts it, national identity “would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland”. Schama, Landscape and Memory, p.15.

Paradise Lost recognized the capacity of landscape painting and photography to enact dominion, but also subverted it. For instance, the curators displayed the nationalistic glory of mountains, while simultaneously suggesting how fraught and even ridiculous such pinnacle worship might be. Okada Kōyō's 岡田紅陽 two-page spread of Mount Fuji, the only subject he ever photographed, was presented in a lavishly book designed by the ultranationalist painter Yokoyama Taikan 横山大観. Near it were two 1938 photographs by Domon Ken 土門拳 of anti-communist mountaineering parties proudly climbing Mount Fuji's slopes as though their ascent could stop the “Red Menace”. Through repetition, the hype around the dormant volcano was revealed as slightly absurd. Likewise, Ansel Adams's “Mount Williamson, the Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar” (1944), the Japanese internment camp, was placed next to Miyatake Tōyō's 宮武東洋 “Mt. Williamson with Camp in the Foreground” (1944 and bottom) underscoring the fact that the same peak can be viewed by free people and prisoners alike. It is worth noting that the museum's 1995 exhibition had also displayed Adams's “Mount Williamson” to very different ideological ends. In 2004, by insisting that the same place may be possessed by many eyes and in many styles, the exhibition used landscape to undermine the claim that the gaze confers exclusive ownership. As a result, even famous prospects like Mount Fuji, partaking of the metsuo 名所 tradition, as well as the more numerous “vernacular landscapes” of ordinary life, were opened up by curatorial strategies as rightly accessible to us all. In this exhibition, the landscape genre created a space where the vicissitudes of history and the nostalgia of memory could be shared across national boundaries. Although initially I had thought landscapes too remote a vehicle for asserting a new view of the past at this difficult juncture in Japanese political debates, in seeing this exhibition I came to understand that Paradise Lost's success rested, precisely, on vistas.

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65 Miyatake was a professional photographer from Los Angeles interned in Manzanar.
Conclusion

Today, in the struggle over how to view Japan's past, especially its wartime past, competing perspectives multiply. In response to this domestic and international dissension, the Yokohama Museum of Art sought neither to mask differences by proposing a single ecumenical narrative nor to trivialize them by suggesting that all competing views, if sufficiently heartfelt, are equally valid. In other words, the exhibition discounted as inadequate both a return to the Enlightenment discourse of a universal history (desired by Charles Maier) and the embrace of memory and popular practices (proposed by Susan Crane). Instead, it thrust the viewer into a dense thicket of prospects where images of comfort and home hung beside images of disaster and alienation. Neither cool cerebration nor ethno-racial attachment could fully comprehend the pleasure, trauma, and eventfulness that washes over these landscapes. In mediating between history and memory, it helps that these are art images, combining the conceptual and the material and, since they are landscapes, perhaps even the cultural and the natural, rather than words or bodies. But ultimately credit must go the curators' mindful collection and arrangement which used this art to argue for compassionate attention as a new way of negotiating difference.

In considering how to relate to differences about the past, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has explored two modes: identity and proximity. Chakrabarty writes:

by identity, I mean a mode of relating to difference in which difference is congealed or concealed. That is to say, either it is frozen, fixed, or it is erased by some claim of being identical or the same. By proximity, I mean the opposite mode, one of relating to difference in which (historical and contingent) difference is neither reified nor erased but negotiated.

It is precisely this sense of proximity and negotiation that Paradise Lost cultivated. For the public at the exhibition itself, the negotiation was conducted through the proximity of images from different places and in different styles and media; behind the scenes, the negotiation was conducted among the staff, between Japanese museum personnel and those outside Japan, and, in my case, between a curator and a historian. Recognizing art museums as resources, I count myself among the historians who are trying to expand "the range of our canonical sources" (as advocated by Leora Auslander) by including images and, most especially, exhibitions. I have also found it fruitful to engage curators as colleagues in the effort to create a self-critical interpretation of the past. But none of this is to suggest (far from it) that landscape images or even proximity are always and forever forces for reconciliation and truth. As Chakrabarty cautions, "depending on the circumstances surrounding them, both the practices of proximity and those of identity can kill us or save us".

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68 Susan Crane argues, "It should not be an exaggeration to tell students (or any audience) that they become historians the moment they begin to think about history—that part of their learning experience constitutes participation in the transmission of historical memory, which they translate into personal experience as soon as they speak or write of it. Perhaps the practice of history, redefined as the active participation in remembering and forgetting within collective memory by each member, can become characteristic of historical consciousness, rather than simply reference to the knowledge of history." Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," American Historical Review (AHR Forum: History and Memory) (December 1997): 1384-85.


70 In arguing for an expansion of sources, Leora Auslander points out, "Each form of human expression has its unique attributes and capacities; limiting our evidentiary base to one of them—the linguistic—renders us unable to grasp important dimensions of the human experience, and our explanations of major historical problems are thereby impoverished". Auslander, "Beyond Words," American Historical Review, 110.4 (October 2005): 1015-45 at p.1015.


72 Chakrabarty, Habitations of Modernity, p.143.
Whatever is revealed must also be persuasively interpreted if we are to create meaning and peace.

In the present circumstances, the curators at the Yokohama Museum of Art have provided a useful counter-model, one worthy of our attention, to the newly emboldened right-wing approach. Using landscape images, they have created an alternative mediation between history and memory drawing on the strengths of both while avoiding reliance on a logic of identity. Unlike the readers of positivistic histories, asked to limit their curiosity to questions answerable by facts without values and unlike the bearers of embodied memory whose primary characteristic must be an appropriate ethnicity, the viewers of *Paradise Lost* were asked to slip from the bonds of self-certainty. The visitor was invited to move across many lands, witnessing the promises and predations of several empires. Neither solely Japanese, Korean, Chinese, European, nor American, this ideal viewer passed through many places, capable of *knowing* on the basis of the primary evidence offered by the documented images in a way familiar to historians and yet also of *feeling* in response to color and form and the reference to space, space through which in imagination the body moves. However, neither knowledge nor feeling could be un-self-aware since the viewer was asked to see both from the perspective of someone at home and through the eyes of a traveler. In short, rather than a positivist history or a collective memory, on offer was what we might call a “spatial consciousness” moving across an open, windswept *fukei*. 

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