HEAR ME OUT:
REMEDIATING BODIES THROUGH DIGITAL VOICES

by

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A DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the issue of vocal "ability" where "passing"—as male, as white, as straight, or as abled—is a site of daily conflict for many people whose voices belie their marginalized identities. This disparity between what the body looks like and what the body sounds like reveals itself in representations of the human in popular media, resulting in underexamined cases where what we hear can change the way we conceptualize bodies and their subjectivities. More often than not, equity and inclusion in sound is often underprioritized in contrast to the visual. This focus on visibility is rooted in a larger epistemic tradition in western society that privileges sight above all other senses to make sense of the world around us, including what or who constitutes as "human." But unlike the physical body, the voice offers plasticity in subjectivity because of its visual formlessness, ephemerality, and its ability to

transcend visual barriers. The voice reveals ways of being that the state's institutions seek to suppress and discipline.

My contribution on the voice attempts to fill in this gap of knowledge on the body in the context of East Asia, specifically Japan, by examining how its approach to the voice resulted in a booming cultural industry where its vocal productions challenge longstanding western narratives of the body. I argue these voicescapes offer a revisionary potential in subject formation that changes the way we define the human, especially in a postcolonial and increasingly posthuman world. By focusing on how the voice is used to remediate bodily subjectivity, it reveals tensions by which we can address institutional and sociocultural representations in future renderings of the human.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation stems from two points in my life that have become a formative aspect of my research in voice and embodiment. As a Hawaiian pidgin speaker born and raised in the colonized territory of Hawai'i, my first experience of speaking in school was one of shame. Prior to pidgin's acceptance as an official language in Hawai'i in 2015, it was considered by the American education system as a signifier of "low class." My early schooling consisted of involuntary speech rehabilitation classes to whitewash how I sounded. I now speak standard English as a native speaker only because I lost an essential part of my cultural identity. Years later as I transitioned during graduate school, my voice was again a problem: I did not pass as male. I sought voice training and was turned away due to transphobia or because the speech therapists I spoke to mistakenly assumed I was a trans woman who wanted to feminize my voice. With no other resources, I underwent hormone replacement therapy to medically change my voice. To my delight, my vocal cords thickened and my pitch lowered. And yet, I still did not pass. My voice was not what others expected a male voice to sound like. So, I began this project with the question: What *should* I have sounded like?

Both of these anecdotes share a commonality regarding vocal "ability" that affects not only the LGBTQ+ community, but people of color, people with disabilities, D/deaf people, and many others whose voices are sites of daily conflict. Although my solution as a child was to stop speaking, failure to "pass"—as white, as male, as *something else*—has become a choice I make

daily because, in the words of Jack Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure,* "if success requires so much effort, then maybe failure is easier in the long run and offers different rewards."[1] Failure is both disruptive and productive as it reveals what should not be: the messy, undisciplined, unpredictable alternatives. In the context of body politics, failure reveals ways of being that the state's institutions seek to suppress and discipline. Failure is being brown, black, queer, disabled, and, most importantly, human.

Richard Dyer wrote that "whiteness is felt to be the human condition" and we need only look at visual technologies like the camera to see how their use and development has always assumed a white subject.[2] But what is significant to this discussion is that they not only privilege the white subject; they also "construct that subject, that is, draw on and contribute to a perception of what it means to be white."[3] This implicit racial bias in technology has continued into the twenty-first century as the Covid-19 pandemic revealed how light sensors used by pulse oximeters could not accurately detect blood oxygen levels in darker toned skin, resulting in tripling the misdiagnosis of hypoxia among Black patients compared to their White counterparts.[4] This focus on visibility is rooted in a larger epistemic tradition in western society that privilege sight above all other senses to glean knowledge from the world around us. But seeing has a sinister side as well—it grants power.[5] This is evident in how surveillance is a demonstration of power in modern society, where, according to Foucault, its very name means "over-seeing."[6] But sight not only surveils whiteness. While whiteness may constitute the human condition, so too is being male, heterosexual, cisgender, and abled. But, as I demonstrated earlier, voice also plays a part in this process. Despite its marginal place in body politics, I argue that voices offer a revisionary potential in subject formation that changes the way we define the

"human condition." It offers modes of play outside codified conventions of the ideal body because of just how difficult it is to locate and discipline its invisible and intangible form. If we return to Halberstam, voice as a form of failure is just another way to say "resistance."

I draw from fields like disability studies, queer theory, and postcolonial studies as they revolve around methodologies of resistance that begin with the body. For example, Alison Kafer's crip theory is a significant concept in disability studies that is in conversation with José Esteban Muñoz's strategy of "disidentification" in queer theory. Such methods contribute to ongoing projects like Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee's "de-westernization" in postcolonial studies. Building on this work I bring in the issue of Asia, as the geospatial location, its cultural imaginaries, and even its area studies have a complex relation with whiteness that it still struggles to independently define itself from. At the root of all this is Asian bodies who have failed in some way to conform to the "human condition." I argue that this failure of the body may contribute to dewesternizing the field and redefining what "Asia" is or can be for Asians and the Asian diaspora. My interdisciplinary approach attempts to contribute to the ongoing efforts at decolonizing Asian area studies by first addressing the prevailing question of what "Asia" embodies. To do so, I begin from a macro-level where the body acts as a site of conflict. Academia is an institution that officializes bodies of knowledge—both about and what constitutes the imaginaries of "Asia." Often, the labeling of what is considered "Asian" and what is not is a persisting problem in western-structured academic institutions that isolates scholarship on Asia from incorporation into other fields of knowledge. Particularly in new media studies, the title itself already assumes a western positioning through the modifier "Asian new media" or "global new media" that signals a component of difference, that is, of "Asian-ness." However,

this Asian-ness is not genuinely Asian as western epistemologies developed for western contexts serve as the basis for such studies. In their discussion on the field in *Asian Media Studies*, John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua describe this as the "*paradigmatic* predicament" of studies on, in, and about Asia that has not improved since the 70s when Asian media studies immersed itself in the long and complex process of decolonization.[7] Rather, the result of such critical postcolonial consciousness did not lead "to genuinely original theory- or method-building that specifically speaks to media development and critique arising from indigenous political forms, intellectual legacies, or social relations across the region."[8] What Asia offers is not a case study for western theory nor "diversity" for western-dominated fields of study. Rather, it centers on the question: "Whose Asia is it?," a question that even now, has no answer. While Asian area studies in general has renounced the authority of western theories and methods and immersed itself in the long and complex process of decolonization, Kuan-Hsing Chen notes that with "the rise of Asia, we have suddenly found that we have been doing Asian studies in our own way, without using that name. The absence of the name, in fact, indicates our own lack of consciousness about Asia."[9]

However, it is difficult to deny the pervasiveness of western thought in academia. As a Chinese film scholar, Rey Chow reflects on her usage of western theoretical frameworks by asking a question that has followed me throughout the writing of this project: "am I paying homage to the West?"[10] Her response is simple: yes. But, she adds, "if 'the West' as such has become an ineradicable environment, it is not whether we 'pay homage' to it but *how* we do it that matters [my emphasis]."[11] To address the institutionalized problem of Asia's othering, I turn to the concept of de-westernization in academic scholarship as outlined by Saër Maty Bâ and

Will Higbee in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*. To dismantle the orientalist conceptions of the "East," we must first look at the nuances inherent in the imaginary conception of the "West." In doing so, rather than approach the "West" as a "fixed geographical location . . . bound to a specific historical period," Bâ and Higbee describes it as "an ideologically inflected mode of being in and seeing, perceiving or representing the world."[12] Within western discourse, this mode of being in and seeing—and, I add, hearing—excludes those bodies who do not subscribe to the ideals of the white, heterosexual, and abled male body. However, to reiterate, the process of de-westernizing is not based on a binary that merely reverses a "West and the rest" mentality or a mere process of replacing the "West" with the "non-West" while relegating the former to the periphery. Bâ and Higbee advocate "exposing, challenging, and thus repositioning the West's dominance (real and imagined) as a conceptual 'force,' in cinema [and other media], as well as questioning the hierarchies that are produced in film studies as a result of studying 'cinema' under these conditions."[13] For Katharina Lindner in her article "Situated bodies, cinematic orientations: Film and (queer) phenomenology," she says that "one way of dislodging film (studies) from its 'Western' hegemonic locations is to put 'the body,' and questions of embodiment, at the center of inquiry, in order to challenge the taken-for-granted orientations, perspectives, and (embodied) points of view of traditionally 'Western' film (criticism)"[14] The centralization of the body through a phenomenological approach by foregrounding a state of being through feeling is fitting for de-westernization.

However, my objective is not to establish a defined methodology for de-westernization but to offer one of already many existing decolonizing methodologies that, ideally, intersect to produce different, and possibly opposing interpretations that "cause positive vertigos of

displacement in the reader."[15] It is this goal of "positive vertigos" that I emphasize as this physiological reaction of the body highlights the significance of phenomenology in the meaning-making process. My foray into this conversation is to use "Asia as method" through the phenomenology of East Asian voices. As knowledge about Asia is produced largely in the US and Europe, Asia as method requires "a different sort of knowledge production . . . to generate self-understanding in relation to neighboring spaces and regions as a whole while at the same time removing the imperative to understand ourselves through the imperialist eye."[16] While the cultural and ideological legacies of Western colonialism cannot be separated from knowledge production in a postcolonial Asia, there is value in this "hybrid hyphenation" as

> The cultural inheritance of slavery or colonialism is brought before modernity not to resolve its historic differences into a new totality, nor to forego its traditions. It is to introduce another locus of inscription and intervention, another hybrid, 'inappropriate' enunciative site, through that temporal split.[17]

For this reason, a transnational lens is necessary as it focuses not on the top-down flow of knowledge but a horizontal one that considers the "relational nature of contemporary economic, social, cultural processes that stream across spaces."[18] As such, this trajectory disrupts and reroutes the flow of knowledge that has typically been portrayed as flowing one-sidedly from the "West" to "the rest." However, the scope of transnational flows is wide-ranging, so I focus on just one route for this project. Due to the long established and persisting image of "Cool Japan" in transnational flows since the 1980s, I limit the scope of my research to Japan's role in the Pacific. While the premise of the "Cool Japan" initiative sounds simple—to cultivate relationships with other nations through the promotion of Japanese culture—its widespread

effects are much more difficult to unravel due to its adaptive nature to local contexts. This focus not only examines the movement of knowledge within this flow but most importantly, the bodies that take in and are formed by that knowledge.

The visually vibrant culture of "Cool Japan" has been well documented by scholars like Christine Yano who examines the role of cute cultural products like Hello Kitty in Japan's national cool in her monograph *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific.* Sharon Kinsella, a scholar of Japanese visual culture, likewise has looked at how Japanese girl culture promoted the Cool Japan project, most notably as cultural ambassadors in its early years. While there are countless notable scholars in the field, Yano and Kinsella's works highlight the lesser-known significance of how representations of femininity and Japanese girl culture are interwoven into the successful export of Cool Japan overseas. I contribute to their growing scholarship through my focus on aurality to bring a more holistic view of Cool Japan that brings its marginal voices into the conversation.

This disparity between what the body looks like and what the body sounds like reveals itself in representations of the human in film and other media, resulting in underexamined cases where what we hear can change the way we conceptualize bodies and their subjectivities. As Joseph G. Kickasola points out in his article "Leading with the Ear," "if we focus on one dimension of this [sensorial] equation . . . we must always understand that it is part of much a broader dynamic."[19] My contribution on the voice attempts to fill in this gap of knowledge on the body where image dominates over all other sensorial study. Doing so encourages a type of corporeal understanding that contributes to an experiential body of knowledge that is not bound by abstract theory.[20] Hence my focus is on the voice that, despite its seemingly underwhelming

form, has a strong say in the body's production and consumption. Unlike the physical body, the voice offers plasticity in subjectivity because of its visual formlessness, ephemerality, and its ability to transcend visual barriers. Its non-physicality offers a greater potential to create and start over again and again—in other words, continuous remediation. But remediation cannot be talked about without technology as it has contributed to the increasing sophistication of what may be considered early renditions of the posthuman.

Computer-generated depictions of humans (or parts thereof) in film appear as early as the 70s with Edwin Catmull and Fred Parke's *A Computer Animated Hand* (1972). Following incarnations of the human over the decades show a preoccupation with photorealism in films like *Looker* (1981), *Rendez-vous in Montreal* (1987), *Fight Club* (1999), *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001), *Tron* (2010), *Terminator Genisys* (2015), and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) which refined reproductions of the human beyond the uncanny to the familiar. As with these examples, the remediation of the corporeal body focused on realness. However, the format of traditional film limits the extent to which a sense of realness can be achieved because it is two-dimensional. New media (such as virtual reality) offers liveness as a solution to the problem of realness, and with it, interactivity that involves the three-dimensional. As liveness involves a participatory aspect, viewers substantiate the presence of the remediated human through interaction. While films in the 90s focused on photorealism, new media during this decade offered "live" interactivity. During this time, the entertainment industry in Japan offered an early form of liveness that surpassed the work of its overseas competitors. In 1994, Konami released the first volume of its dating simulator game series, *Tokimeki Memorial*, which featured a live, albeit highly stylized human character. Two years later in 1996, talent agency and independent

music publisher HoriPro, combined both realness and liveness in Kyoko Date, whose music video, “Love Communication,” made her the first virtual idol. As the music video format derives from the live aspect of concerts, the realness derived from a such a “live” medium lent some realism to Date’s character. By layering Date over real-life footage of urbanites on the street, “Love Communication” demonstrated how a virtual human was now able to mingle with real humans in the same space. Adamsoft’s Adam and eFrontier’s Yuki Terai followed Date in 1997. However, the largest leap for digital humans in this genealogy was Hatsune Miku’s live performance at the Animelo Summer Live concert in 2009. Originally a vocal synthesizer, Vocaloid was intended to be used as a stand-in for music creators who produced music but did not have a vocalist. However, its popularity was not limited to professional and amateur musicians as fan bases cropped up around the character vocalists as well. This eventually led to live concerts using rear projection on a glass screen to cast the characters on stage. As with Date’s music video, live people also accompanied the Vocaloid on stage as backup dancers or musicians to lend realism to the projection. What is significant in this case is that Vocaloid’s characters are the first of their digital peers to perform “offscreen” in real time.

However, Vocaloid’s approach to human subjectivity veers from a true-to-life reproduction of the human. Vocaloid marks its human figures with digital “accents” in both sight and sound. However, this aesthetic “reversion” does not make these idols any less “real” as their remediation of the human focuses not so much on photorealism but a realism structured on bodily response. This realism is affective realism, where Vocaloid’s realness and liveness is substantiated through the feelings fans pour into the idols. This affective realism is predicated not so much on sight, but sound, or to be more precise, voice.

Rather than seeing, the affect invoked by voices plays a significant part in this recognition and subsequent legitimization of the digital human. However, the focus on photorealism so far has overshadowed the potential digitally generated audiorealism offers to the technologically-remediated human, or what we now consider the posthuman. As I mentioned previously, sound plays a critical role in legitimizing representations of the human. By focusing on how humans use the voice to remediate the human into the posthuman, it reveals tensions by which we can address institutional and sociocultural representations through affect and how we can address this in future human remediations.

Women's voices have a broad application in contemporary life. Especially in Japan, women's voices play a large role in the everyday as they serve as mediators between people and public spaces. But their prevalence belies how often they are used as a vehicle for something greater. I localize my research to Japan due to its conception of the "modern Japanese woman" as an essential part of its national reconstruction effort toward (a western-defined) modernity at the turn of the twentieth century. At this historical moment, women's speech came under social reform, and since then have become "indexical of how far Japan has progressed or caught up with America in terms of 'equality' and 'modernity.'"[21] As a marker of modernity, voices, then, have a powerful say in a nation's identity.

Chapter II is titled "Queering Heteronormative Desire through Vocality" and it examines vocal genderplay in the 2014 Japanese drama CD series *Goes!*. As a reverse harem drama, the genre features heteronormative romantic encounters as its mainstay. Yet what makes *Goes!* notable is that it is the first popularly received series within this category where female seiyū voice the male cast. I argue that by encouraging the idea that women can embody men in a

desirable way that men cannot, *Goes!* dissociates the link between men and masculinity as it invites pleasure from a certain kind of male-coded voice that, most importantly, is cultivated by the female body. The resultant effect is the destabilization of Japan's concept of "woman" and heteropatriarchal ideal enforced by the nation. *Goes!* offer other modes of being that do not rely on a rigid gender binary encapsulated by the nation, nor ones that are tied to heterosexual reproduction. As a result, this listening experience facilitates a shift in the listener's aural orientation away from a traditional concept of masculinity and heterosexual romance toward othered modes of feeling in the world.

In Chapter III, I begin my examination with musical voices to look at how nation-building and the ideals of the nation are built into vocal subjectivity. I situate this chapter at the turn of the twentieth century when women's speech came under social reform. Here, I demonstrate how women's voices are an underexamined, fetishized component of women's bodies that act as a tumultuous site of contention between the past and modernity, the "West and the rest," the primitive and the civilized. Within this sociohistorical shift, I identify shōjo, or young girls, as one of the subjectivities of "woman" that came about as a result of social national reform around female bodies. Shōjo's crucial role in nation-building sets up my argument on how current voice synthesis technologies like Vocaloid (which feature shōjo voices) further fragment and dislocate women's voices from the material human body to refashion them into a digital ideal of "women" as contemporary national subjects. The vocal synthesizer Vocaloid provides a model by which we can listen to how digital voices, especially women's, are altered to (re)imagine the nation within transnational relations. Titled "The Voice of the Digital Other: Vocal Nationalism through Vocaloid," I examine how Japan as a national body and its relations

to the "West" is manifested by the nationalistic song "Senbonzakura." Through the numerous renditions of this song by fans, I argue that the women's voices used to articulate it, both Vocaloid and human, reinterpret boundaries about gender, sexuality, and nationhood to queer the bodies tied to it.

In Chapter IV, "21 Grams of the Soul: Soullessness as Post-Mortem Disability in Empire of Corpses," I extend my work on voice in nation-building from a symbol of the nation to a marker of humanness. While the trajectory of humanness in the use of technology is meant to further a "liveable" life, it only applies to a certain type of "liveable" body – one that is able, cisgender, and heterosexual. One of the ways in which humanness is defined is through the intelligibility of linguistic-based speech. In the animated world of *Empire of Corpses* (2015), it is not death but the corpse's vocality—and implied loss of language—that marks the body as abject. In addition to embodying ableist fears and anxieties surrounding the connection between language and cognition, the corpse's successful resistance to linguistic rehabilitation queers the ideal model of the white, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual male. This speculative imagining of disability through vocality challenges modes of speech mired in ableist constructions of communication and remediates the way in which "unintelligible" bodies in real life are heard.

Times of national crisis such as war, or in this case, a pandemic, is an especially resonant time to revisit the boundaries around such categories of "us" vs "them"—the have and have nots and the deserving and undeserving—to reveal the cracks in societal infrastructures that perpetuate them. The imagined communities of this neoliberal time deviate from the hopeful tone Benedict Anderson takes in his definition of the term as some groups depend on the consumption of certain human lives over others. I take this point further as *Empire of Corpses* uses technology

to revive humans for labor as a continuation of the nineteenth century imperialist project where the posthuman is not representative of some technological dream to better the human race, but a nightmare where one may not rest even in death. In this speculative past, this juncture between body and technology has come to the point where the once ephemeral yet divine soul has also become a tangible thing to be consumed so that nothing is "sacred" from capitalist machinations.

My focus on the film's speculative interpretation of the industrial revolution of England is a deliberate one to revisit an important moment in history where humans have become analogous to machines in terms of productivity and use-value. Machine-specific injuries became commonplace and so did the effects of industrial pollution on the body. While the cultural context seems to depart from the first two chapters on Japan's nation building with women's speech in the 1800s, this was a biopolitically rich time for the use of technology to render the human voice "service-able" for the nation. Regardless if whether the nation is Japan or Great Britain, these parallel historical moments paved the way for each nation's path toward modernity. Under the framework I established, women's voices and those of the undead are not so different considering their enforced silence by patriarchal systems, history of subordination, their use as producers or reproducers of the nation (i.e. women as child bearers and the undead as agents of imperialism), and their sacrificial nature for the sake of able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual men. These case studies underlie David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's critique of neoliberalism in *The Biopolitics of Disability* as it "comes replete with an expansive sense that we are all living in relation to the arrival of a prognosis of the pathology-to-come."[22] While the pathology in question shifts according to national need, what is definite is that the rehabilitation

of such bodies is not for the sake of creating a "liveable" life but to determine who is worth living that "liveable life."

In the end, this dissertation listens to how voices fail and the rewards that come of it. Failure reveals latent facets of how the constructions of gender, sexuality, ability, and race determine the "human condition" and the ways in which we can queer it, crip it, and de-westernize it. Subjectivity, as Chen states, is "a key site of decolonization work. Only through the process of self-analysis can new strategies be formulated to overcome the limits imposed and shaped by the history of imperialism."[23] In using the voice as a map for bodily subjectivity, we can identify larger transnational tensions between soft power and the institutions that enforce and benefit from them. While we are waiting for the next "pathology to come," may the voice remind us that failure is part of the human condition. And that sometimes, we need to listen to it.

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[1] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

[2] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xxxiii, 103.

[3] Ibid., 103.

[4] Richard Harris, "Devices Used In COVID-19 Treatment Can Give Errors For Patients With Dark Skin," *NPR,* December 16, 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/12/16/947226068/dark-skin-can-lead-to-errors-with-pulse-oximeters-used-in-covid-19-treatment.

[5] Dyer, 104.

[6] Ibid., 104.

[7] John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua, "Introduction: Our Asian Media Studies?" in *Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities*, edited by John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 2.

[8] Ibid., 2.

[9] Kuan-Hsing Chen. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

[10] Rey Chow. *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xv.

[11] Ibid., xv.

[12] Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee, "Introduction: de-Westernizing film studies," in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, edited by Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-2.

[13] Ibid., 3.

[14] Katharina Lindner, "Situated bodies, cinematic orientations: Film and (queer) phenomenology," in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, edited by Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee (New York: Routledge, 2012), 152.

[15] Bâ and Higbee, 13-14.

[16] Chen, 2.

[17] Homi Bhaba. *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 346.

[18] Aihwa Ong. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999)

[19] Joseph G. Kickasola, "Leading with the Ear: Upstream Color and the Cinema of Respiration," *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2013): 73.

[20] Ibid., 73.

[21] Miyako Inoue, *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 3.

[22] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015) 12.

[23] Chen, x.

CHAPTER II

QUEERING HETERONORMATIVE DESIRE THROUGH VOCALITY IN *GOES!*

Through the din of the filled-up world of emanation we seek voices that caress us.
—Bonenfant, "Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres," 77

Can I kiss you? Even if you say "no," I won't be able to hold back.
— √ *HAPPY+SUGAR=DARLIN*

The above excerpt is from the fifth volume of √ *HAPPY+SUGAR=DARLIN*, and it represents a typical scene in otome drama CDs where the listener is seduced by what would be described as an ikemen voice. An ikemen voice is just one of an array of voice types established within the Japanese voice acting industry whose system categorizes voices not only according to the aural quality of the speaker's voice, but their physical body as well. Whether or not it is true of the corresponding body in physical reality, such terms strongly associate the voice with the specific bodies evoked by them. Ikemen voice refers to the voice of an ikemen, or handsome man. However, the qualities constituting such a voice are vague and circular: an ikemen voice comes from an ikemen. One definition describes ikemen voice as that which *misleads* the listener into believing it belongs to a handsome man.[1] What is notable about this particular description is the act of deception, or the performative aspect involved in being a handsome man. The underlying assumption here is that ikemen voices are not exclusively produced by the male bodies that such voices imply. As exemplified by notable female seiyū like Saiga Mitsuki, Paku Romi, and Ogata Megumi, women too, can produce ikemen voices, and, in some cases, even more successfully than some of their male peers.[2] However, women performing as men and vice

versa is not a novel concept. Gender play has a long history in Japan, and is a recurrent trope in anime, music, stage plays, dramas, and other contemporary media productions. Female seiyū are commonly cast as young boys as it is both easier for women to maintain a pre-pubescent voice than their male counterparts and because they would be able to continue voicing that character as they matured in the series. It is rare, on the other hand, for male seiyū to have the capacity to voice younger versions of their characters, and it is usually the case that female seiyū are employed for those parts. As such, due to the versatility of their voices, it is not surprising then that female seiyū are called upon to perform as bishōnen (beautiful young men), androgynous characters, and even older men. But despite the spotlight on those who produce these voices, little attention is paid to the affective experiences of those who consume them.

Due to the voice's flexible and ephemeral nature, transgressing the bodily boundaries of gender has become an aural reality in the voice acting industry today. However, we must also consider the technological frameworks that made such transgressions of the voice possible in Japanese popular cultural products like drama CDs. In tracing the vocal genealogy of female transgression, I examine how the mass medium of radio introduced us to the voice as a private site of desire, giving shape to what it means to be "pleasing to the ears."

I begin this conversation by briefly discussing the sociocultural transformations of the voice through radio and telephone. While there are other communication technologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that contributed to the amplification and transmission of sound, radio and telephone developed beyond the role of delivering information to establish a way of hearing that used the disembodied voice to develop a positive affective relationship with its listeners. While early experiments with the phonograph magnified the uncanny qualities of the

voice, the later developments in radio and telephone cultivated vocal qualities that appealed to listeners. These preferences, I emphasize, are shaped by gender and cultural factors. In the case of Japan, I delve further into these preferences through radio's reconstruction period during the rise of television in the fifties as those in the broadcasting industry, critics, and scholars alike reevaluated the purpose of radio, its audience, and the new culture of listening that arose from it. Popular among youth of the time were late night radio personalities who heralded a new form of celebrity via the voice, which in turn, became the precursor to the seiyuu star system in Japan today. Then, I turn to the drama CD industry whose prolific output provides ample material for further study on voice acting in Japan. Among the many genres in this industry, I focus on the transgressive nature of the otome genre and how it has the potential to queer listeners' expectations of gender and sexuality through the voice in the first volume of the otome drama CD series *Goes!*.

The Radiophonic Roots of Audio Dramas

Amidst the rapidly changing landscape of communication technology, the radio still retains its importance as a tool of social connectivity. Whether it be through online radio streaming or podcasting, the broadcasted voice persists in uniting diverse audiences across geographical boundaries. From its inception as a public medium, radio's shared aural connection consolidated a national identity and culture. But more importantly for this project, it also allowed a plurality of voices and technological subjectivities to emerge as a popular cultural medium, which we see with Japanese audio dramas today. To better contextualize the roots of the audio

drama, I outline a brief genealogy of the sound technologies which made preserving, amplifying, and transmitting the voice possible.

On December 6, 1877, Thomas Edison created the first recording of the human voice with the phonograph, a technological feat that manifested, what Weiss calls, the "techno-phantasies" of the age.[3] Aside from its rumored spectral ability to communicate beyond the veil, the phonograph established a new directory of sound deviating from that which was formerly set by music. What was recorded—the peripheral sounds of the vocal body: shouts, mumbles, whispers, and of technology: crackles, static, the hissing of white noise—"changed the nature of auditory perception and sonic creativity."[4] The effects of recording, and later, its transmission through broadcast technologies like the telephone and, subsequently, radio, did not so much reproduce the world as it was heard, but changed the world in a way that made us *hear* it differently.

This turn from industrial technology in the earlier part of the century to communication in the latter represented a new era of "neotechnics."[5] While the development in auditory technology served the practical purpose of conveying messages across space and time, its creative innovations lay in the desire to preserve and transmit the voice in a way faithful to the speaker.[6] The sociocultural aspect of this preservation speaks to the subjectivity inherent in the voice and its affect on listeners. What is particularly important here is that in this relationship between speaking and listening, "the auditory also has the capacity to enter into other forms of sensual organization, contaminating and creatively deforming them."[7] This recognition of voice's affects and effects resulted in the usage of certain voices for certain purposes. How these purposes were

determined was shaped not only by its respective sound technologies, but historical and cultural forces as well.

A key historical moment to my discussion of the voice and its sensual function is the AIDS epidemic of the 80s, where the "libidinization of the aural" designated the powerful role of sound in sex.[8] To avoid contracting HIV through the messy physical reality of sex, the telephone allowed for a new, "safe" form of sexual penetration to develop in the act of listening. Consequently, the voice became the preferred sexual stimulator, while the ear became its orifice. While the AIDS crisis in Japan was not as devastating as it was in America, telephone sex arose from a cultural infrastructure where children resided in the family home into adulthood. With the lack of privacy in these multigenerational spaces, the telephone came to be an outlet for sexual solace in the 60s. Although telephone sex emerged out of different contexts, the acknowledgment of its role in achieving sexual intimacy in absence of the physical bodily relations remains the same. Telephone sex illustrates how the "auditory has [the] capacity to enter into other forms of sensual organization, contaminating and creatively deforming them" so that it is not just a substitute for physical sex, but a new form of "sensual organization" through aurality.[9] However, this raises a question Bonenfant brings up in her work on listening practices and its queer potential: "Who is allowed to sound and under what circumstances? Who is allowed to touch with timbre in ways that caress queerly or otherwise?"[10] In broadcasting the voice, be it through radio or telephone, the notion of a "proper" broadcasting voice led to the gendered aspects of this genealogy.

While the public voice of radio was overwhelmingly masculine, the private voice of the telephone was markedly feminine. Since 1878 until the job's decline a century later, most

telephone operators were women as listeners preferred the “soothing” sounds of their voices over the rude, cracking shouts of the boy operators who preceded them. These “Hello Girls” occupied the public and private worlds of their callers as they not only connected callers to each other but provided personal advice to them as well. But what they represented to callers was foremost characterized in terms of their affective qualities. The “voice with a smile”[11] relayed the pleasant sound of “Hello Girls,” and at times, comforted them as well. Prior to the advent of 911 services, their voices were critical to their callers as they also functioned as first responders. Reflecting on her thirty six years as an operator, Margaret Harris admitted that "you never get used to hearing the panic in the other person's voice,” stating that the only thing she could do was “staying calm and staying with them on the line until help arrives."[12] It was paramount then, that the voice’s presentation was more than a superficial service. The intimacies offered up by the telephone line created a new relational space to a voice who guided callers to their destination (and who sometimes eavesdropped on them as well). Subsequently, over time, the voice on the line became closely associated with intimacy. This preference for such intimate contact via phone as compared to radio highlights a valuable aspect of feminine voices in constructing an ideal to-be-listened-to voice. What this illustrates is like for any other media, audiences came to develop a preference—in this case for certain kinds of voices on air, and that identifying these ideal voice types became a subject of public and academic interest.

What is interesting is that while feminine voices were preferred over the phone for their soothing ability, there is no mention of pitch. While feminine voices are typically coded as high pitched in both Western and Japanese contexts, this is not the case across temporal factors. If we turn to radio in Japan during WW2, we come up against a requirement that complicates what

feminine coded voices should sound like. In NHK's oral history broadcast series, Takei Teruko, a prominent woman radio announcer for Japan during WW2, noted a change in preference for women announcers' voices before and after the war which resulted in a shift from high to low pitched voices as the latter was said to be easier to listen to.[13]

In an academic context, among one of the earlier studies on the ideal voice in the 80s, Valentine and Saint Damian attempted to identify universal descriptors of the ideal voice across gender and cultural differences. Using the US and Mexico as samples, their results showed that in respect to radio, the ideal voice was neither strictly masculine nor feminine.[14] The cultural differences were also noteworthy, where in Mexico, the ideal female voice, whose sensual and delicate qualities were "identified with refinement and affective communication," was closer to the ideal voice than it was for the ideal male voice.[15] Yet it was the opposite case in the US, where the ideal male voice, identified as firm, low, and cheerful, proved to be more closely aligned with the ideal voice.[16] While gender plays a role in how voices are evaluated, culture also influences how such voices are heard, differentiated, and shaped into desirable listening experiences.

As culture shapes gender, it's necessary to have a cultural understanding of sound's influence on what sound sounds like and what it does. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Japanese voice acting industry characterizes voices according to the bodies they evoke, such as ikemen, which does not have an equivalent in Western descriptions of the voice. Another example can be found in onomatopoeia. English does not have a linguistic equivalent to mimic the sound of rain falling, other than pitter patter, yet the word does not reproduce the sound so much as describe it. On the other hand, Japanese characterizes rain fall according to

severity, such as “zaa zaa,” “shaaa,” and “poto poto.” Within such different cultural contexts, sounds come to have different “sounds” and meanings such that it destabilizes any definitive category of description. While Bonenfant speaks about practices of queer listening, she emphasizes how culture, and, I add, even our social groupings, influence our “attunement” toward certain somatic sensitivities that we then notice and are affected by more readily than others.[17] For these reasons, it is necessary to be cognizant of an epistemology of sound that is not limited to Western categorization.

Culturally, what is interesting from Valentine and Saint Damian’s study is that in Mexico, women’s voices were characterized as delicate, sensual, and soft. As many male voices in Japanese drama CDs also share these attributes, this medium provides a productive study into examining this shifting definition of the ideal voice while complicating what it means in aural codings of gender. That is to say, the ideal voice of broadcasting is neither fully male, nor female, but a combination of feminine and masculine qualities. This idealism can be seen in *Goes!*’s seiyū and I evaluate the effects of this ideal voice and what it can offer in changing the nature of broadcasting.

A Brief History of Radio in Japan

1925 marked the first year of radio broadcast in Japan, and its leading role as a mass communication medium went uninterrupted until the introduction of television in 1953.[18] Until the 70s, this period of radio’s so-called decline was also one of “reconstruction” as broadcasting companies reevaluated the purpose of radio, its audience, and most importantly for this chapter, the new culture of listening that arose from it.

The pervasiveness of radio in Japanese society was so widespread that within seven years of its privatization in 1951, NHK reported having 14.81 million subscriptions, or 82.5% zonal coverage.[19] The live qualities of radio were quickly recognized as it soon enabled real-time broadcasts of theater and sports events, which in turn, blurred the boundaries between the aural and visual.[20] Its broadcasting omnipotence was soon matched by its portability in 1955 when transistor radios made listening an activity that was: one, no longer confined to the home, and two, made for an audience of one.[21] Prior to this, listening to the radio was a family activity done at home. However, now that the radio could be taken with the listener as they conducted their day-to-day activities, it developed a more intimate connection with its listener like the telephone.

Even with the rise of television in 1953, the unique listening experience established by radio could not simply be replaced by the audiovisual aspects of TV. In an article titled "Television and Radio" from a 1954 issue of *Broadcast Culture*, Naoya Uchimura described radio as "art of the imagination," asserting that the superior abilities of sound could get to "the heart of things" whereas vision could not due to its distractive nature."[22] While television was fast eclipsing radio, he urged readers to consider taking advantage of this characteristic to the utmost of its abilities.[23] Similarly, Takayuki Ochiai, Radio Tokyo's Research Manager, cautioned against confining radio to such a narrow category as the yet untapped potential of sound offered a broad range of possibilities for radio's future.[24]

It was during this time that radio's "reconstruction" resulted in a new form for radio dramas. As a new form of intimacy developed with the single listener, the affective and immersive capability of dramas became a point of interest. In his 1963 article "A New World of Drama," Makoto Hōjō likened dramas to music in wanting to establish a "heart-to-heart

connection" with its listeners.[25] A notable model during this time was film actress Keiko Awaji's narration in the *Pink Mood Show* (*Pinku Mūdo Bangumi*) where her one-on-one conversation with the listener cultivated a space of intimacy that Akira Funakoshi described as elegant yet erotic.[26] The direct appeal to emotion and sensuality, what Funakoshi identifies as deeply characteristic of the radio,[27] is one of the possibilities of radio that Uchimura and Ochiai previously looked for. Later on, the midnight broadcasting boom in 1967 further reinforced the important role of broadcasters in attracting and maintaining listenership. *All Night Nippon*, *Pack in Music,* and *Sei! Young*, also known as the "Big Three Midnight Broadcasters" were nighttime programs that featured radio personalities like Nozawa Nachi and Ochiai Keiko who attained idol status among many youth of the time.[28] The function of new radio departed from the original idea as a generalized mass communication medium as its turn towards "emotional communication" and the creation radio personalities (to initiate such relationships), catered to targeted listenerships of one.[29] These radio personalities heralded a new form of celebrity via the voice which was a precursor to the seiyuu star system in Japan today.

Aural-Oral Sex on Demand

While radio set the foundations for intimate listening, the telephone made voices into a site of desire. Both contributed to the form and purpose of drama CDs of the 90s to the present, where the listener engages in aural acts of varying degrees of intimacy (of a romantic or sexual nature) with a voice. This marked deviation from the conveyance of information to conveying affect queers radio's original intent in the public domain of broadcast—especially as a national news source. In critiquing radio's use as an information relay object in the public domain, Weiss

describes how the "true site" of radio lies not "in mere existence of recorded sound object but in the very manner that this aural fabrication establishes a relationship between an invisible creator and equally invisible and usually anonymous listener.[30] For Weiss, the radio's purpose is not in base linguistic transmission, but affective connection between speaker and listener. In other words, its "true site" takes place in the body of the listener and effects felt transformation. It is an entirely subjective experience not so easily regulated by a higher authority. As relations of radio, his statement may also be applied to phone sex and otome drama CDs as they both are sites of queerness operating outside heteronormative practices. I emphasize the affective relationship initiated through aural texts as a valuable part of the text which prolongs its lifespan. I now turn to the relationship of contemporary listeners with drama CDs.

The Drama CD Market in Japan

While CDs may be a bygone media format in many countries, in Japan, they're still alive and spinning. On a research trip I took to Japan in January 2019, I was met with a passion for the material despite how ephemeral such products are in Japan's rapidly changing media landscape. A memorable aspect of Japan's otaku culture emphasizes materiality, where collecting physical copies of a series or franchise represents a physical show of support for its creators. As such, CDs, DVDs, doujinshi (fan-published works), figurines, keychains, badges, file folders, and other paraphernalia can be found not only in anime merchandise stores but in secondhand stores as well. Even at media stores such as Tsutaya and Tower Records, where sales do not explicitly revolve around anime-related products, drama CDs have their own sections. What was even more surprising for me was that at a Tower Records in Osaka, some popular companies like

Rejet and Otomate even had their own drama CD sections. Thus, it could be said that drama CDs are not quite a niche product as they may seem abroad.

However, for non-domestic listeners, acquiring drama CDs outside Japan requires no small amount of dedication. Tumblr, which seems to be the preferred website for Anglophone drama CD fans, has numerous tutorials put together by fans on how to navigate Japanese drama CD purchases online. It is also noteworthy that such sites tend to also provide fan translations of drama CDs which incidentally act as free advertising for specific franchises. Such guides usually direct novices to Stellaworth (https://www.stellaworth.co.jp/shop/) and Animate Online (https://www.animate-onlineshop.jp/) as these are the most user-friendly sites for those with little to no Japanese language reading comprehension. Perhaps because of that, and they offer additional incentives to buyers by offering tokuten (bonus) tracks and limited-edition goods exclusive to their stores, these two sites are the most well-known drama CD retailers online among Anglophone buyers.

However, online storefronts also have their downsides. Most offer a limited selection of drama CDs that do not always feature the latest releases in the market. Similarly, older series may not be available due to their short production runs. Both problems can be averted by shopping on other sites specializing in drama CDs, yet you would need more advanced Japanese language skills, and in many cases, a forwarding address in Japan as most stores do not do overseas shipping. Another barrier is that listeners seeking to buy drama CDs from certain seiyū would need to know their pseudonym as the average seiyū tend to avoid having their name attached to R-18 works due to the negative effect it could have on future job offerings or promotion in the industry.[31] All these factors make it difficult for non-domestic buyers to acquire

drama CDs but as with all fan communities, there are always alternative, that is, non-legal, ways to get their fix. Soundcloud and YouTube are popular streaming sites where fans in Japan upload drama CDs for listeners abroad. Perhaps because of this, the industry has started to move toward mobile and online streaming. PokeDora (pokedora.com), Drama CD Fan! (drafan.com), and DLsite (dlsite.com) are some popular drama CD sites for mobile phones. Purchases link to the site's respective smartphone app where users can stream drama CD content on the go. Drama CD companies have also responded to the downtick in sales due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On February 24, 2020, Rejet announced on their official Twitter account that they would be setting up an archive on YouTube for some of their old and upcoming drama CD series to prevent illegal uploads of their products.[32] This trend is not limited to drama CDs as music labels have also turned to video streaming platforms to upload live band performances and promotional trailers so the move toward online accessibility may be a larger shift in Japan's media industry to reach a wider audience.

Studying Drama CDs

There are multiple categories of drama CDs such as talk CDs, BL (Boys' Love) CDs, GL (Girls' Love) CDs, and otome CDs. In this case, I focus on otome dramas as a site of queering in terms of gender, sexuality, and media practices. While same-sex love like that found in BL and GL dramas are prevalent enough to have their own category, this queering does not happen with gender identity. A possible reason for the wider circulation of the former is the common, but not altogether accurate, assumption that such worlds operate outside reality, where its sexual transgressions are considered fantasy play. While the beautiful men of BL may provide content

for a voyeuristic female gaze, Baudinette's interviews with gay Japanese men reveal how BL's consumer demographic is not strictly limited to heterosexual women.[33] Studies in BL continue to grow, yet there is a gap both in production of and studies on nonnormative gender play in drama CDs. For this reason, this project examines how drama CDs offer a way to explore queer aural subjectivities outside the visual spaces of Japanese media.

While commonplace in visual media, gender play is surprisingly rare in Japanese drama CDs. In a medium where the listener is only privy to the voice itself, this lack of visual stimuli suggests that the voice, without imagery to contain it, may function as a powerful mode of transgression and transformation. The significance of aural sensuality is a similar phenomenon we see with telephone sex and its transformation of sex acts during the AIDS crisis from bodily to aural/oral orgasm. Bonenfant emphasizes the power in giving shape to the vocal body, as in such imagining, "We hear and feel a body: a *peculiar* sort of body [italics mine]" that is very much influenced by our own lived experience.[34] For queer listeners, especially, drama CDs offer a space where gender bending offers more than just play. In this aural space, the voice has the potential to further complicate current renderings of gender, sexuality, and the body in media and, in extension, real life.

Japanese Drama CDs and *Goes!*

As of 2020, there are only two Japanese drama CD series that feature an all-female seiyū cast for their male characters: *Goes!* (2014, *Gôzu*) and *Grand Stage* (2015, *Guran sutêji*).[35] For this analysis, I focus on the former series, as it is the first well-known occurrence of female-to-male gender play in this medium. This drama follows a reverse-harem format where the assumed

female listener develops a relationship with seven possible male love interests.[36] As an audio drama, the success of *Goes!* relies heavily on the ability of its male characters' seiyū to appeal to its target audience of young women. Unlike other reverse-harem drama CDs that employ male seiyū, *Goes!* uses women, or more specifically, women's voices to attract other women listeners. Whether intentional or not, *Goes!*'s heterosexual romance is not so heterosexual after all. As such, in this chapter, I examine how voice aurally queers the gender and sexual positioning of bodies in the interactive space between speaker and listener in *Goes!*.

By having an all-female cast, *Goes!* provides a unique aural vantage point to examine not only how female listeners negotiate the dissonance between "male" voices and the female bodies producing them, but also why they find such voices appealing. This audio drama demonstrates what it is to *sound like* a desirable man regardless of the body creating it, thereby queering not only listeners' expectations surrounding masculinity but, more critically, how and by whom it is performed. As Butler illustrates in her concept of the heterosexual matrix, the association of masculinity with male bodies and femininity with female bodies are not, in fact, natural phenomena, but rather, configurations determined by heterosexual practice. [37] By examining female seiyū's voices in *Goes!,* I challenge the seemingly inviolable tie between the concepts of "man" and "masculinity" and argue that being a man is not exclusive to the male body.

In undoing the heterosexual matrix, it is necessary to recognize not only who speaks but who is listening, as the voice has potential to queer the body it comes from *and* the desiring bodies it elicits. Japanese drama CDs, and more broadly, the voice acting industry it stems from, exemplify how other, non-visual media operate in studies on gender and sexuality—a field in need of perspectives outside the Western sphere. Although anglophone voice actors practice

gender bending as well, I chose to focus on seiyū for sociocultural and ideological reasons. First, the phenomenological focus of this analysis requires an acknowledgement of the body's presence in vocal performance. Japan's voice acting industry fulfills this condition. For seiyū, dancing and acting form necessary parts of their voice acting regimen, alongside more explicitly vocal skills like singing. These extra skills strengthen a seiyū's repertoire as they are expected to participate in live events and other activities to promote their character.[38] However, these skills also reflect how the actor's body is conceived in Japanese voice acting. For seiyū Arino Hiroki, he notes that the only difference between acting and voice acting is whether the performance is in front of a recording mic, thus reinforcing the importance of the body's presence in both forms of acting. [39] This emphasis on the body is largely absent in anglophone voice acting; in fact, the wider Western film industry tends to treat voice acting as separate from and secondary to acting where the body is actually seen. The Academy Awards, a Western-centric institution, exemplifies such a tendency as it excludes voice acting talent despite voice acting being a part of film production, whereas the Seiyû Awards in Japan exclusively features voice actors. As such, the significance of voice acting in Japan and the country's strong cultural history of gender play across various media—of which I will discuss in further detail later—make Japanese drama CDs rich material for exploring the connection between voices and bodies, and their impacts on transgressing the borders of gender and sexuality. Second, while the sociocultural conditions of the voice acting industry in Japan would be reason enough for this choice of text, my focus on an East Asian cultural product is also intended to disrupt a wider discourse on gender and sexuality reliant on Western conceptions of the body and its movement through the world. In order to de-Westernize the positioning of the body, my working approach to the slippery concept of what the "West"

embodies references Bâ and Higbee's definition of "an ideologically inflected mode of being-in and seeing, perceiving or representing the world."[40] This ideological mode is informed by an Orientalist view of the Eastern Other, what Said describes as a Western conception of the Orient that is rooted in "a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections," all of which justifies and enforces Western superiority.[41] Despite the so-called hybridization of culture that came about through globalization, Richard Dyer reminds us that nevertheless, "whiteness is [still] felt to be the human condition," where it serves not only as the basis for normality but its embodiment.[42] Also, within the context of a patriarchal and heteronormative society, this dominant mode of being-in and seeing centers on the white cis-gendered, heterosexual male body. As phenomenology explores subjective experiences, its de-Westernization does not rest on one body but *bodies*, and as such, produces diverse ways of being that rupture a Western conception of the ideal body as a white male body. However, this process should not be a dogmatic, inflexible practice; it should be a multiplicity of methods that intersect to produce different, and possibly opposing, interpretations that, "cause positive vertigos of displacement in the reader."[43] It is this goal of "positive vertigos" that I emphasize as the affective reaction of the body to the vocal queering in *Grand Stage* and *Goes!*, which serves in the unmaking of gendered voices and the bodies associated with them.

To displace both the West and the white cis-gendered, heterosexual male body as default positions of being in the world, Ahmed's queer phenomenology serves as an apt starting point to begin this displacement, or in alignment with her terminology, disorientation. However, beyond the typical idea of orientation as a "matter of how we reside in space," she focuses on sexual orientation which extends to "'who' or 'what' we inhabit space with."[44] In other words, the act

of being with someone may direct one's own body toward or away from the dominant heteronormative position. Orientations of the body tend to focus on the seen body, but an often-neglected way of being-with involves the voice and how we may "feel" its orienting touch through hearing. This alternative positionality of the subject through aural bodies and the resulting repositioning of their interactions returns to the goal of de-Westernization, as it creates many possible and clashing realities to come into being that, in effect, challenge and displace a dominant Western mode of being in the world. As Ahmed states, emotions direct us "toward" and "away" from the object or subject we come into contact with.[45] And it is through listening, that reorients us as "the act of paying intense somatic attention to the ways that our bodies engage with the sonic stimuli around them . . . decide[s] which emanators of vocal sound to gesture toward, which of these to want and to seek, and in which baths of sound to swim" (Bonenfant 78). As a result, the effected affect of touch "shape[s] what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach."[46] Through *Goes!*, the affective reaction elicited by the voice (re)orients listening bodies toward other possible trajectories of inhabiting one's own body and the world.

(Re)orienting the Aural Body—the Otome Road

The starting point of this analysis begins with the direction in which Japanese drama CDs seek to orient their listener. Up until this point, I have referred to *Goes!*'s target demographic as young women based on a surface translation of it as an otome muke drama CD, or drama CD for "maidens." As the combination of the words otome and muke translates to "for maidens," this category's target demographic would assumedly be young women. Such drama CDs typically

feature heterosexual romance—that is, a romance between a female-coded listener and male-coded speaker, as central to or a significant part of their narratives. While the assumed conventions of the category rely on a heterosexual pairing, this is not always clearly the case as in *Goes!,* the gender of each party is not always explicitly stated. To emphasize this distinction, I use the term "coded" for both female and male identifiers. Yet, regardless of whether the listener's gender is pre-determined, their implied orientation is that of a young woman on a trajectory toward heterosexual romance.

From an ideological standpoint, the English translation of otome to "maiden" suggests a young woman innocent to the ways of the world in both mind and body. More explicitly, this term revolves around virginity. But otome's sociocultural history reveals there is more to the term than its surface translation denoting a mere "maiden." To contextualize otome, it is necessary to look at the term's underpinnings through a broader exploration of how the concept of "woman" operates within Japanese culture. Inoue relates how the concept of the "modern Japanese woman" emerged during the late Meiji period at the turn of the twentieth century as a result of Japan's national initiatives toward modernization.[47] This was due in no small part to the proliferation of women's magazines, which adapted to the shifting demographics of women at that time, and whose trajectory from childhood to adulthood was interrupted by enrollment in secondary education and entrance into the workforce.[48] Until this point, the "good wife, wise mother" (ryôsai kenbo) model was no longer an ideal for womanhood as girls' compulsory education, mandated by the 1899 Directive on Girls' High Schools, lengthened the time between childhood and adulthood. This new liminal time materialized in the terms jogakusei and shōjo—as "not-quite-female females" who were perceived as hyperfeminine threats to a cultural sphere

shaped largely by a patriarchal vision of the "good wife, wise mother."[49] [50] In other words, these 'girls' did not constitute a nationally accepted idea of the modern Japanese woman and served instead to destabilize and open up a potential restructuring of this nationally defined construct. Although shōjo initially referred to a girls-only space, post-war renderings of shōjo developed, "into something that was even being theorized as genderless and situated as a postmodern consumer identity by cultural theorists and critics like Otsuka Eiji (1989) and Horikiri Naoto (1988)."[51] With its strong ties to consumerism, the shōjo construct was criticized for its deviation from the acts of cultural production associated with nation-building.[52] In this complex web stretching between childhood and adulthood, otome, like shōjo, similarly rejects the maturation attached to becoming a productive member of Japanese society and represents a failure of heterosexual reproduction. However, otome replaces shōjo's naivety with a subversive state of becoming that "creates a space to evolve and engage in practices to develop beyond gender binaries and narratives of normativity."[53]

Nguyen's case study on how otome operates within Lolita culture illustrates the term's application in contemporary Japanese culture. She describes otome as a "genderless term" encompassing a liminal identity that has the agency and self-consciousness lacking in shōjo.[54] Nguyen's definition resists gendering the maiden figure while emphasizing the shifting and potentially subversive position it occupies in the child's transition to young adulthood. It is significant that Nguyen treats otome as a framework of affect or lived experience by focusing on how Lolitas embody the term rather than apply it as an abstract concept. For Nguyen's respondents, otome is dependent on the practitioner's bodily experience in this state of becoming. Bodily response, then, is central to the practitioners' otome experience—a fitting

approach to explore desire in drama CDs, as otome listeners are positioned in a state of realizing the body's sexual potential.

Similar to its application in Lolita fashion, otome does not delineate a prescribed gender role in video games either. In their historical account of otome games, Koide and Obana observe that unlike women's and men's games (josei muke gēmu and dansei muke gēmu, respectively), which prioritize a targeted gender demographic, otome games have increasingly placed importance on game content—that is, the appeal of the characters themselves through their personalities and appearance.[55] As for the players, they must find love *with men* enjoyable for the game to be successful as an otome game.[56] The wording of this particular sentence is significant as it specifies *love with* men rather than *to love* men or to *be loved by* men. This wording signals that the otome body enables a romantic encounter that elides a particular gendered, listening body. The important aspect of otome games is thus the affective response of the player. Otome, then, orients the listener toward multiple open trajectories that would otherwise be closed to a female listener. As *Goes!*'s target demographic is otome, the term invokes a potentially queer space between the listener's and speaker's body that does not subscribe to a clear-cut heteronormative or gendered coupling.

To create a meaningful relationship with an otome listener, the seiyū's voice must first elicit the receiving party's desire. Because the drama plays out through conversations, *Goes!*'s success is heavily dependent on the ability of its characters' seiyū to appeal to otome with their vocal performance. As such, how the voice is perceived, whether favorable or not by the listener, acts as an orienting compass that directs the listener's body toward another way of being with this voice. *Goes!* initiates a queer trajectory, as the voices used to cultivate this romance are not

produced by the male bodies such voices imply. Although the novelty of having female seiyū cast as men could plausibly be explained as a marketing tactic to attract listeners outside their target demographic, Petit Reve's choice to cast female voice actors in the role of men in a romantic game for women was perceived in the project planning process as a possible deterrent for players. [57] However, due to the strong support from Internet and magazine readers, Petit Reve extended the drama CD series to a console game, thus extending its legacy across media platforms.[58] This demonstrates that *Goes!*'s consumer base preferred these particular female seiyū over their male counterparts, implicitly supporting the idea that female bodies can successfully produce men's voices in a desirable way comparable to and perhaps exceeding that of male bodies. Consequently, after the release of the *Goes!* PS Vita game, its creators were also convinced of the game's appeal beyond female players as they expressed hope for the game to be played by a "wide range of people regardless of gender."[59] This comment assumes that even within a romantic context, their seiyū could satisfy the expectations of a broader demographic of listeners beyond those in the otome genre.

Returning to *Goes!*'s appeal, the overall preference for female seiyū may be explained by the way in which the queer space of gender play makes it possible for otome listeners to enact their fantasies and desires. According to Kim, women's games, and, I add, interactive media in general, are important in that they not only "act as a medium for women and girls to acquire pleasure from identification and gratification as women" but, more critically, to "provide a specific type of pleasure [over] games targeting a general or dominantly male audience."[60] The implication of Kim's statement is that pleasure is something that only women can make for other women. However, I am not enforcing a gender essentialist view of saying that women's games

are only for women and men's games are only for men and so forth. Rather, I draw upon the idea that this space is tailored for a particular community, enabling exploration of other ways of being not possible in a public space sanctioned by patriarchal and heteronormative ideals. In this orientation, *Goes!* allows for a collective pleasure-seeking, making, and attaining for otome whose (aural) bodies are in a state of becoming. The resultant pleasure from this interaction induces an affective movement toward the body's dis- and subsequent re-orientation. Regardless of whether this "positive vertigo" is brief or long-lasting, this experience inserts previously unconsidered possibilities into the otome's trajectory toward a transformation of the self.

As an otome drama CD, *Goes!* operates in a similar way to women's games, yet without the constraint of gender, as both induce a distinct pleasure that would not be attainable if they were produced for a general (read: cis-gendered, heterosexual male only) audience. The inherent intimacy of the medium also reinforces this targeted pleasure. Drama CDs are meant to be listened to privately, and this private experience of listening is enhanced through the physical intimacy of ear buds or headphones. The presence of a physical conveyor of the speaker's voice nestled in the ear itself, an erogenous but also vulnerable part of the body (not to mention an orifice), establishes a physical extension and intimate connection to the implied speaker. The intimacy of this connection is particularly heightened because it operates in a space made for otome. Drama CDs for otome act as a shared intimate space that is created and cultivated for that particular community. This otome-made space deconstructs a gender binary and structures intimacy regardless of one's assigned gender or sexuality. It acts as an invitation to a collective imagining of "men" without the structural limitations imposed by a patriarchal rendering of 'man' as defined through heterosexual romantic relations.[61]

The Japanese language also shapes the creation of this for-otome space, as it is specifically made for Japanese audiences. Unlike anime, manga, and video games, which make up a large part of Japan's soft power overseas, drama CDs circulate as a domestic product. English translations, if there are any, are only available as fansubs online. As such, the voices themselves do not assume an anglophone listener. As the drama CD does not provide official English translations, it expects its listener to have a certain level of Japanese listening comprehension. Japanese contains many nuances that are lost in an English translation, so it is essential that listeners have a grasp of the language to understand how it informs the characters' personalities and relations with each other. Pronouns are a recurrent translation hurdle as they differ according to age, gender, social position, dialect, and context.[62] In *Goes!*, Vince refers to himself as "boku," a male-specific term typically used by young boys. As the term is associated with youth, it is meant to be endearing to the listener and evoke a sense of childishness in the speaker. However, boku also expresses a level of politeness, as it can be used by adult men in formal settings or when speaking to a superior. The intentional use of boku, then, can portray Vince as likeable, respectful, and boyish all at the same time. On the other hand, Takashi refers to himself as "ore," another male-specific term. But, unlike the more childish boku, ore is a masculine way of referring to oneself that evokes a sense of self-confidence. When young boys enter adolescence, they tend to "graduate" from using boku to ore, seemingly as a linguistic marker of maturity. Depending on context, ore can be perceived as arrogant and rude to those who are not familiar with or are of a higher social standing than the speaker, whereas it can denote a sense of familiarity with close friends and family. So, for Takashi, his use of ore renders him as a more masculine character who is overfamiliar with those around him. These pronouns

provide a glimpse of how the characters want to be perceived by listeners—the complexity of which would be lost in an English translation. As a result, *Goes!* taps into a knowledge base that does not automatically assume an English-speaking (that is to say white) listener. It challenges this assumption by the nature of its marketed category, its character voices, and the language in which it is produced. These features reorient pleasure for a non-Anglophone otome listener.

The final and most important orientation of this analysis is the performative nature of masculinity and sexuality, in general. However, before turning to the female-performed masculinity in *Goes!,* I want to briefly address how masculinities performed by women in Japanese popular culture have been approached. The most well-regarded example of female masculinity within Japanese popular culture is the Takarazuka Revue, an all-female theater group established in 1914 by Ichizo Kobayashi. His intention for the otokoyaku (male role) was to use it a pedagogical tool to teach Takarasiennes and their female audiences how to be good wives and wise mothers by temporarily internalizing the male psyche.[63] However, underlying this patriarchal ideal of womanhood is the acknowledgment that these women could perform men in a way that was not only relatable to women but, most importantly, alluring to them as well. According to Kobayashi, "the *otokoyaku* is not male but is more suave, more affectionate, more courageous, more charming, more handsome, more fascinating than a real male."[64] The Takarazuka Revue presented a masculinity that did not subscribe to those performed by men, as its otokoyaku performed 'men' in a way that was only possible via the female body. The implication of Kobayashi's statement is that women could perform men better than men could. And, though this view originated in the early twentieth century, it retains relevance in Japan's

current dansō boom, with bands like Fudanjuku and THE HOOPERS demonstrating that such performances of female masculinity.

However, it is important to recognize that the female body in male guise is not an attempt to become male. Rather, the significance of such performances calls upon Butler's concept of drag:

> *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself— as well as its contingency*. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary . . . In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.[65]

In effect, drag's denaturalization of gender opens up a space to reevaluate the means of its construction. *Goes!* achieves drag's goal but pushes it in a different direction, as it does not seek to dramatize the aspects associated with maleness or masculinity, nor is it simply an act of male impersonation. Rather, its performances are akin to what Halberstam identifies as female masculinity. In critiquing the near interchangeability of masculinity and maleness in popular discourse, they emphasize that masculinity "must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects."[66] They locate masculinity not within some inherent aspect of the male body as heteronormativity suggests, but as a production across both male and female bodies.[67] However, as white male masculinity is upheld as the most recognizable form (hence safe and familiar) by society, it not only obscures all other masculinities but others them as well.

As such, Halberstam urges us "to turn away from its construction to bring other more mobile forms of masculinity to light."[68] It is this production across bodies, the dissociating of masculinity from white male bodies and its validation in othered bodies that *Goes!* strives toward.

Mobile Female Masculinities—the Older Brother Type

As a result of its origins in a female body, the form of masculinity produced by *Goes!* disrupts the traditional association of masculinity with maleness and those bodies assigned male at birth (AMAB). In promotional material for *Goes!*, Petit Reve advertises their female seiyū as a selling point. Although again, this acknowledgment may be for the marketing of the novelty of having a genderbending cast, it nevertheless validates the masculinity their seiyū produce. Whereas the vast majority of societal and cultural institutions ascribe "femininity" to female bodies, *Goes!*'s use of the female body instead legitimizes already existing masculinities operating outside an AMAB body and avoids dismissing them as mere male impersonations by women. As such, *Goes!* is a compelling source from which to examine how such voices queer listeners' desires for "men" and the appeal that this kind of masculinity offers to otome listeners.

The masculinities that the female seiyū in *Goes!* enact draw upon and modify a typeset of male characters commonly found in Japanese popular culture for female audiences. Each character type has a specific personality and voice associated with it. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on Vince, the ideal older brother-type (risōtekina oniisan taipu). Vince's official character bio describes him as "kind, polite, and good at caring for those around him." [69] Seiyū

typically characterize this type of character with a healing voice (iyashi boisu). A healing voice has a calming effect on the listener, which fits well with older brother-type characters who typically have younger siblings to care for in place of absent parents. Such voices are generally breathy, mid-range (or a little higher, depending on the character's age), and most importantly, gentle. Healing voices also tend to have more inflection than typical masculine-coded characters, which not only reflects a more feminine way of speaking but also makes the character emotionally accessible and relatable to the listener. Yet, it is important to note that even if a voice meets these requirements, it has to be able to convey warmth to the listener for it to be considered "healing." In other words, the listener must be able to <u>feel</u> the seiyû's smile through the character's voice. It must be pleasant to listen to. The way Vince talks is especially pleasing to hear as he 'rounds' his words—that is, he softens 'harder' sounding words by putting less stress on certain syllables. For example, when he asks Takashi if he hurt himself falling out of a tree (ke ga ha nain desu ne), he uses a soft "ga" rather than a hard "ga." He also subtly draws out his sentences, taking advantage of ending particles like "ne" or "ka" so they have a gradual breathy ending rather than an abrupt one. Even though the above traits are typically coded as feminine, they do not mark the voice as strictly belonging to a female speaker. They do move the character away from what would be considered mainstream dominant masculinity, but such traits do not vocally emasculate their characters. Rather, this shift emphasizes their appeal to listeners. Masculinity here is constructed through tonality, or an easy listening that elicits aural pleasure. The voice does not penetrate the ears but rather is *taken in* by the ear because of its gentle "touch."

While I focus on the voice, it is also important to consider how its surrounding sounds underscore Vince's tonality. Schafer's concept of the keynote describes these sounds as the backdrop against which the figure is formed, and, while it may seem to play a secondary role to the principal subject or object, "it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning."[70] As a caretaker of plants, Vince's caring personality is evoked through the many scenes where the twittering of birds or the soft rustling leaves of trees serve to accentuate his innate affinity with nature. The keynotes of the forest give Vince substance in this soundscape, endowing him with the additional sonic "feelings" of warmth, tenderness, and the youthfulness of Spring already contained within the gentle appeal of his voice. As the drama continues, we find that Vince is not only a caretaker of plants but also human relationships, as he frequently acts as middleman in calming the turbulent relationship between the energetically reckless Takashi and brooding "King" Kai. Similarly, outside the world of the drama, Vince's role as the nurturing ideal older brother-type positions the listener as the one to *be* cared for rather than having *to care* for others. However, the power dynamics of this relationship do not subordinate the listener to the speaker—which is the case in many reverse harem drama CDs. Rather, the gentle quality and inflections of the healing voice imply that the speaker is emotionally accessible, or vulnerable to the listener. Although reverse harem drama CDs typically feature love confessions as a way to express character vulnerability, such instances of sudden emotional reveal tend to highlight the dramatic and alarming effect on the listener. They also create a feeling of obligatory reciprocation for the emotional labor that the speaker goes through for the listener. Still, the healing voice's inherent emotional vulnerability does not

demand anything from the listener. Its openness invites the listener to be pulled along with the character in the narrative.

However, what is most remarkable about *Goes!* is that it does not directly address the listener, which is otherwise common in reverse harem drama CDs. As *Goes!* does not demand anything of the listener, it is perhaps this lack of obligatory reciprocation that contributes to its appeal. Although the listener is the addressee of the narrative, they are not directly acknowledged. The narrative will go on without the listener, and the listener need only follow along at their leisure. And so, the listener retains their own agency in this relationship, as they are not expected to engage in the narrative. The only expectation on the listener is to listen. This is readily apparent when listeners are privy to Vince's thoughts, which he voices aloud more often than any of his peers, as if to include the listener as a participant in his thought process. In the act of listening, the listener becomes complicit in the legitimization of these female-voiced-men and the masculinities they mobilize.

Despite catering heavily toward their listeners, the men portrayed in *Goes!* are more than mere performances of listeners' desires. Rather than simply providing ear candy, the narrative focuses on developing the personalities of the male love interests, and, in essence, rounds them out as 'real' people in order to show how these forms of masculinity are transferable to real life bodies that are not AMAB. In this case, the listener accompanies the characters in their student lives at an academy of magic where they attempt to uncover its seven wonders.[71] Each scene reveals the personalities of each of the seven young men, and the interplay of these varied character types not only portrays the "mobile masculinities" Halberstam calls for but also reveals facets of the female bodies producing them. These reveals of the female-performing-male body

go as far back to the gender play practiced in early kabuki. Mezur analyzes the gendered politics of male actors in onnayaku (women's roles) and asserts that such "slippages" are not mistakes in the performance but are inserted so that "spectators may hold different views of [the onnayaku actor's] gender, and their views may also change during the course of a performance."[72] Likewise in *Goes!*, these slippages allow listeners to perceive this portrayal of masculinity *across* both real female bodies and imagined male bodies. It is throughout this listening experience that the listener's aural orientation, like the characters themselves, may move away from a traditional concept of masculinity and heterosexual romance toward other modes of feeling in the world.

By encouraging the idea that women can embody men in a desirable way that men cannot, *Goes!* dissociates the link between men and masculinity. Through their performance of female masculinity, the seiyū in the drama CD challenge listeners to perceive masculinity outside the dominant form put forward by Western ideals and, by extension, the cultivation of an expectation of pleasure from a certain kind of male-coded voice. Rather, the healing voice in *Goes!* queers not only the listener's expectations surrounding masculinity but, more importantly, how and by whom it is performed. By focusing on the appeal of its characters for a "genderless" otome listener, *Goes!* de-essentializes gendered audiences and resists the white cis-gendered, heterosexual male body as both a dominant and desired masculinity. Consequently, the affective reaction elicited by these queer voices reorients listening bodies toward other trajectories of inhabiting one's own body and being in the world.

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[1] "Ikemen boisu" イケメンボイス [Ikemen voice], Nico Nico Pedia, last modified January 20, 2015. https://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/イケメンボイス. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

[2] I use the term seiyū to refer to the cultural context in which it operates. Unlike voice acting in America, becoming a seiyū in Japan is a highly competitive vocation with a corresponding star system, and as such, there is cultural capital associated with the term that is not present in its English translation.

[3] Allen S. Weiss, *Phantasmic Radio* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 3.

[4] Ibid., 5.

[5] Steven Connor, "The Modern Auditory 'I,'" in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, edited by Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1997), 204.

[6] Ibid., 205.

[7] Ibid., 220.

[8] Ibid., 206.

[9] Ibid., 220.

[10] Yvon Bonenfant, "Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres," *Performance Research* 15, no. 3 (September 2010): 79.

[11] "SBC Michigan Recognizes 125 Years of Telephone Operators," SBC Communications, Inc., October 31, 2003, http://www.att.com/gen/press-room?pid=4800&cdvn=news&newsarticleid=20902.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Kyōko Hirotani, "Hōsō no Ōraru・Hisutorī Shin Shirīzu 'Hōsō Ūman' Shi (1): Takei Teruko san ~ Futsū no 'Onna no Ko' ga, Sensō wo Hete, Kotoba no Puro ni Naru Made~ 放送のオーラル・ヒストリー新シリーズ「放送ウーマン」史 (1) 武井照子さん～普通の「女の子」が、戦争を経て、言葉のプロになるまで～ [Broadcasting Oral History New Series "Women Broadcasters" History (1): Teruko Takei ~ An Ordinary "Girl" becomes a Linguistics Professional through War], *Hōsō Kenkyū to Chōsa* 放送研究と調査 4 (April 2016): 33.

[14] Carol Ann Valentine and Banisa Saint Damian, "Gender and culture as determinants of the 'ideal voice,'" *Semiotica* 71, no. 3/4 (1988): 300.

[15] Ibid., 300-301.

[16] Ibid., 294, 301.

[17] Bonenfant, 78.

[18] Ichirō Tōyama, "Shirīzu Rajio 90 Nen (Daikkai): Terebi ga Tōjōshita Jidai no Rajio ~Sono Giron to Senryaku wo Megutte~" シリーズラジオ 90 年【第一回】テレビが登場した時代のラジオ～その議論と戦略をめぐって～ [90 Years of Radio Series (Episode 1): Radio in the Time of Television ~On its Discussions and Strategies~], *Hōsō Kenkyū to Chōsa* 放送研究と調査 4 (April 2015): 2.

[19] Ibid., 4.

[20] Ibid., 5.

[21] Ibid., 5.

[22] Naoya Uchimura, "Terebi to Rajio" テレビとラジオ [Television and Radio], Hōsō Bunka 放送文化 2 (February 1954): 3.

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] Takayuki Ochiai, “Rajio no Shinro wo Omō” ラジオの進路を想う [Imagining the Course of Radio], Chōsa Jōhō 調査情報 8 (August 1960): 13.

[25] Makoto Hōjō, “Atarashī Dorama no Sekai wo” 新しいドラマの世界を [A New World of Drama], *CBC Repōto* CBC レポート 8 (August 1963): 39.

[26] Akira Funakoshi, “Rajio Jihyō Pinku Mūdo Bangumi no Seihi no Kiro” ラジオ時評　ピンクムード番組の成否の岐路 [“Radio Review: At the Crossroads of Success and Failure in the Pink Mood Show], *CBC Repōto* CBC レポート 7 (July 1963): 36.

[27] Ibid., 36.

[28] Tōyama, 16.

[29] Morio Tadaishi, “Rajio Saihakken: Ashita no Rajio wo Kōsatsusuru” ラジオ再発見明日のラジオを考察する [Rediscovering Radio: An Investigation into the Radio of Tomorrow], Hōsō Bunka 放送文化 8 (August 1973): 45.

[30] Weiss, 79-80.

[31] However, this is not a problem for well-established seiyū like Kaji Yūki or Suzuki Tatsuhisa, whose large fanbases will follow them through hell or highwater.

[32] Rejet⊙Archive [Shin YouTube Channeru Kaisetsu] Rejet⊙Archive【新 YouTube チャンネル】, Twitter post, February 24, 2020, 3:26 a.m., https://twitter.com/RejetArchive/status/1231903147506798594.

[33] Thomas Baudinette, “Japanese gay men’s attitudes toward ‘gay manga’ and the problem of genre,” *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 3, no. 1 (April 2017): 59-72.

[34] Bonenfant, 75.

[35] “Gōzu dorama CD dai ichi kan” ゴーズ！ドラマ CD 第一巻 [GOES! Drama CD Volume 1] (Japan: Petit Reve, 2014), CD.

[36] However, I make the distinction that *Goes!* follows an observatory mode of participation where the listener gets to know the characters and develop feelings for them based on their aural observations. *Grand Stage*, on the other hand, involves a more interactive mode as a situational drama where the characters speak directly to the listener.

[37] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: New York, 2002), 194.

[38] An example of such promotional activities would be seiyû Hosoya Yoshimasa’s “白石蔵ノ介 *Special Live Tour 2010* 毒と薬” (Shiraishi Kuranosuke Special Live Tour 2010 Poison and Drug) where he held concerts in Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka to promote his character song album “Medicine or …?*”* for the *Prince of Tennis* franchise.

[39] Hiroki Arino and Yuria Sasamori, “Being a Voice Actor/Actress in Japan (Interview),” interview by Nobita from Japan, YouTube, posted by Nobita from Japan, November 26, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbIyvpqOYI0.

[40] Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee, “Introduction: de-Westernizing film studies,” in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, edited by Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-2.

[41] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 8.

[42] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 9.

[43] Bâ and Higbee, 13-14.

[44] Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

[45] Ibid., 2.

[46] Ibid., 2.

[47] Minako Inoue, *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 78.

[48] Ibid, 116.

[49] Ibid, 116.

[50] An Nguyen, "Maiden's Fashion as Eternal Becomings: Victorian Maidens and Sugar Sweet Cuties Donning Japanese Street Fashion in Japan and North America," PhD dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 2012, 143.

[51] Ibid, 151.

[52] Ibid, 156-157.

[53] Ibid, 216.

[54] An Nguyen, "Eternal maidens: Kawaii aesthetics and otome sensibility in Lolita fashion," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 2, no. 1 (April 2016): 21.

[55] Chitoko Koide and Takashi Obana, "Historical Study of 'OTOME Games': Focus on the Character Analysis," *Research bulletin of Osaka Shoin Women's University* 8 (January 2018): 70.

[56] Ibid, 72.

[57] Sumiyoshi STRANGER 住吉 STRANGER, "[Otogē] Kyasuto wa josei seiyū nomi! Ishoku de arinagara seitouha na "Goes!" kaihatsu mēkā ni urabanashi wo kiitemita" 【乙女ゲー】キャストは女性声優のみ！異色でありながら正統派な『Goes!』開発メーカーに裏話を聞いてみた [Otome Game: A female-only voice cast! I ask the developer for the inside story behind the unique yet traditional game "Goes!"], Character Japan, February 28, 2016 (3:00 p.m.). http://ure.pia.co.jp/articles/-/53019.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Hyeshin Kim, "Women's Games in Japan: Gendered Identity and Narrative Construction," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2-3 (March 2009): 166.

[61] However, this varies on a case-by-case basis as some otome drama CDs do forward the desirability of misogynistic men to its listener.

[62] A notable example would be in *Your Name* (*Kimi no Na wa*) where after body swapping with Taki, Mitsuha blunders Taki's pronouns while talking to his friends. To his friends' confusion, Mitsuha refers to her/himself as first "watashi," then "boku," and finally "ore." As "watashi," "boku," and "ore" all mean "I," the social and gendered nuances of these terms are lost in an English translation.

[63] Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 49.

[64] qtd. in Robertson, 51.

[65] Butler, 175.

[66] Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1.

[67] Ibid., 1-2.

[68] Ibid., 16.

[69] "Character," *Goes!,* accessed June 29, 2019, http://www.fenter.jp/p-reve/goes/#!/chara.

[70] R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 9.

[71] Although the drama CD does not offer direct interaction between the cast and listener, this relationship can be developed in the *Goes!* PS Vita game, which was released shortly after the first CD volume. Where the CD builds listeners' expectations toward romance, the game fulfills it.

[72] Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 8.

CHAPTER III

VOCAL NATIONALISM: BUILDING A NATION OF CUTE WITH HATSUNE MIKU

In 2009, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) nominated a schoolgirl as one of three cultural ambassadors to promote the nation abroad. While the "schoolgirl" Shizuka Fujioka was not a real schoolgirl per se but an actress, the decision reveals the significant role such fantasized women have in nation branding—and its negative repercussions on their real-life counterparts. Academics and non-academics alike have explored the visual fetishization of women in such roles but not much have been said about the voices animating them. Most notably, these women are associated with a certain type of high-pitched voice that has come to be emblematic of how Japanese women *should* sound like. While higher pitches tend to denote politeness in Japanese speech regardless of gender, women's voices tend to be described (unflatteringly) in terms of the unnaturally high pitches they can achieve. In a *New York Times* article from 1995 entitled "Japan's Feminine Falsetto Falls Right Out of Favor," Fujiko Hara, a Japanese interpreter based in Tokyo, described the voices of elevator girls in Japan as "robots," adding, "you don't see a person but a doll."[1] Despite the article's claim of its decline, twenty-five years later in 2020, the continued pervasiveness of this particular sort of voice in media and real life speaks to its significant influence in "sounding" the modern Japanese woman. With the rising popularity of voice synthesizing technologies like Vocaloid, this "robotic" and "doll-like" voice reinstates the continuing representation of Japanese women via the figure of an eternal, ageless schoolgirl.

The schoolgirl is a complicated ideal shaped by numerous examples from fantasy and reality. Aside from the venues of anime and manga, she can be found enacted in popular songs by girl idol groups like O-nyanko Club ("Don't Take Off My School Uniform!," 1985) and AKB48 ("My School Uniform is Getting in the Way," 2007). In the press, life imitates art as she is often mentioned in relation to enjo kōsai, or compensated dating, which has evolved into the JK (joshi kōsei) business that encompasses cafes, shops, and other establishments where high school girls, or those dressing as such, offer a range of services to a largely male clientele. Strangely enough, as mentioned earlier, such negative associations did not stop the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from appointing the schoolgirl as a cultural ambassador for the Cool Japan project in 2009. But the schoolgirl's role in Japanese memory outside popular culture might suggest a deeper significance to MOFA's decision. In her examination of Japanese school uniforms in the 20th century, Sharon Kinsella describes how Japan's development as a modern (and militarized) nation since the 19th century was tied to the visual display of power embodied by the uniform so eventually, "in the collective imagination of the nation, the uniformed individual has come to represent the example *par excellence* of the modern subject."[2] Even after Japan's demilitarization after WW2, the uniform persists as a symbol now most visibly seen on Japanese schoolchildren. Perhaps then, it is no coincidence that the schoolgirl has become an important figure in rebranding the nation's imperialistic image from WW2.

In 2020, one of the most popular incarnations of the schoolgirl is the Vocaloid Hatsune Miku who has gained international renown as a virtual idol. While Miku was not the first Vocaloid, nor the last, she has come to be synonymous with the term Vocaloid itself. Her immense popularity has led to artistic collaborations with live singers like Namie Amuro and

Lady Gaga, dozens of national and international tours, and even rumors of her participation in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony. While originally a synthesized voice, Miku's aural features took the visual form of a sixteen-year-old girl with twin tails. Like so many young girls in Japanese media, it is no mere coincidence that she is dressed in an outfit closely resembling a school uniform.

Studies on Vocaloid like that of Sandra Annett's primarily focus on Hatsune Miku as a subject of the male gaze and her lack of agency as a sexualized product of otaku male fantasies.[3] More recently, Yuji Sone continues this line of inquiry into the technological consumption of Hatsune Miku by Japanese male otaku and her relationship to the idealized shōjo figure. The academic and public attention on her popularity and symbolic status, especially among men, signals her rising place in the line of women who serve (to represent) the Japanese nation at home and abroad. But, like the schoolgirl whose image her design draws upon, what has not yet been considered is how Miku's voice contributes to this genealogy. Her high-pitched voice comes from a long history in Japan regarding the modulation of women's voices. While what was considered desirable in a voice differed according to historical context, Yuasa traces such expectations of women from literature as early as thirteenth century Japan.[4] In contrast, Yuasa did not find any guidance for how men should speak in pre-modern Japanese historical records which suggests that this emphasis on modulating women's voices provides a gendered perspective on the relationship between sound and power.

Jumping forward to women's voices in postmodern Japan where my focus takes place, the "cult of cuteness" in the 80s was a significant moment in Japanese pop culture that contributed to the high-pitched voice via Japanese idols such as Matsuda Seiko who adopted the

popular burikko ("fake child") style associated with young women at the time.[5] The 80s, also known as the bubble economy, was, like the turn of the century Meiji era (see Chapter II), "a surplus of modernity."[6] Many of the youth-driven trends and subcultures of this time were critiqued for their excessive consumption and decadence, and burikko was no exception. Burikko borrows the innocent and childlike qualities of the shōjo and often exaggerates it to the point of artificiality. But unlike shōjo, burikko itself is a set of verbal and nonverbal behaviors rather than an identity. As Miller clarifies, it is not a matter of *being* burikko but *doing* burikko.[7] Described as "innocent girls' talk . . . the most readily associated traits [of burikko voice] are the falsetto voice and a glissando movement through a pitch range. Additional features include a nasalized delivery, [and] use of a baby-talk register."[8] While contemporary youth use the term to derogatorily refer to "faked" innocence because of its apparent performativity, what is notable is that "it has become synonymous, in some writing, with *young woman.*"[9] Indeed, "[p]erforming ultrafeminine behaviors [like burikko] reveals a desire to showcase a decorous ojoosama 'proper young miss' upbringing" and "are connected to prescribed cultural norms of femininity."[10] Burikko is just one influential example of the link between women and speech in Japan but despite its indexical power, it is deemed as "as silly, inconsequential, and embarrassingly unworthy of academic attention."[11] The prescription of cuteness to women's voices is not a localized phenomenon as it is present throughout contemporary East Asia. In their article "Embodied Kawaii: Girls' voices in J-Pop," Sarah Keith and Diane Hughes liken Japanese pop idol vocal patterns to sajiao in Taiwan and aegyo in Korea.[12] This type of voice has become a coveted, even expected, trait among girl idols and their male fans that has unacknowledged wide-ranging effects beyond the stage. So while there has been so much attention on the visual aspect

of Japan's soft power diplomacy in the latter half of the twenty-first century, we should also look at how it relies largely on such cute voices through transnational pop figures like Hatsune Miku as they rehabilitate the nation's image from WW2.

Alongside her voice, another distinctive feature of Miku's success is that she is the product of an international collective. Crypton Future Media, the company who developed the Hatsune Miku character, hosts Piapro (a pun on the Japanese transliteration of "peer production"), a platform that, under the Creative Commons License, encourages fans to participate in an ongoing process of redefining who and what Miku means on both a personal and public level. In the hands of fans around the world, she becomes a transnational project of nation-building. Miku's role in reviving a Japanese "spirit" in the digital age returns to my discussion in Chapter II on radio as a tool to consolidate nationhood among diverse audiences. National broadcasting technologies, according to Edgaras Klivis, have become a "framework for collective memory and a gauge for uniform national language" in which I argue can also apply to technologies used by the Vocaloid fandom as media to recuperate collective and unofficial public memory.[13] What makes Vocaloid different from other technologies of reproduction in media is that "The voice-scape - the physiological surface of the phonetic substance as an organic and unmediated or immediate experience - is a metaphysical presence considered a guarantee for the metaphysical presence of nation." [14] Even though Klivis takes an unforgiving stance against media, describing it as "alien and secondary" to the voice in its unmediated state, his assumptions are reasonable in consideration of past attempts at vocal reproduction that have produced an uncanny effect on listeners. The task of simulation is a difficult one, as of all acoustic instruments, Scott Wilkinson identifies the singing voice as the most difficult to

simulate due to its wide versatility in sound and its unique combination of lyric with melody that results in a double layer of meaning.[15] But I argue that not all media diminishes the spoken word. This is especially true in the case of Japan where its use of media technologies do not threaten the voice, but rather, amplify and transform it.

Vocaloid tackles the reproduction of not just the voice, but the singing voice. According to Kevin Alexander, former CEO of the voice technology company TC-Helicon, there are "two approaches to voice processing. 'One is to manipulate the voice to enhance it and make it better, keeping it natural-sounding so the listener doesn't know processing is happening" and "The other is to treat the voice as an instrument and work toward creating new voices and effects,'" the latter of which is where Vocaloid comes in.[16] Vocaloid samples the voice of a live person and compiles a library of phonemes that the user can then string together to create words and then lyrics. It was meant to be used as a digital instrument, a stand-in for music creators who produced music but did not have a vocalist. While such kinds of "robo-crooning" were deemed uncanny in previous incarnations of vocal reproduction technologies, early reports on Vocaloid such as that from *Popular Science* describes it as "just like the latest Britney Spears CD, but with less midriff."[17] Ironically, it was not long before the "ghost in the machine" became embodied in the synthesizer's second and third generations which eventually evolved to the characters we see today. Unlike previous vocal synthesizers, Vocaloid's emphasis on vocal delivery and its relation to affect reveals the "ghost in the machine" to be something that resonates within the human body. Asami Shimoda, the voice actor for the Vocaloid pair Kagamine Rin and Len, alludes to this distinct human-technological resonance in her reflections on her relationship with Vocaloid and its growing popularity as a new form of communication.[18] While Shimoda does not

elaborate further on Vocaloid as communicative medium, I suggest that its success may stem from a deeper fantasmatic quality that instills intimacy with its users beyond spatial and temporal boundaries.

While Miku's voice is singular, we are privy to the voices of those who speak through her technology. As a result, Miku's international fan collective takes aural nationalization to a global level. Her fans use Vocaloid's technology—her appends and musical styles—to create new subjectivities by which Miku inhabits the on and offscreen world, which further connects and expands a virtual nationalism through this idol/icon. But while Miku's origins are Japanese, her embodiment of the nation is not so clear-cut. To borrow Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's words, "*Nationalism and patriotism are born at the vibrant intersection of the global and the local*, rather than being the xenophobic expressions of a hermetically sealed people."[19] The participatory culture around Hatsune Miku complicates her "Japaneseness" as fans, domestic and non-domestic, rearticulate this concept within their own localized contexts. For fans in formerly colonized Asian countries, Miku's performances have become a site of conflict regarding Japan's positioning in Asia and the West. Through such creative (and critical) interpretations and imaginings, Miku is an evolving text of the nation and nationality.

In this chapter, I contextualize Japan's shifting relations with Asia and the West to show how its strategies in nation-building after its defeat in World War 2 shifted from one of militarism to soft power in a landscape where physical boundaries—both geographical and bodily—are increasingly disappearing under the digital. Following this, I focus on the large role women played in Japan's postwar reconstruction strategy and examine how women's language become a measure of the nation's progressiveness on a global stage. I apply this imaginary aural

ideal of the Japanese woman, or "fantasmatic femaleness," to Vocaloid Hatsune Miku and use one of her songs as a case study to demonstrate how this particular model of the Japanese woman, recuperates Japan's history in one of its many circulating nation-building narratives.

Datsu A Nyūō: Escape from Asia, Enter the West

In 1885, an article from the *Jiji Shinpō* newspaper characterized Japan's relations in Asia with the following scathing analogy:

> It is not different from the case of a righteous man living in a neighborhood of a town known for foolishness, lawlessness, atrocity, and heartlessness. His action is so rare that it is always buried under the ugliness of his neighbors' activities . . . It is better for us to leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West . . . We simply erase from our minds our bad friends in Asia.[20]

This excerpt illustrates a popular slogan of Japan during the late 19th century known as "datsu a nyūō" (脱亜入王), or "escape from Asia, enter the West."[21] This slogan, however, was at odds with its Asianist agenda to align itself with other Asian countries against Western imperialism. Because of this paradox, Japan's rapid westernization at the turn of the 20th century has occupied a tenuous position between the island nation, its Asian neighbors, and the US. Through a Western perspective, Japan was catching up to becoming a progressive island nation that would soon leave the rest of Asia in its backwardness. But its ambition toward becoming a world power on par with the Western nations it rejected was cut short by the results of WW2, and the years following changed the trajectory of Japan's place within this triad.

After WW2, Japan's "bad friends in Asia" solidified their own positions on the global stage. Following a similar trajectory to that of Japan's decades prior, the 60s to 90s saw rapid industrialization and reforms in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea, resulting in

economic booms that earned these nations the collective title "Four Asian Tigers" throughout the region. What is significant for this discussion, especially in Korea's case, was the focus on cultural reforms. Among the reforms taken by South Korea in the late 90s, the nation's soft power exports secured the nation's image as a modernized, trendy nation. The Korean wave, or Hallyu, was the rapid growth of South Korea's popular cultural exports to the world that contributed to Japan's slow decline in the global sphere as Asia's leading representative. The increased domestic cultural production during this time was also in part a response to Japan's colonization efforts throughout WW2 so that South Korea and Taiwan, especially, banned the import of Japanese products. Turning inwards as both a nationalization project and in response to domestic demand resulted in cultural waves that circulated widely through transnational flows outside these nations.

On reporting the wider implications of Hallyu's global spread in other Asian countries like Taiwan, Steven Kim describes popular culture as "the most cost-effective and potent means" of increasing a nation's soft power that can not only compensate for a lack of hard power but proliferate without the consequences that would undoubtedly follow in the latter's case.[22] This strategy is one of nation branding, a process, Koichi Iwabuchi describes, "by which a nation's images can be *created or altered, monitored, evaluated and proactively managed* in order to enhance the country's reputation among a target international audience [italics mine]."[23] Soft power, then, is a means by which a nation can create itself anew in a globalized world where soft power has more traction in diplomatic relations than brute military strength. Unlike the latter, its effectiveness lies in its subtle and malleable nature in rewriting national memory in past, present, and future.

The proliferation of other cultural waves throughout East and South Asia included Taiwan's Tairyū and Thailand's T-Wind which added increasing competition with Japan's position within the Western sphere. Accordingly, in a transnational era where other Asian states no longer fit the pre-war mold of "backward" nation, Iwabuchi describes Japan's re-entry into this new configuration as Japan's "return to Asia," an agenda defined by a reevaluation of its national and cultural identity.[24] Nostalgia plays a significant role in this process as it seeks to idealize a past that had never actually existed. While imagined, this "loss" reveals desires of the nation and its hopes of reviving it in the future. This structure of feeling is still very real and speaks to the desires of the nation as it attempts to revive an idealized Japanese past.

The shōjo from Chapter II is a familiar figure of this idealized Japanese past as this new stage of life before adulthood came about through compulsory education. As a result, the shōjo is most often conflated with the schoolgirl who still persists today. She is a subject heralding modernism that, "In a demilitarized post-war society . . . the national school uniform and the schoolchildren who wear them have taken on the symbolic weight previously attached to military uniform and the armed forces."[25] While the western-style school uniform for girls was only formalized in the 1920s, her association to Meiji values of innocence and purity became intertwined with the patriotism embodied by the military-inspired school uniform.[26] As a result, the schoolgirl has come to represent a "lost femininity" once encapsulated by the Meiji woman.[27] But more widely, schoolchildren in uniform have been a part of the media landscape in postwar Japan, signifying a "morally wholesome" quality that was similar to the Puritanesque, family-friendly atmosphere touted by America at the time.[28]

But the cuteness heralding the new face of Japan's "return" is not purely Japanese. In the case of Hatsune Miku, a cultural product spanning the participation of multiple nations, Japan's new face is not necessarily a hundred percent Japanese. Or to be more specific, the Japaneseness constructed here is reflective of this postmodern moment. It is a fragmentation of past, present, and future across transnational lines. Vocaloid's transnational flows is not indicative of a homogenized nation nor one totalizing position in history nor geography.

Women as Soft Ambassadors of the Nation

Similar to the other cultural waves occurring throughout Asia, Japan initiated the "Cool Japan" strategy in 2013, which included the promotion of Japanese culture abroad. In creating a new image for Japan in a globalized world, women were ideal candidates to recast its colonizing image with one of cultural sophistication. But the role of women in nation-building (and re-building) is not a new concept nor one specific to Japan. During times of crisis when the nation is under threat, women are commonly called upon as protectors of the hearth, which in of itself a microcosm representing the nation. More specifically, Bronwyn describes how women's mobilization as "cultural markers/bearers" has been tied to the "(re-) invention of tradition."[29] We see an example of this during Japan's shift toward modernity at the turn of the 20th century, where "Forging women as nation subjects and reforming language became national issues," resulting in "new discursive spaces like 'women's language.'"[30] Alongside language, voice became a crucial part of this change.

However, in examining the complex and often troubling relationship between women and their embodiment of the nation (and the ideologies underlying this construct), I do not intend to

further the notion of women as passive symbols in which meaning is inscribed. Nationalism itself is not so easily contained in a simple concept, or body in this case, as in their discussion on feminist interpretations of nationalism, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Tétreault observe that

> The chameleon quality of nationalism means that it can be couched in multiple and, at times, competing organizational forms and this confounds any attempt at glib generalization or universalizing pronouncements. The idealized, often sexualized, representations of women that permeate nationalist discourse in its variety of contexts—or as Zillah Eisenstein writes "fantasmatic femaleness—shape locations and possibilities for women's activism"[31]

In studies on gender and nation, too little is said on women's active roles in shaping nationalist discourse as they are, more often than not, overshadowed by narratives of oppression and violence. For this reason, I pick up on the productive possibilities women present with Eisenstein's "fantasmatic femaleness." Quite literally, the "fantasmatic femaleness" conjures up the phantasmic qualities of the phonograph I discussed in Chapter II. As I mentioned in my introduction, aurality allows for change when physicality cannot. In this case, the spectral qualities afforded by the voice comes into play here. Due to women's alleged compatibility with the spiritual (an idea supported in large part by spiritualist literature of the time), women's close relation to the phantasmic only increased when phonographs became popular for their roles in seances. The merging of women with technology of human vocal reproduction merges the concept of "fantasmatic femaleness" with the "techno-phantasmic." As "Nationalized identity blends real and unreal constructions with a psychic resonance that is imaged in real and made up ways, with no consciousness that it is not 'perfectly true,'" such technological renderings of the

voice allows for a psychic reinterpretation of women and their role in sustaining, promoting, and, above all, embodying nationhood.[32]

One of the ways in which Japan sought to "reinvent tradition" in their early years of its modernization was with how women spoke. The result of the gendered language reform known as women's language instilled a sense of tradition in its past, the idea that "there was once a pure women's language" that, despite its relatively new construction, represents a long-lost Japan.[33] But there was a paradox. As Inoue writes, "one 'hears' Japanese women's language not so much from living bodies of Japanese women, as from imaginary voices."[34] Indeed, she observed hearing "the most authentic women's language from such inauthentic—electronically mediated—bodies, not the bodies of real people."[35] I emphasize the electronically mediated aspect of these voices as it returns again to the techno-phantasmic femaleness that continually evolves in popular media like film, TV, animation, and, in this case, voice technology.

Japanese woman's speech is not just a localized topic as it has become a signifier of the nation's modernity on the global stage. In response to the same *New York Times* article I referenced at the beginning of this paper, Inoue describes how the notoriously high-pitched tone of Japanese women has become a sound denoting Japanese women.

> Japanese women's speech—as if merely one other disassembled and fetishized part of a woman's body—now draws intensive international attention as indexical of how far Japan has progressed or caught up with America in terms of 'equality' and 'modernity.'[36]

In addition to the material body, the voice and its contents has become a fetishized component of women's bodies—a site of contention between the past and modernity, the "West and the rest," the backwards and the civilized. With current voice synthesis technologies like Vocaloid, women's voices have become even more fragmented and dislocated from the material human

body and reconstructed into a digital ideal of "women" as national subjects, in other words, a techno-phantasmic femaleness. I assert that Vocaloid Hatsune Miku is a postmodern technological continuation of Japanese women's speech.

I contextualize my examination of Miku's vocal style by starting with Rebecca L. Starr's identification of sweet voice as a vocal style that authenticates traditional Japanese performances of femininity through Japanese women's language. Also identified by native Japanese listeners as "anime no koe," or "voice from Japanese animation," Starr locates sweet voice within "the province of professional announcers and voice actors," emphasizing that it "is rarely if ever produced by 'ordinary' women."[37] Sweet voice is most closely voiced by the Yamato Nadeshiko type of woman made popular during Japanese imperialism in the late 20th century where women were idealized as self-sacrificing "mothers of the nation."[38] As she reminds us, "While these remarkable women have never existed in the real Japan, *in the Japan of the imagination they are alive and well* [italics mine]."[39] I emphasize the latter part of Starr's statement as the women produced from such structures of power, be it through patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, or westernization, were always imagined. Such women are seen most popularly now in Japanese soft culture, where an array of (fetishized) femininities populate Japan's mediascape. What is significant is the way these femininities appear as "many of these manifest themselves in distinctive vocal styles."[40] From the Yamato Nadeshiko's sweet voice of imperialist Japan, we come to the shōjo Hatsune Miku's kawaii voice of postmodern "soft" Japan. While Starr distinguishes cuteness within Japan as oppositional to the sophisticated maturity endowed by Japanese women's language, I assert that in Hatsune Miku's case, this cuteness is harnessed for

the promotion of the nation through a specific form of maiden-like femininity represented by the figure of the shōjo and schoolgirl.

Japan's Kawaii Ambassadors

Japan's cultural goods constitute a form of soft power nationalism, a sentiment expressed by Youna Kim who observes that "Nationalism has been central to the globalization of media cultural products; therefore, to question how global such media are is to ask how nationalistic they are."[41] In tracing the cultural flow of Japan to Asia and the West, it is necessary to examine how such goods are consumed, as it is in this space "where the continuities, rearticulations, and ruptures of historically constituted 'Asia' in Japan are complexly manifested."[42] However, I make the distinction that consumption, especially in the realm of Vocaloid fan culture, is more commonly in play with production, in which the combination of these activities situate fans in the influential role of prosumers. As such, in lieu of examining the official Hatsune Miku created by Crypton, I will examine how fans negotiate asymmetrical power relations of the nation through the prosumption of Hatsune Miku herself.

For this paper, I analyze "Senbonzakura," a Vocaloid song produced in 2011 by KuroUsa. The lyrics and accompanying music video set Miku and Vocaloids Meiko, Kaito, Kagamine Len and Rin, and Megurine Luka in Taisho era Japan, foregrounding the juxtaposition of Japan and the West during a period of rapid modernization that began previously during the Meiji era. Despite the controversy that arose from its nationalistic theme, the song's immense popularity secured its place in the Vocaloid Hall of Myths, a title reserved for videos on the video-sharing platform Niconico with more than ten million views. Notwithstanding unofficial

uploads and KuroUsa's upload on YouTube, in 2020, nine years after its release, the song has garnered over 14 million views from KuroUsa's official upload on Niconico alone.[43] As its place within the Vocaloid Hall of Myths is an acknowledgment of its popularity within the Vocaloid participatory community, the song eventually came to represent the aesthetics of the official representation of Hatsune Miku herself in her live concerts.[44] As "Senbonzakura" and its ensuing success was not sponsored by Crypton nor initially related to the official Hatsune Miku character, it is important to emphasize the power of prosumers in directing the transmission of such a controversial song on both a domestic and international level, where its popular reception is a significant contribution to Japan's positioning within the West and Asia from a prosumer's perspective.

"Authentic" Women's Voices

It may be that the earliest recorded example of techno-phantasmic femaleness in Japan can be traced back to the first Miss Nippon contest in 1931. The event was so much more than a beauty contest as it was the first of its kind in Japan's history to be in the service of representing the "modern nation-state."[45] In her essay "Japan's First Cyborg? Miss Nippon, Eugenics and Wartime Technologies of Beauty, Body and Blood," Robertson points out that "the only feminine allegorical image of the Japanese nation prior to the investiture of Miss Nippon contest was one of Amaterasu Omikami (the Shinto sun goddess and originary ancestor of the Imperial Household)" so that "Miss Nippon was arguably the first secular and historical icon to represent the imagined community of Japan."[46] The association with Amaterasu, and in extension, the imperial family, added deeper meaning to the iconography of Miss Nippon. As a modern, down-

to-earth figure, her direct connection to the people was used in social reforms that sought to produce strong citizens of the nation—one such example being "good wives, wise mothers." Her visibility in the public eye was not coincidental to the political events of the time as scant months later, Japan invaded Manchuria, the event that led Japan into "overt militarization" and World War 2.[47]

What is remarkable is that the physical body of Miss Nippon was ancillary to her crowning. The true identity of Miss Nippon was not important, rather, it was her technological reproduction, or the techno-phantasmic femaleness she embodied. In the 1930s, cutting-edge technology took the form of photography, and it was through photographs that candidates were selected based on the characteristics that would make up the core of the modern Japanese nation. According to Robertson,

> Although she [Miss Nippon] herself embodied the criteria *of* the New Woman of New Japan, it was her body's measurements that, when photographically fixed, provided a standardized model *for* the New Woman of New Japan . . . It was as a photographic icon - a disembodied body, as it were - that Miss Nippon was both idealized and generalized as the New Woman of New Japan, and as the image of New Japan itself. Photographically reified, her symbolic properties immune from the vagaries and mortality of her human referent, Miss Nippon was at once a timely and timeless image of a eugenically superior national body.[48]

Miss Nippon was essentially "[a] synthesis of organic and technological elements, a hybrid construction of materiality and discourse," and "in a sense, Japan's *first* cyborg [italics mine]."[49]

Miss Nippon's photographic likeness can arguably be the root of the techno-phantasmic femaleness now embodied in contemporary virtual idols. Such technological likenesses in the photograph of Miss Nippon and her descendants highlight the ageless, youthful, unchanging, immortal quality of its subject. With Japan's shift to consumerism in the 80s, the symbol of the

nation took the form of idols. In crafting this techno-phantasmic femaleness of postwar Japan, the 80s added another aspect that came along with the rise of consumer culture: the kawaii. Japan's idols are "a highly constructed and controlled confection for the delectation of the consuming public" who have become synonymous with the term "kawaiiko-chan" or "cute darling."[50] In other words, the idol is kawaii brought to life. In the following decade that heralded the rise of digital technology, created the desire for immortal cuteness. Replacing photography, computer generated women took the spotlight. Even stronger than the photographic image, the CG body was not only "a powerful site for the construction of fantasy bodies," but it fulfilled the characteristics molding the kawaii body as well, which was "divorced . . . from physicality and biology."[51] However, strangely enough, it was some time before the kawaii aesthetic was adopted in virtual idol culture.

The concept of the virtual idol predates Vocaloid when HoriPro launched Date Kyōko (DK-96) in 1996.[52] However, the ongoing success of Hatsune Miku makes her distinctive from Date and other virtual characters in film and media.[53] A compelling reason for Miku's success is not only her direct connection to fans, but the kawaii aesthetic she achieves. Her appearance marks a distinct break from that of her peers and predecessors, as, Black notes, "[t]he virtual idol is a fantasy figure, but one whose criteria for success prize[s] 'realism' highly."[54] As developers strive for realness, a common critique against virtual characters is their eerily lifelikeness that tend to invoke revulsion on the part of the viewer. This uncanniness, in Freudian terms, may have been one of the contributing factors that led to Date's short-lived popularity as seen in "Love Communication" (1996), the only music video HoriPro released for the idol. Juxtaposed over real-life footage of real-life urbanites on the street, the music video posits Date as a live

person, yet she is remarkably conspicuous for her digital artificiality. Her appearance as well as her voice are simultaneously realistic and robotic—she is both real and unreal.

Compared to Date, Miku's uncanniness is subtle, yet I assert that it is not due so much to the latter's technological capability but to her aesthetics. In regard to her visuals, Hatsune Miku moves away from the expected realism of virtual idols by drawing from the distinct aesthetics of Japanese anime and manga that already has a large influence in popular culture in and outside Japan. As such, the Vocaloid's visual familiarity taps into the rapport Japanese cultural products already have on domestic and international audiences. But more importantly, Miku does not pretend to be real. Viewers are aware of Miku's fictitiousness, and with this awareness is a suspension of disbelief that is not always applied successfully to other virtual characters. Rather than focus on Miku's "realness" as HoriPro did for Date, Crypton prioritized the development of a unique voice for Miku that attends to the uncanniness attributed to her predecessors. This emphasis on aural aesthetics is an objective evident by Miku's name—"First Sound of the Future"—and the origins of Vocaloid as a sound-based software. For Vocaloid, the visuals support the sound rather than vice versa.

What is significant in Vocaloid is its attention to a delivery of speech that does not pretend to be "real," but rather, plays off its artificiality. Though Hatsune Miku's voice, like Date's, is noticeably digitally generated, the former is stylistically so in that the human and robotic components are meant to complement rather than obscure one another. In such a way, this vocal partnership produces a distinct voice that is not generically robotic nor eerily human-like to evoke an uncanny listening experience. In an interview with Wataru Sasaki, the developer of the Character Vocal Series 01, he describes how listeners' potential unease with a robotic

voice led to a compromise between robotic and human vocality in Miku's voicebank: by "Using a voice actor's voice – which is already "not normal" – and mixing it with a robotic kind of voice . . . it will end up as a very unique sound. By contrast, if you add a robot voice to a good singer's voice, it sounds much more normal."[55] Crypton was strategic in basing Miku's voice on that of the voice actress Saki Fujita whose voice was already attuned to be perceived by listeners as anime-like rather than real life-like. To return to my previous statement, Vocaloid did not try to position Miku as a live person like HoriPro did with Date, but rather presented her as an extension of Japan's popular cultural exports—anime and manga—off screen.[56] For Miku's voice, Sasaki "wanted to aim for a voice that was cute, but robotic, and in the end [*sic*] result was still cute."[57] Crypton Future Media's founder Hiroyuki Ito cites Miku as having the ideal kawaii voice as he says she "possesses a natural 'Lolita voice', meaning an adult female actor's childlike voice that is typically used in animation" where "[t]his voice in itself is understood to express a message of cuteness."[58] The artificial cuteness Ito mentions may sound familiar as burikko was the 80s version of cute. Decades later, Miku adopts it through a technological approach. As cuteness was a determinant in the creation of Miku's voice, Wataru and Ito's comments return to my introductory comment about Miku's embodiment of kawaii as a contribution to her popularity. Except I assert here that her kawaii aesthetics is a critical aspect of Miku's "Japaneseness."

Nation-building through Kawaii Ambassadors

The concept of kawaii is not only hard to pin down but it is often subjective. Hiroshi Nittono's study on kawaii considers it an emotion rather than a descriptor, and it is this affective

state I further explore here in relation to Miku. In lieu of the physical attributes that mark something as kawaii, Nittono points out that this does not account for the consistent application of the term in varying contexts. As such, he describes kawaii as a "positive emotion related to the social motivation for engaging and staying with preferable persons and objects," and makes the distinction that it "involves the wish to exist together with the object, rather than consume or conquer it."[59] As I mentioned earlier with the schoolgirl, MOFA's appointment of such Kawaii Ambassadors in 2009 puts this concept into practice. While Miku is just one of a long line of cultural representatives from Japan that successfully incorporates cuteness with diplomacy, her case is especially noteworthy as fans' relationship with her is one of both production and consumption, where fans coexist with Miku in the makings of this shared Vocaloid community. The positive emotions elicited through the idol and the community's participatory practices manifests in a positive behavioral response to Japan despite its tumultuous history of imperialism and colonization. This result accomplishes one of the goals the 2008 Minister for Foreign Affairs, Masahiko Koumura, stipulated at the inauguration ceremony for Japan's first Anime Ambassador Doraemon as he meant for the anime character to cast a positive light on Japan to the world."[60] The use of such "ambassadors," whether official or unofficial, demonstrates how kawaii operates in social practices of the public realm, where its "choreographed frivolousness, harmlessness, and indeterminacy, repudiates the cult of earnestness, brutality, and obedience associated with Japan's era of militarism."[61] With the rise of contemporary screen culture, it is not so difficult to imagine how a digital being like Miku would thrive. Furthermore, Vocaloid achieves something that others have not. Unlike Japan's real-life Kawaii Ambassadors, Miku can be found anywhere at any time so long as there is a screen.

The inclusion of a kawaii aesthetic in Miku's voice is also a determining factor in whether a Vocaloid voicebank would be developed for other languages besides Japanese. When asked about the challenges of making Vocaloid multilingual, Sasaki describes that

> Context and meaning can easily change when changing something into a different language. As long as the meaning in different languages is the same as in Japanese, then that's fine. But if the meaning changes fundamentally, and the end result doesn't sound 'cute', then we don't want to force ourselves to localize into a different language.[62]

Development on Miku's English voicebank began in 2010 and it was released in the Vocaloid 3 engine in 2013.[63] Though Miku's new bilingual feature made the Vocaloid linguistically accessible for an English audience, Miku's "Japaneseness" was subdued in the process as Crypton's developers were concerned that her kawaii vocals would not be well received by a western audience.[64] As a result, Miku's English voicebank was changed to a mature voice for western users that is not representative of the "Japaneseness" Miku's original voice embodies.[65]

On recording Miku's English voice, Saki Fujita, the same voice actress for Miku's Japanese voicebank, commented: "I'd be sad if everyone thought there was some difference [between the Japanese and English versions]."[66] Fujita's remark illustrates an intentional self-erasure of "Japaneseness" from the English voicebank despite the well-known detail of Miku's Japanese origins among fans. Koichi Iwabuchi terms this erasure as "mukokuseki," or "statelessness," which commonly characterized Japan's exports prior to its global rise in the 80s. While Japan had "an increasingly narcissistic interest in articulating the distinctive 'Japaneseness' of cultural products" in the following decade as a result of its economic prosperity, Miku is a return to its "culturally odorless" past.[67] Unlike Date whose racial makeup

appears Japanese, Miku herself is mukokuseki, where her large violet eyes and aquamarine twin tails deviates from any particular racial or ethnic group that befits both her status as a global idol and her global prosumer base.

However, that is not to say that Miku is devoid of any relation to Japan, as manga and anime commonly feature mukokuseki characters without relinquishing its ties to Japan. Miku's Japaneseness is just relational to its users. The desire of Miku's creator to present an appropriate "Japanese" Vocaloid for English users reflects a similar cultural positioning Japan took after World War II. Iwabuchi describes the reluctance of Japanese people to disseminate Japanese culture outside Japan, and if done, it was through an essentialist lens that "demarcates Japan's unique, supposedly homogenous national identity" that exploits rather than opposes Western orientalist conceptions of Japan.[68] As a result, Japan's self-presentation to the West accommodates Western ideals of Japan but at the same time preserves a distinct "Japaneseness" hidden from, or inaccessible to outsiders. The "Japaneseness" in this case is the distinctive kawaii voice of Miku's Japanese voicebank. But the kawaii voice is not the only aspect excluded from the English voicebank as the Japanese voicebank boasts a range of vocal styles that lend a rich aural dimension to Miku's voice.

Miku's kawaii voice is punctuated by a range of vocal styles, or Appends, created specifically for the Vocaloid herself. The Append version offers specialized voices for particular musical genres: "Sweet" offers a sweet whispery voice for French pop, ballads, and electronica; "Dark" is calm and slightly melancholic for ballads, jazz, folk, and ambient music; "Soft," like its namesake, has an overall gentle sound for soft rock, ballads, folk, and ambient music; "Light" is noted as cheerful and strong for pop, rock, dance, and technopop; "Vivid" is smooth and clear

for pop, technopop, and trad; and "Solid" has a strong tonal quality for pop, rock, dance and electro.[69] As the Appends are only available for Miku's Japanese voicebank, the lack of vocal styles in the English version renders it more susceptible to an uncanny response from listeners—a digital othering intentionally placed on a Western language that positions the Japanese voicebank as more technologically and culturally "authentic." In this way, the English voicebank which lacks these tones is both racially and digitally othered. As such, this limitation can be interpreted as a reverse vocal othering that positions the Japanese Vocaloid as more authentically "unreal" than an English Vocaloid voice.

In this sense, the combination of Miku's kawaii voice with her Appends results in a voice exclusive to Japanese users and is associated to a larger extent with "Japaneseness" and Japan. As such, we can see a national voice emerging out of Vocaloid. However, that is not to say that Miku's voice acts as the nation's only voice, but rather one of many that is currently a major component of Japanese soft power. I emphasize the importance of the voice in constructions of the nation as Klivis asserts that "it is the voice that takes a central position in nationalism's core imaginary. The voicescape – the physiological surface of the phonetic substance as an organic and unmediated or immediate experience – is a metaphysical presence considered a guarantee for the metaphysical presence of nation."[70] I liken Klivis' metaphysical quality of the nation to Iwabuchi's cultural imaginaries, where both may be viewed as immaterial constructions that are malleable according to the ways Miku's Japanese voice is reproduced by Vocaloid prosumers.

Imperialist Nostalgia in "Senbonzakura"

The title "Senbonzakura," or "Thousand Cherry Trees" is not exclusive to this particular song. The title is reminiscent of one of the three most renowned plays in kabuki, "Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura" (1748), where Fujiwara no Tomokata presents a hand drum named "Hatsune" to Minamoto Yoshitsune with the emperor's message that he was to strike his brother Yoshitomo as he would strike the head of the drum. The association of the Hatsune drum with war and national unification underlies the Vocaloid's name through the metaphorical significance of Hatsune the Vocaloid's ability to "strike" at other nations.

The title of the song itself is also symbolic in regard to Japan's complex relationship to cherry blossoms during the war. Over the centuries, cherry blossoms have come to signify certain ideologies according to the historical context it was situated in. During the Meiji era in particular, Ohnuki-Tierney describes how cherry blossoms "became the master trope of Japan's imperial nationalism" to the extent that the flowers were "called into duty" as symbols of soldiers' sacrifice for the emperor.[71] It also came to represent the "Japanese soul" abroad as the planting of cherry blossom trees in Japan's colonies were aimed at claiming the land and its inhabitants as belonging to the Japanese nation. However, cherry blossoms reached peak notoriety in relation to the tokkōtai (or kamikaze) pilots who flew to their deaths bearing cherry blossoms, in the form of insignia and the real flower, on their uniforms. [72] These examples exemplify the complex and interwoven meanings of cherry blossoms during this historical moment of heightened nationalism.

In further unraveling the metaphysical aspects of nation, I analyze "Senbonzakura" for not only its widespread popularity in the Vocaloid fandom, but because of its explicit references

and merging of Japan's imperialistic history with the present. The presentation of the lyrics via Miku's kawaii voice is an upbeat, celebratory one, subduing the dark and violently suggestive lyrics. "*Kawaii*," according to May, "doesn't just eviscerate Japan of internal and external violence. It does the opposite: it allows violence to be expressed in an unsolemn, unthreatening way."[73] Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) applied this concept to their own public image at home and abroad by using kawaii mascots and anthropomorphized shōjo to recruit new members and garner overseas acceptance. In fact, the strength of nostalgia and familiarity with some of these mascots have been said to deter their destruction in war zones.[74] Due to its ambivalent function in Japanese society since its disarmament,[75] or perhaps because of Japan's new role as a pacifist nation in the Asia Pacific region, the long gap in which the JSDF was absent in popular culture allows it to remake its mythology in such a way that it aligns with Japan's vision of pop culture diplomacy. As Hiro Katsumata comments on Japan's cultural diplomacy efforts, "In a decade or two, younger generations in many countries who love Japanese cartoons will start to fill leadership roles," he stated, adding, "Japan can benefit from that."[76]

Since 2014, Japan's Self-Defense Force office in Ibaraki prefecture releases an annual recruitment poster featuring their mascots for each of the three branches of the armed forces. The trio, known collectively as I☆P (read as "ai pēsu," a transliteration of "love peace"), grew in the following year with the addition of three shōnen mascots. This bubbly youthful image is just one of many examples that illustrate a dramatic change in JSDF public relations from the 50s and 60s where men were used to promote nation and pride.[77] The I☆P women here, on the other hand, focus on the youth of Japan, the future, the "desire to 'protect,'" and peace.[78] As Fruhstuck explains,

> Female figures render harmless a notion of "pride" that might otherwise be associated with nationalism and imperialism. They are promoted as the peaceful gender: their smiling faces suggest that there are nice, pretty women even in the Self-Defense Forces, and that they would not be here if the military were *a violent, strange, dangerous organization* [italics mine].[79]

In addition to Fruhstuck's visual analysis, I also add that women's voices, a familiar everyday sound of instruction in the public sphere (as mentioned in the introduction), emphasizes this peacefulness through an aurally subconscious level. The bright, cheery voices of girl idols resound in JSDF recruiting commercials and ad campaigns to appeal to Japanese youth. In 2003, popular girl idol group Morning Musume (lit. Morning Daughters) featured on a JDSF poster with the slogan: "Working hard feels good. GO! GO PEACE!," the cheer a play on words from the lyrics of their naval-themed song "The Peace" (2001).[80] In 2014, Shimazaki Haruka from another popular girl idol group called AKB48 featured in two JSDF commercials where she concludes with the earnest words: "There is a job that only you can do here," with the phrase "YOU AND PEACE" in handwritten pink lettering. Vocaloid similarly employs the affective influence these bubbly girl idols have with its own digitized characters. In the 2015 Niconico chō party, the Vocaloid cast concluded their show with the words: "A world created by everyone/A dream that cannot be seen alone."[81] Youth, futurity, and peace have become Vocaloid's core values and Miku is the fitting face of them as her smiling girlish figure lack any relation to the violent aggressions of Japan's past.

To return to "Senbonzakura," the gendering of the song is noteworthy as Miku's feminine inscribed voice softens the aggressive implications of the lyrics (whereas a masculine inscribed voice would accentuate the song's imperialistic tone). As women are attributed to be protectors of the home, a feminine voice, especially that of a young one, makes the song into a plea rather

than declaration. Though KuroUsa-P's intentions for the song is unclear, this ambiguity of the song's intention in production continues to reception as listeners' reactions range from labeling the song as pro-militaristic to viewing it as an ironic reading of Japan's imperialist past. There is also an additional layer of controversy regarding the song's numerous English translations. Rich with metaphor and symbolic references, listeners debate the meaning of the lyrics and multiple interpretations abound in Vocaloid forums, blogs, and comment sections for "Senbonzakura" on Niconico and YouTube. As my intention is to focus on how the nation emerges from prosumers' use of Vocaloid, I will examine the English cover of "Senbonzakura" by Lizz Robinett.

Lizz Robinett is an American Youtaite who is notable for her sweet and gentle vocals. Her vocal covers range from video game to movie songs, and some of her most popular covers originate from the Vocaloid fandom.[82] Unlike many popular renditions of "Senbonzakura" by other utaite and Youtaite, Robinett's rearranged cover of "Senbonzakura" has a dreamlike and melancholic tone, that with the addition of its lyrical content, can be described as nostalgic.[83] Robinett's tonal interpretation of the song questions the meaning of nation when sung by a western body. In contrast to the positive and hopeful tone of the original which looks toward the future, the regretful tone looks to the past. The difference in portraying a growing nation and a nation mired in its history raises the question of how Japan is perceived from a Japanese perspective versus an American one. As music, according to Sara Cohen, is "a 'cultural map of meaning'" which one uses "to locate 'themselves in different imaginary geographies at one and the same time,'" locating Japan in the past—namely the Taisho period where Japan underwent rapid Western modernization—revives the exoticization of Japan by the West, thus embedding the nation within an orientalist soundscape.[84] This nostalgia by the West then, is what bell hooks

describes as “imperialist nostalgia,” where the mourning for a Japan before Western colonization is done not by the nation itself, but by the West, a strategy which “often obscures contemporary cultural strategies deployed not to mourn but to celebrate the sense of a continuum of ‘primitivism.’”[85] However, my intention is not to characterize Robinett’s stylistic choices as an intentional continuation of orientalist discourse, but to demonstrate how alternative imaginings of the nation can be manifested in tone and the body which produces it, features often taken for granted despite the aural influences they have in a song’s reception.

In relation to tone, language, as exemplified by my earlier discussion on Miku’s Japanese and English voicebanks, is another aspect that affects the “Japaneseness” of the song. Miku’s kawaii aesthetic is replicated in Robinett’s similarly sweet and light voice. However, in this case, the kawaii aesthetic applies to an English voice. As Robinett, having sung in Japanese in previous covers, opts to sing “Senbonzakura” in English, what does it mean for an American to take the song from its Japanese linguistic context and place it into an English one? The English vocals mark Robinett’s rendition for a Western audience rather than a Japanese one, and the result changes the way the original song is understood by English speakers. A recurring comment for the YouTube video was how Robinett’s English lyrics revealed the darker aspect of “Senbonzakura” that western listeners were initially unaware of in the original. For those who did not understand Japanese, their initial impressions were a positive one associated with the original’s lively tempo. Among comments debating the song’s references to Japan’s role in World War II, of particular interest is a self-reflexive comment from Larryson who said: “That just made me realize how sad this song is... Now I feel bad to be American 😢.”[86] Larryson’s comment is echoed by other commenters who are critical of America’s own history which

becomes visible in relation to Japan's. However, there are also those who critique Japan's imperialism and overall role in World War II, and so these two trends indicate how the English lyrics provoke a variety of reactions among listeners. Within a month of its release, Robinett gained over 500,000 views, surpassing that of other English language covers of the song, so her rendition is especially significant in its role in contributing to western receptions of the song and Japan itself.

When relations of nation arise from language, I note that "Senbonzakura's" Japanese nationalism becomes further complicated when it is sung by a Korean Vocaloid. In a cover by VenDre, the use of SeeU, a Korean Vocaloid, to sing Senbonzakura in Japanese rekindles the troubled history between the two nations. [87] Though SeeU's Japanese and Korean voicebanks were voiced by the Korean pop idol DaHee Kim, VenDre opted to have SeeU sing in Japanese (however, to have SeeU sing a Japanese nationalistic song in Korean is problematic as well). As seen with Robinett's example of the direct connection language has with specific audiences, I ask: what does it mean for "Senbonzakura" to be sung in Japanese by a body representing a nation previously colonized by Japan? As Japanese is SeeU's mode of address in this song, her appeal to Japanese viewers about Japan's imperialistic history glosses over Korea's historical trauma as she sings in the same celebratory fashion as Miku in the original song. Similarly, the linguistic limitations disallow Korean viewers' inclusion in this narrative, further removing the perspective of the colonized away from the colonizer. While Korean fans may have a fondness for Miku, the idol does not erase historical memory. As Iwabuchi argues, "[a] sympathetic reception of Japanese media cultures might positively change images of contemporary Japan, but it neither erases the past nor people's memories of it."[88] In this particular case, for SeeU to sing a

Japanese nationalistic song in Japanese can be read as a form of soft power imperialism on Korea via popular culture that rewrites Korean listeners' affective responses to historical trauma.

On the other hand, we see opposition in China's narrative with the use of Vocaloid as a way to counter Japanese invasion. "Chì líng," a 2019 cover of a song by the same name by Chinese singer HITA, featured a collaboration between Yamaha's Chinese Vocaloid Yuezheng Ling and Beijing Photek S&T's SynthV Chiyu. The song takes place during the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, where a Kunqu opera troupe sacrificed themselves for the country by setting their theater on fire during a performance for Japanese troops.[89] Most notably in 2012, Luo Tianyi, the first Vocaloid of three localized for the Chinese market, made her debut and was celebrated by mainstream Chinese media as "a goddess of the Chinese youth."[90] Nearly half of Tianyi's song repertoire on Bilibili adheres to the "Chinese-style" (中国风) genre which not only includes traditional Chinese instruments, but lyrics composed in classical Chinese literary form with allusions to historical events and figures, poems, operas, and other cultural-specific themes and motifs.[91] In fact, YouTube user Ojiji Ojinavi commented that Japan had "Senbonzakura" while China had "Quán Yù Tiānxià," the latter a song about the emperor Sun Quan of Wu who lived during the Three Kingdoms period (222-263 AD) in China.[92] While it could be argued that Yuezheng Ling and Luo Tianyi are products of localization, their use by Chinese fans as a way to celebrate Chinese culture does not benefit but sets aside Japan's own cultural motivations.

From voice, I next turn to the Robinett's English translation of the song, which was sourced from the Youtaite кran. In light of fans' debates around "Senbonzakura's" English translations and the lack of an official translation by KuroUsa-P, I am cognizant of how this translation may not reflect or agree with all fans' understanding of the song. My intent is to

foreground how particular Vocaloid prosumers use this song in contexts outside Japan and to examine the production process of this particular rendition of Senbonzakura through both its English singer and translyricist. Similar to Robinett's stylistic choices, I look at the linguistic choices кran made in her translations for the song to be sung in English. Below are the translated lyrics she provides for the English cover:

> With a bold and sudden calling, Western Revolution's starting
> Let our hearts be open to it
> Pacifist nation
> Riding on a penny-farthing, it's the flag of our sun rising,
> Warding evil spirits like an ICBM
>
> On the train tracks, running along the line,
> let us move forward. Don't look behind.
> Boys and girls becoming like samurai
> just like those from our previous life
>
> Thousands of cherry blossoms dwindling in the light
> Though I can't hear your voice, keep what I say in mind
> This bouquet that surrounds is iron poison, see,
> Looking down at us from that big guillotine
>
> Darkness has just engulfed the universe we know
> The lament that you sing can't reach ears anymore
> We are still far away from reaching clear blue skies
> Go ahead, keep shooting, with that ray gun, fight!
>
> Veterans who've trained through struggles are now officers in battle
> Here and there, we see the harlots in procession
> This one, that one, doesn't matter, every single person gathers
> March on to our saintly deaths now!
> 1, 2, san, shi[93]
>
> Passing through the gates on the mountain peaks,
> Escaping this world, kill all the evil fiends
> Surely this will end in a denouement
> Among the crowds giving their applause
>
> Thousands of cherry blossoms dwindling in the light
> Though I can't hear your voice, keep what I say in mind—

This bouquet that surrounds is iron poison, see,
Looking down at us from that big guillotine

Darkness has just engulfed the universe we know
The lament that you sing can't reach ears anymore
We are still far away from reaching peaks of hope
Go ahead, keep shooting, use the flashing bolt!

On the train tracks, running along the line,
let us move forward. Don't look behind.
Boys and girls becoming like samurai
just like those from our previous life

Thousands of cherry blossoms dwindling in the light
Though I can't hear your voice, keep what I say in mind—
This[94] bouquet that surrounds is iron poison, see,
Leaping down to us from that big guillotine

Thousands of cherry blossoms dwindling in the light
Once your song can be heard, we'll dance with all our might
This bouquet that surrounds is iron poison, see,
Go ahead, keep shooting, with that ray gun, lead![95]

In comparison to the relation I made between tonal differences in framing the nation as either progressive or nostalgic, the lyrics of the first stanza combine these two sentiments into a paradoxical portrayal of the nation that frames the remainder of the song. In "Senbonzakura," Japan is positioned as a "pacifist nation" accepting of "Western Revolution," a statement that simultaneously rejects its own imperialist history in Asia while assigning imperialist desire as belonging to the West. By accepting "Western Revolution," Japan whose role as pacifist nation then becomes a mediator between the rest of Asia and the West. This perspective calls upon Iwabuchi's observation of the "capacity [of post-90's Japan] for 'editing' different cultures and civilizations."[96] In attempting to place itself between the cultural imaginaries of both Asia and the West, Japan "tries to distance itself from either side in order to retain its distinct identity" by

both rejecting Western imperialism on Asian nations and its own imperialistic history in Asia.[97] Though Japan appears to be subject to "Western Revolution," the nation is not helpless, as the imagery of Rising Sun Flag, a symbol of the Imperial Japanese Army, is likened to an ICBM. This implies a strategic positioning of Japan as it acknowledges the strength of the West but remains secure in the power of its own nation. Japan is graciously accepting the West in place of other Asian nations as it believes itself to be the most capable.

English commentary on the Original "Senbonzakura"

With this understanding of the lyrics, I want to briefly look at non-Japanese viewers' reactions to KuroUsa-P's original song. From YouTube, I refer to Niconico where the song was first uploaded, where I emphasize the site's characteristic display of commentary through a barrage system. Unlike YouTube where the comments are located below the video description, comments in Niconico scroll across the video as it is played so viewers can see comments made for a particular time within the video itself. In this way, viewers also contribute to the experience of the video, where fans write themselves into the script through visual commentary. There are two sets of commentary that is viewable according to the language settings on Niconico. Though the Japanese and English settings display marked differences in commentary, I will focus on the commentary marked for English users for this analysis.

Aside the singalong comments, fan exclamations of the Vocaloid characters' appearances, and random blurbs, the English commentary is notably antagonistic. Comments such as "fuck rising sun flag"[98] appeared twice (presumably from the same commenter), "NO

korean please,"[99] and "why are Chinese people here lol"[100] reveal a tense undercurrent regarding viewer's perceptions of Japan, Asia, and the West beneath Miku's poppy vocals. In addition, some have attempted to rewrite the imagery of the video, as there is an instance where a viewer wrote "Actually I'm Chinese" over a silhouette of Miku.[101] Unlike YouTube, fans inscribe these tensions over the video itself, which disrupt the nationalistic themes presented in the video and softened by Miku's kawaii voice. The power relations of Japan with the West is subject to viewer commentary in this instance, and as time passes, upcoming comments will influence the direction viewers take with this song. In the case for Korean and Chinese viewers who may feel disempowered by this nationalistic song, Niconico offers a way to subvert the reproduction of an ideal Japan and so offset its cultural imaginary.

By examining how the nation is manifested by Hatsune Miku, the relations between Asia, Japan, and the West become visible in the works of Vocaloid prosumers. Key to this is the sociopolitical role of women's voices in nationhood and their development from a fantasmatic-femaleness to the techno-fantasmic through technological developments over the decades. Focusing on how Japan first nationalized itself on the global stage from the years building up to World War 2 and after, I demonstrated how Miku's voice is a continuation of how women's voices have been used as a project to promote nationalism at home and abroad. The numerous renditions of "Senbonzakura" demonstrate how "Japaneseness" is rearticulated and negotiated by non-Japanese bodies outside the domestic sphere, and it is through these musical and linguistic differences that contribute to the positioning of Japan from within and outside its geographical borders. Though "Senbonzakura" revives the tensions of its imperialistic history in Asia and its relations with the West, it offers a space where the power relations between these three may be

continuously disrupted and reinterpreted according to the cultural, political, and geographical relation prosumers have with contemporary Japan.

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[34] Miyako Inoue, "Speech without a speaking body: 'Japanese women's language' in translation," *Language & Communication* 23, no. 3-4 (November 2013): 315.

[35] Inoue, *Vicarious Language*, 8.

[36] Ibid., 3.

[37] Rebecca L. Starr, "Sweet: Voice: The role of voice quality in a Japanese feminine style," *Language in Society* 44, no. 1 (February 2015): 3.

[38] Starr, 21.

[39] Starr, 22.

[40] Starr, 26.

[41] Youna Kim, "Introduction: The Media and Asian Transformations," in *Media Consumption and Everyday Life in Asia*, edited by Youna Kim (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4.

[42] Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia for a Different Asian Modernity," 548.

[43] Entry to the Vocaloid Hall of Myths is exclusively based on *Niconico* views. If other video-sharing platforms were included in this count, "Senbonzakura" would exceed 29 million views. However, this count is based on the views from the official video on KuroUsa-P's *Niconico* and *YouTube* channel so it is highly probable that the total number of views including those from unofficial uploads would be significantly greater.

[44] Of particular significance is Miku's performance of "Senbonzakura" in conjunction with the Kodo Taiko Performing Arts Ensemble at the Tokyo Olympic official program in NHK Hall in March 2017. (http://kodo-miku.com/)

[45] Jennifer Robertson, "Japan's First Cyborg? Miss Nippon, Eugenics and Wartime Technologies of Beauty, Body and Blood," *Body and Society* 7, no.1 (March 2001): 1-2.

[46] Ibid., 16.

[47] Ibid., 2.

[48] Ibid., 16.

[49] Ibid., 18.

[50] Daniel Black, "The virtual ideal: Virtual idols, cute technology and unclean biology," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 2008): 37, 40.

[51] Ibid., 40.

[52] Interestingly enough, Date appeared on posters of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, but she eventually disappeared after just a few months of minor activity.

[53] Adamsoft's Adam and eFrontier's Yuki Terai followed Date's debut a year later in 1997.

[54] Black, 42.

[55] Hiroyuki Itoh and Wataru Sasaki, "CRN Interview: The Creators of Hatsune Miku," interview by Patrick Macias, Crunchyroll, July 21, 2011, http://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-news/2011/07/21/crn-interview-the-creators-of-hatsune-miku.

[56] I use the term "off screen" rather than real life as Miku exists in the real world to the extent that she has live concerts but does not exist off stage, a limitation that fans readily accept in contrast to Kyoko's reception.

[57] Itoh and Sasaki.

[58] Qtd. in Yuji Sone, *Japanese Robot Culture: Performance, Imagination, and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 141.

[59] Hiroshi Nittono, "The two-layer model of 'kawaii': A behavioural science framework for understanding kawaii and cuteness," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 2, no. 1 (April 2016): 91.

[60] "Inauguration Ceremony of Anime Ambassador," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 19, 2008, https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2008/3/0319-3.html.

[61] Simon May, *The Power of Cute* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 91.

[62] Itoh and Sasaki.

[63] "Hatsune Miku V3 English," Vocaloid Wiki, accessed March 17, 2017, http://vocaloid.wikia.com/wiki/Hatsune_Miku_V3_English#cite_note-22.

[64] "Hatsune Miku 6th Anniversary Niko nama de 'Hatsune Miku V3 ENGLISH' hatsubai kinen tokushū" 初音ミク 6th Anniversary ニコ生で『初音ミク V3 ENGLISH』発売記念特集 [Hatsune Miku 6th Anniversary Nico Live "Hatsune Miku V3 ENGLISH" Commemorative Release], Hatsumikumiku 初ミクみく (blog), September 4, 2013, http://vocaloid.blog120.fc2.com/blog-entry-16739.html.

[65] "[Hatsune Miku] HATSUNE MIKU V3 Release Special Interview [Hatsune Miku]"【初音ミク】 HATSUNE MIKU V3 Release Special Interview 【HATSUNE MIKU】, YouTube video, posted by HatsuneMiku, September 27, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eD9H34jvh0c.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 30.

[68] Ibid., 6-7.

[69] "Hatsune Miku・Append (MIKU APPEND) 初音ミク・アペンド (MIKU APPEND), Crypton Future Media, Inc., accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.crypton.co.jp/mp/pages/prod/vocaloid/cv01a.jsp.

As a note, these Appends were made for the Vocaloid 2 engine and so differ from the V4X engine which improves on previous appends and has "original," "soft," "solid," "dark," and "sweet."

[70] Klivis, 51.

[71] Ibid., 143.

[72] Ibid., 10.

[73] May, 70.

[74] Hiroko Tabuchi, "SDF deploys perky mascot to boast cuddly image," *The Japan Times,* Feb. 21, 2007, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/02/21/national/sdf-deploys-perky-mascot-to-boast-cuddly-image/.

[75] In 1991, *Bessatsu Takarajima* did a feature on the JSDF and a notable quote on the magazine's back cover summarizes the Japanese public's thoughts on its military: "No enemy to fight—nothing that has to be protected—who made [the Self-Defense Forces] into this military!?" (Frühstück, 120).

[76] Tabuchi.

[77] Sabine Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 122.

[78] Ibid., 122.

[79] Ibid., 126.

[80] "'Mo-Musume.' de Jieikan Boshū/ Bōeichō ga Posutā Isshin"「モー娘。」で自衛官募集／防衛庁がポスター一新 [SDF Personnel/Defense Agency Renews Recruitment Posters with "Mo-Musume"], *SHIKOKU NEWS*, August 8, 2003, http://www.shikoku-np.co.jp/national/life_topic/20030808000049.

[81] "【OFFICIAL】 NicoNico Music Party 2015 VOCALOID Live," YouTube video, posted by Niconico Kōshiki Channeru/niconico ニコニコ公式チャンネル / niconico, June 24, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_QS0sjg6YU.

[82] The term "Youtaite" refers to those who upload covers of songs to YouTube, whereas "utaite" refers to those who upload to Niconico.

[83] Utaite examples include Ikasan, Glutamine, Soraru, and the collaboration between 96Neko and Pokota; and the Youtaite кran.

[84] Sara Cohen, "Sounding out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 4 (1995): 444.

[85] bell hooks, "Eating the Other," in *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). 369.

[86] Larryson, March 17, 2017, comment on "Senbonzakura" English Cover by Lizz Robinett, YouTube video, posted by Lizz Robinett, February 18, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdYKj2PvnZE.

[87] "Senbonzakura (feat. SeeU SV01)," YouTube video, posted by VenDre, September 16, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_GWqWo-gxg.

[88] Iwabuchi, "Pop-culture diplomacy in Japan," 426.

[89] saberbutterfly, May 24, 2020, description of "[Yuè zhèng líng x Chìyǔ] Yuezheng Ling, Chiyu - Chì líng Chi Ling [English Sub]"【樂正綾 x 赤羽】Yuezheng Ling, Chiyu - 赤伶 Chi Ling【English Sub】, YouTube video, posted by saberbutterfly, May 24, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-tsSbe1oBk.

[90] Yiyi Yin, "Vocaloid in China: Cosmopolitan music, cultural expression, and multilayer identity," *Global Media and China* 3, no.1 (May 2018): 57.

[91] Ibid., 57.

[92] "[Luò tiān yī] Luo Tianyi - Quán yù tiānxià Sun Quan The Emperor (English Translation + Pinyin)"【洛天依】Luo Tianyi - 權御天下 Sun Quan The Emperor (English Translation + Pinyin), YouTube video, posted by saberbutterfly, March 6, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJms1CGHjn8.

[93] Instead of "1, 2, san, shi," Robinett sings this as "1, 2, 3, 4."

[94] Robinett replaces "This" with "That" in her version.

[95] кran, "Senbon Zakura English Lyrics," Ongaku ★ Meganekko (・∀・) 音楽★メガネっ娘 (・∀・) (blog), January 12, 2011, http://kran117.blog127.fc2.com/blog-entry-82.html.

[96] Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization*, 14.

[97] Ibid.

[98] February 19, 2017, comment on "'Hatsune Miku' Senbonzakura 'Orijinaru Kyoku PV'"『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲 PV』, Niconico video, posted by kurousa 黒うさ, September 17, 2011, https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15630734.

[99] December 17, 2016, comment on "'Hatsune Miku' Senbonzakura 'Orijinaru Kyoku PV'"『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲 PV』, Niconico video, posted by kurousa 黒うさ, September 17, 2011, https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15630734.

[100] September 24, 2016, comment on "'Hatsune Miku' Senbonzakura 'Orijinaru Kyoku PV'"『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲 PV』, Niconico video, posted by kurousa 黒うさ, September 17, 2011, https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15630734.

[101] November 27, 2016, comment on "'Hatsune Miku' Senbonzakura 'Orijinaru Kyoku PV'"『初音ミク』千本桜『オリジナル曲 PV』, Niconico video, posted by kurousa 黒うさ, September 17, 2011, https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm15630734.

CHAPTER IV

21 GRAMS OF THE SOUL: SOULLESSNESS AS POST-MORTEM DISABILITY IN *EMPIRE OF CORPSES*

In Chapter III, I explored how the digital diva Hatsune Miku's voice embodies and perpetuates Japanese nationalism across transnational soundscapes to rehabilitate Japan's violent imperialist history in Asia. As a technological extension of the human, the Vocaloid is a popular example of the rising shift toward posthumanism and the speculative futures it evokes. In Chapter IV, I examine an alternative route of posthumanism that does not escape the messy reality of the corporeal body but rather uses one of its "deviances," disability, as a nationalistic endeavor.

At first, disability and nationalism seem to be at odds with each other as the nation requires abled bodies to serve and protect it. This is especially so when combined with late capitalism as disability studies scholars David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder identify "Functionality, ability, and appearance . . . as determinative of participation in the surface identifications cultivated by nationalism."[1] As a result, disability becomes use- and value-less, supporting the notion that nationalism is built on the belief of "disability as a materially devalued existence."[2] However, this reasoning contradicts the neoliberalist view of "inclusivity." To clarify, such "inclusivist techniques…have less to do with a more expansive tolerance toward formerly deviant citizens than the appropriation of disability as an opportunity for expansion at the consumption end of late capitalist marketplaces."[3] Within this framework, "nearly all bodies

are referenced as debilitated and in need of market commodities to shore up their beleaguered cognitive, physical, affective, and aesthetic shortcomings."[4] The production of disabled bodies underpins neoliberalism's market structure and so creates a need for market expansion through conferment of disability. In other words, nationalism is dependent on the active disabling of bodies to survive. This practice resonates strongly as a precursor to Achilles Mbemebe's death worlds. For Mbembe,

> in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead.*[5]

Such "weapons" sometimes take the form of biotechnologies that seek to "better" one's quality of life from the womb to the tomb, and in the near future, beyond it.

As able-bodiedness determines the degree to which one is valuable (or value-able), the disabled body connotes a state of value-less living. As gatekeepers of the body, medical institutions may confer a "living dead" status to bodies that are still biologically living. The phrase to be "better off dead" is often said in relation to disabled bodies, and even more so to those with cognitive disorders. In the creation of such death-worlds Mbembe mentions, cognition has often been used as a weapon to justify colonization, slavery, and eugenics, where the quantification of intelligence has been used to determine the value of humanness and its subsequent lack a justification for dehumanization. And herein lies the focus of this chapter: the voice. The voice has historically served as a measure of cognition under ableist screening. From those who are deaf and hard of hearing to even those who do not speak the dominant language,

the so-called inability to "speak" is justification enough to dismiss one's cognitive faculties and strip them of personhood. But there is productive value when the "illegitimate" or "illiterate" voice disrupts hegemonic speech as it reveals the ableist parameters of what is considered human.

Vocaloid is a contemporary example of how voice assistive technology can construct a nationalistic body through the voice of Hatsune Miku. But what happens when assistive technologies are taken too far? In chapter three, I examine a reanimating technology called Necroware in the film *Empire of Corpses*. Necroware presents a darker perspective of such assistive devices that recreates the death worlds painted by Achilles Mbembe where ableism and nationalism pushes the limits of what the posthuman can ethically mean.

> "Thought precedes language. So long as there is language there is a heart and in there, the existence of the soul. Let us prove the 21 grams of the soul."
>
> —Friday, *Empire of Corpses*

In the animated world of *Empire of Corpses* (2015), hereafter referred to as *EoC*, it is language and not death that severs the soul from the body. Physical death is no longer the fear of the living, but rather, social death, defined in the epigraph as the loss of language. The setting is late nineteenth century England where corpse engineers resurrect the dead through a computerized implant known as Necroware. This technology grants corpses artificial "souls" that determine their body's range of abilities with one exception—the ability to speak (like the living). Although corpses can speak, the parenthetical addition of "like the living" distinguishes between what the living majority acknowledges as speech and what it does not. Corpses, though

mainly silent, can articulate non-verbal speech. However, the standards of speech enforced by the non-corpse, or more specifically the *able-bodied* non-corpse, mark such bodies as disabled due to their speech "impairment." As written in the epigraph, the character Friday, while alive, believed language was an indicator of the soul. But when language, as expressed through living speech, is the soul's signifier, the speech-impaired corpse cannot claim itself as human. The use of ableist-held conceptions of speech to gauge cognition extends beyond the sci-fi world of *EoC* as people whose disabilities render their speech "unintelligible" are likewise rejected autonomy in real life. By using the corpse to resist modes of speech mired in ableist constructions of communication, I explore the shifting boundaries of humanness and how it upholds certain bodies while excluding many others.

To Speak is Human, to Not is Also Human

In this chapter, I link the terms cognition, personhood, and soul as these characteristics often describe what living bodies possess. To speak is to prove one has cognition; to have cognition is to prove one has personhood; to have personhood is to prove one has a soul—or so this logic, however flawed and ableist, goes. Especially in today's world, disability rights activist and scholar Eli Clare cautions that "being seen as intellectually, cognitively, or developmentally disabled is dangerous because intelligence and verbal communication are entrenched markers of personhood."[6] For America, it was not until 1964 that Congress issued the Babbage Report that decried the effectiveness of oralism in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. Until then, the act of speaking had been the undisputed form of communication that sidelined, and even attempted to eliminate manualism, or the use of sign language. The centralization and

exaggerated value of oral-based speech is not only detrimental to the disabled community, but to those who cannot communicate via the dominant language. For displaced migrants and the colonized, speech has become the precarious evidence for humanness. What we may learn from the corpse is what constitutes personhood outside the limited markers of speech and in a literal sense, who is living a life "worth" living and why that may be.

The equatability with able-bodiedness as a signifier of life, and especially a life worth living, denies the existence of those who do not fit into this category. Stigmatization surrounding people whose disabilities renders their speech unlike the able-bodied converge on the lack of cognition and its association with soullessness. This ableist way of thinking relegates people with disabilities to the realm of not-living, or the living dead. Although I realign the living dead with people with disabilities in this discussion, my intention is not to encourage the already detrimental relation between them but to show how the speculative nature of the corpse disrupts an economy built on the policing of human life. In my close reading of *EoC*, I examine how this film takes this equation (able bodied = life/value, disabled body = death/waste) in a literal fashion through its biopolitics on reanimated corpses. I invite the reader to consider the corpse's significance as a literal breakdown of the able-bodied, and more specifically, a breakdown of language, a significant determinant of ability.[7] By doing so, the tensions and anxieties revolving around the speech of corpses draws attention to the oralist parameters that assign and maintain the label of disability and its attending devaluation of human lives.

I delve into biopolitics for this reading as it concerns the governance of life and death, body and power, and its role in a current modernity that increasingly imagines a life beyond death. The living dead prefigures in the genealogy of monsters which "gave birth to modernity:

those unnameable figures of horror and fascination [who] shadow civilization as its constitutive and abject discontent."[8] Biopower emerged through this disciplining of the monstrous—those deviants of race, sex, and I add, ability.[9] In an Agambian sense, biopolitics involves "the perpetual definition or redefinition of the human" where "power is increasingly less the power to put to death, and increasingly more the right to intervene in order to make live"[10] Under this framework, the definition of human now revolves around the question of which lives are worth prolonging. As ableism promotes the idea that it is better to be dead rather than to have a disability, then that means those lives worth saving are abled ones. In other words, to have a disability is to be like the living dead (an association especially prominent with patients of dementia). In the twenty first century, the figure of the living dead invokes the deviant who transgresses even the limits of the ableist definition of mortality—the disabled. As such, both people with disabilities and the living dead raise important questions on what it means to surpass death, whether literal or metaphorical, and what extent humanness can extend beyond this state of (non)being.

In the able-bodied society of *EoC*, it is unusual that the use of cutting-edge assistive technology like Necroware intentionally resurrects corpses as disabled bodies. This prompts the questions: what role does disability play in this speculative sci-fi world and what does the posthuman, through the figure of the corpse, offer to current understandings of disability? How does speech determine what it means to be human and why is speech used as a measure of humanness? In this context, the overarching question is no longer what happens to the body after death but what happens to the body when one can no longer "speak."

Of the monster family, the undead have the closest ties to biopolitics through its racial underpinnings. The more commonly used term, zombie (or zombi), is a Haitian construction rooted in slavery during its colonization by France in the late 18th to early 19th century. Colonization of the bodymind in the service of the nation, as I will elaborate later, is a key theme of *EoC*.[11] Through its adaptation into film, the zombie's exotic mysticism was replaced by scientific experimentation. But regardless of the means by which they are controlled, zombies are always portrayed as slaves, the lowest class of both monsters and humans alike. As they are often driven to cannibalism by a base animalistic desire for sustenance, zombies have become a "symbol for disenfranchisement and loss of agency," which also points to the "loss of ability to feel (as a human) and loss of value (as a human)."[12] However, Comentale and Jaffe claim that despite its dehumanization, the zombie's insufficiency as human entails thinking through this selfsame insufficiency of our current wealth of knowledge on zombies, and, I add, definition of human, body, and biopolitics.[13]

Unlike other monsters, the zombie's colonization alludes to the colonization of the body, the ongoing project in biopolitics this paper centers on. In other words, "zombies figure the return of the historically repressed" and "can likewise unearth, exhume, and redress historical repression—offering the possibility of a counter-history, an alternative way of knowing."[14] Similarly, this "alternative way of knowing" parallels Alison Kafer's feminist and queer approach to disability through a political/relational model which recognizes disability "as a site of questions rather than firm definitions," whose unstable nature has the potential to effect political transformation of disability futures.[15] These zombies "challenge the logic of being able

to strip someone of their humanity" and "mediates our fears of losing agency and our hopes that we might get it back."[16]

Comentale and Jaffe pose two questions in defining the undead: "How much *un*doing can it stand?" and "How much of the body can be lost before it becomes a *no*-body? [my emphasis]"[17] Both these questions hinge upon the idea of how humanness is determined. As such, these same questions can also be posed in the realm of living bodies that do not fit the figure of the ideal body paraded in western art—a white, cisgender, heterosexual, able male body. The insufficiency of bodies, or un-sufficiency, have been determined by race, sex, gender, ability, and in more speculative terms, death. In response to the abovementioned questions: How can these insufficient bodies, the other, claim sufficiency?

The answer to these questions is language, or the ability to claim one's self. Soldat-Jaffe in her chapter "Zombie Linguistics" observes that "in many zombie texts we see a repeated correlation between language and humanity that suggests that language use is decisively what makes humans *human* [my emphasis]."[18] Similarly, the fields of disability studies and postcolonial studies gesture toward the importance of reclamation of the self through spoken testimony via Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller* and Gayatri Spivak's essay "Does the Subaltern Speak?" The other *does* speak but the question is who *will* listen. Language is not just about the act of communication but making meaning in that communication. To be human, the self must be claimed and acknowledged as such.

However, claiming human sufficiency through language merely reinforces an oralist framework. Rather than rehabilitating the other through language, language itself needs to be understood as insufficient and rehabilitated. The intervention in this discussion of disability is the

disabling, or cripping of speech. Cripping, according to Hutcheon and Wolbring, seeks to "Generate a 'desire for what disability disrupts,' that is, suggest an understanding of resilience which embraces polyvocality, circumvents ability-centrism, re-understands 'disability,' and which re-locates resilience to the level of relationship and community."[19] Cripping speech denies the need for rehabilitation or the curing of "insufficient" others and allows bodies of different abilities to be acknowledged on their own terms. To crip speech is to similarly "understand 'zombie language' as a performance and not a competence-lacking linguistic behavior" which allows "more intellectual space to explore dimensions of language usage that would be otherwise categorically excluded"[20] As such, I interpret the speech of corpses in *EoC* as a way to crip speech produced by abled bodies. As corpse bodies are manipulated by the coding of Necroware, their only remaining means of revolt is by doing what they are not allowed to do. And it is the voice that provides this outlet. "Revolt exposes the speaking subject to an unbearable conflict" and this revolt of language and speech exposes the able-bodied to disability and its association with mortality.[21] As such, corpse speech and crip communication share similar goals, and the interplay of both through the body of the corpse explores an alternative understanding by which cognition, or the soul/personhood, may be acknowledged beyond the conceptual pre- and post-mortem human to those bodies whose speech remain unrecognized by ableist constructions of communication.

> "First, we must begin by explaining my profession. What I most greatly require is corpses."
>
> —John Watson, *EoC*

Biopower concerns itself with the administration of life, and in Foucault's view, with the discipline and punishment of bodies. In its goal of extending life, it must also determine which

lives are worthy of that project. Hence its framework hinges on cultivating normal bodies while letting, rather than consigning, the abnormal to death (to make live and to let die). The concept of cure makes frequent cameos in disability studies, where Clare discusses how cure is dependent on eradication—often finding abnormality where it in fact does not exist. Thus, discipline and eradication are often the same—both are championed as cure to othered bodies when in fact, these bodies may not need or desire it.

EoC initially presents itself as an overcoming narrative where the seemingly disabling effects of returning from the dead would be "cured" if only the corpse could speak, an end goal typical of the medical model of disability. The one who searches for this "cure" is John Watson, a man unflatteringly described by his Russian guide, Nikolai Krasotkin, as "a madman engineer who, on their own initiative, turned their friend into a corpse."[22] In accordance with the promise made at his friend and colleague Friday's deathbed, Watson continues their joint soul-searching project with the newly deceased as his test subject. Friday is notable for corpse standards as Watson uses Necroware to grant him specialized communication abilities—a skillset not assigned to corpses; a choice made even more unusual in a time of war.[23] At the time the narrative takes place, the British empire has expanded its territories and in so doing, utilized corpses as tools of imperialism to maintain their colonies abroad. But upon Friday's resurrection, Watson tells him, "Write down every conversation and action. I hope this will become your soul."[24] Watson's statement is significant here because it is at this moment he defines the soul as language and that language is the "cure" to Friday's "disability," or loss of self.

Friday's character is a fitting subject to examine the potentiality of corpsehood in relation to disability, as, unlike many popular portrayals of the living dead, his corpse does retain agency

even after the "disabling" event of death. In the general process of becoming the living dead, the body undergoes a marked cognitive change, where this transformation, or degeneration, signifies the loss of the soul. In such bodies, cognitive death is believed to persist even when physical death is undone. And so the resurrection of the corpse is merely the resurrection of the human shell. Likewise, popular perceptions of disability view the person with disability as a "shell" of who they once were. This transition from ability to disability, in the same way from living to living dead, condemns both the person with disabilities and corpse to social death. By these examples, cognition is undisputedly a quality of the living. Yet according to most lore on the living dead, destroying the brain is the only way of killing such beings. By such logic, the corpse's brain retains some sort of cognitive value, even if it is just "mindlessly" animating the body. As evident by Friday's specialized ability to transcribe the events and conversations around him—even acting as translator in one scene—the motor and cognitive skills of corpses in *EoC* have the potential to speak like the living, and so the *EoC* corpse provides insight into the oft overlooked cognition of the living dead. As Necroware defines the extent of the corpses' abilities, so too does it define the extent by which they may possess a soul. In other words, it is not that corpses do not have the capacity to speak because they are "brain-dead," but it is that they are not given the "code" to express themselves in a way that the living acknowledges as speech. As such, Necroware imprisons corpses within their own bodies and their souls are forfeit to the corpse engineers who program them. Placed within the medical model of disability, this would mean that corpses, along the lines of people with speech disabilities, must overcome and learn this "code" to function as a productive member of society. Like Necroware, the medical model places responsibility on the disabled subject, whereas the social model of disability looks

outward toward the barriers that an ableist society places on the Other. However, it is necessary to not just merely acknowledge nonnormative modes of communication, but to crip this "code" of normality as Kafer's political/relational model would suggest.

Resurrection from the dead redefines disability such that it is no longer about physical or cognitive impairment, but spiritual as well. Upon death, the body becomes disabled by loss of its soul. While Necroware allows the corpse to regain mobility and cognitive function to the extent that it can even perform tasks like typing, it does not allow the corpse to reclaim its "soul" through speech. Rather, this intentional neglect by corpse engineers ensures the corpse remains disabled. When corpses do try to communicate, it is conveyed within a framework of screams that further consolidates their otherness. Though disability studies scholars have examined varying levels of speech from stuttering to aphasia, screams are not included nor have been examined as part of speech. A possible explanation for this exclusion is because screams precede the production of speech and constitute what could be termed as an emotional rather than cognitive excess. However, their affective expression subverts the stereotype of the "brain-dead" corpse who is incapable of feeling, let alone conveying emotion. Accordingly, corpse speech crips living speech through affect, placing a higher order of meaning not in conventional linguistic signifiers, but in the unruliness of bodily sounds. More broadly, the potential offered by corpse speech is significant for its flexibility and adaptability of what is considered communication as it returns the meaning-making process to its basic sonic components.

The significance and intention of Friday's screams is ever more important considering the situations in which he does speak. Throughout his travels with Watson, Friday is silent. It is only when Watson and their traveling party locate Victor's Memorandum in Japan and has Friday

analyze it does the latter break out of his speechlessness and "speak," but the only sounds he makes are strangled cries. In "The Linguistics of the Voice," Mladen Dolar places value in the scream as "it epitomizes the signifying gesture precisely by not signifying anything in particular, it presents the speech in its minimal traits, which may later get obscured by articulation."[25] In other words, meaning is expressed through affective sound which would otherwise be lost in the linguistic particularities of living speech. "[B]y its very inarticulate nature," Dolar adds, it may "even become the embodiment of the highest sense."[26] Screams prioritize meaning because of their direct connection to the body. So it is not the speech of the able-bodied non-corpse that is linked to a higher form of communication but that of the "brain-dead" corpse.

As corpse speech separates language from cognition and instead links it directly to the body, corpses are the speakers of a non-adulterated form of communication which privileges the signified rather than the signifier itself. However, the base sound of the body governing corpse speech should not be mistaken for an animalistic form of communication. The norms governing communication revolves around the concept of able-bodied speech. However, the issue with this is that

> The norm is not only a discriminating social, economic, and moral constraint; it is written into the social contract right from language. *As soon as I begin to speak, I in fact accept and share norms.* To speak is to submit to grammatical norms, and the 'speaking being' does not escape common rules, without which there would be no exchange [my emphasis].[27]

In other words, the concept of norm itself must be cripped for any productive change to occur.

For the corpse, whose Necroware disables the motor functions associated with speech production, "The scream, unaffected as it is by phonological constraints, is nevertheless speech in its minimal function: an address and an enunciation."[28] It is an intentional, meaningful, and only means of communication possible within the constraints posed by the corpse body's subjugation to Necroware. In addition, the scream becomes ever more so valuable considering that corpses are mainly silent.[29] The times they do speak hold great significance and Watson realizes this in his interactions with Friday. Watson interprets Friday's first utterance in Japan as a sign toward the return of the latter's soul rather than a Necroware glitch their traveling companion Frederick Burnaby believes it to be. Although Burnaby interrupted their exchange, the second time Friday speaks confirms Watson's assumption.[30] During a corpse riot initiated by The One in San Francisco, Watson escapes with Friday through the sewers. En route to a safehouse to meet Hadaly and Burnaby, Friday momentarily breaks out of The One's control and speaks once more. This time, Friday not only screams with intent, but follows up by tapping Watson on the nose with his pen—a signal both agreed upon before the former's death to signal he had a soul. These were the only two instances in *EoC* where Friday spoke, and in both, Friday's screams culminated in a shared connection that led Watson to believe Friday's soul had finally returned after death. Despite Watson's desire for Friday to speak like the living, his acknowledgement of Friday's utterances as being meaningful goes further in these instances as he asks Friday questions in expectations of receiving an answer, regardless of form, in return. In other words, Watson's reactions negate the notion that communication (and in extension, cognition) can only be predicated by living speech.

The scream as a form of affective communication through bodily sounds also takes place within the non-corpse as well. Yet even though the scream is not unfamiliar to the non-corpse, the state of the body plays a significant role in defining whether such utterances are associated with living speech and hence acknowledged, or conversely, corpse speech and unacknowledged. To render these sounds through the body of the corpse redefines what a scream means if vocalized by a non-corpse, and so what constitutes living speech is not dependent on cognition but the state of the body itself. That is, what is considered speech must be uttered by a "passing" abled-body. If the body is marked by a disability, in this case, if it is corpsified, then the speech itself is also rendered unintelligible. For example, when Watson examined the Russian corpse sent to assassinate him in Khyber Pass, Krasotkin questioned the latter's confidence in the corpse's attempt at speech because to him "corpses have no need of names they cannot speak."[31] For Krasotkin, regardless of what sound the corpse made, it could not be considered speech because it originated in the corpse body. However, what is particularly interesting in this case is that the Russian corpse was not actually a corpse per se, but a living human installed with Necroware. Despite being alive, Necroware reduced his faculties to that of a corpse so that he operated under the conditions coded into the software. Krasotkin assumed he was a corpse due to his vegetable-like state and so refused to acknowledge the sounds he made during Watson's examination as a genuine attempt at living speech. As such, the state of the body affects the non-corpse's reception of what counts as living speech. And so even if the corpse body's vocalization of speech is evocative of a soul, it is not a soul the non-corpse recognizes as the same soul belonging to the pre-mortem corpse.

Consequently, the recognition of the soul, like the body, is dependent on a shared connection between the corpse and non-corpse, in the speaker and the listener. Regardless of its cause, "the moment the other hears it [the scream] . . . it assumes the first function of speech: to address the other and elicit an answer."[32] As such, this form of communication relies upon a shared network of understanding—highlighting the necessity of interconnection between corpse and non-corpse. How the listener responds, then, is significant in corpse speech, and the failure to understand is not caused by the corpse's so-called lack of cognition, but the bound conventions that the living place on what is considered "speech." In contrast to Krasotkin's dismissal of the Russian corpse's speech, Watson interpreted the sounds the corpse made as cues toward an attempt to communicate something. The extreme close-up of the corpse's mouth as he opens and closes it—as if to form words—emphasizes his attempt at speech. Watson prompts the corpse by asking him his name, but before he elicits an answer, the Necroware short-circuits, ending the experiment. Watson's response to the Russian corpse is one of acknowledgment that what occurred between them was a two-way conversation. However, to Krasotkin, a third-party observer, this cognitive test was nothing more than an exercise in futility.

As such, what constitutes cognition needs to be examined in relation to corpse speech. A defining characteristic of soullessness is the loss of selfhood which is presented in the way one speaks. Speech style is contingent upon the individual, and so when the corpse does not return to the way they spoke while living, they are posited as soulless. As seen at key points in Friday's existence as a corpse—when he is first resurrected and after analyzing Victor's Memorandum in Japan—Watson asks Friday, "Can you see me?"[33] The question is not about whether Friday can actually see Watson, but if Friday can recognize Watson through a verbal acknowledgment

characteristic of the living Friday. In continuing the idea that corpse speech relies on interdependency between speaker and listener, so too is the soul itself constructed by both parties. However, once the body's state has been altered, is it possible to identify the soul? In *Gutenberg Galaxy,* Marshall McLuhan observes that "If a technology is introduced whether from within or from without a culture, and if it gives new stress or ascendancy to one or another of our senses, the ratio among all our senses is altered."[34] If such is the case, then the introduction of death, and consequently Necroware, impinges upon the corpse a state of living speechlessness. Hence, it may be more appropriate to see the corpse as in a state of transitioning the senses to a post-mortem experience where the soul must likewise be post-mortemly constructed.

But although Watson recognizes Friday as a post-mortem subject, he still clings to a pre-corpse image of who Friday was and still should be. This invocation of an ideal past self has similar resonances with family members of people with disabilities who deny the latter's current state to preserve their memories of who that person was before their disability. However, as seen with Friday, the corpse body, and in extension the disabled body, resists this nostalgic recuperation. In doing so, the corpse transcends this haunting figure of the past to a new form of selfhood that must repeatedly contend with the expectations of the living. Much to Watson's frustrations, Friday persists in the vocalization of corpse speech even after his analysis of the Memorandum in Japan. As they head to America in pursuit of The One who has recovered the Memorandum for his own purposes, Watson attempts to update Friday's Necroware in accordance with the information the pair gleaned from the Memorandum. However, the updates end in failure. Here it appears that Friday's inability to speak like the living is not technological but physiologically-oriented. In *Senses of the Subject*, Judith Butler discusses the constructive

nature of language on the body, noting that "Although the body depends on language to be known, the body also exceeds every possible linguistic effort of capture."[35] And that, according to Mitchell and Snyder, is because "the body itself has no language, since language is something foreign to its nonlinguistic materiality."[36] So in line with McLuhan's assertion of the inability for the body to return to its former self before its changed state, the corpse body becomes incompatible with living speech after the event of death. Hence, the corpse body reifies itself as a posthuman one that rejects linguistic conventions of the living in an attempt to redefine itself. As to be discussed in the next section, for Friday then, his corpse soul reasserts itself through screams, and the responsibility of reaffirming this affective pronouncement as evidence of Friday's soul falls upon Watson and Burnaby.

"If this is what's considered the reappearance of the soul then I'd rather not let him suffer any longer!"

—Frederick Burnaby, *EoC*

Watson and Burnaby's opposite responses to Friday's corpse speech draw similarities with able-bodied responses to people whose disabilities affect speech production. To return again to Friday's first expression of corpse speech in Japan, after analyzing the Memorandum, Friday has a fit in perhaps what may be a short circuiting of the corpse body as he comes into contact with the Necroware code for living speech. It is then Watson who hears Friday's corpse voice for the first time as strangled cries. Through his cries, which the living typically associates with distress, Friday's corpse speech crips living speech as his cries are meant as a means of communication. His screams manifest his struggle for Watson to acknowledge him, but as seen

in the epigraph for this section, Burnaby mistakes his screams of corpse speech as screams of pain.[37] Burnaby accuses Watson of his selfishness in making Friday suffer to prove his theory of the soul. But it is Watson who, by prompting Friday to continue speaking, legitimizes Friday's screams as an attempt at communicating his possession of a soul. However, before he can press Friday further, Burnaby tries to destroy the Memorandum. In contrast to Watson, Burnaby's response is to take Friday's screams as justification for him to end what he perceives as pain, drawing upon a similar logic regarding how the lives of people with disabilities are similarly associated with suffering and hence not worth living. Alyson Patsavas in her article "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain" discusses how through this "over-determined relationship between disability, pain, and the (supposed) desire to die" that such interventions, however well-intentioned, often lead to more suffering.[38] With no other alternative but to scream, Friday is caught in a tug-of-war between Watson who acknowledges his screams as communication and Burnaby who denies him autonomy by perceiving his screams as pain and an implied plea to end his "life."

In Friday's corpse speech, the communication he presents as screams is dependent upon Watson and Burnaby to acknowledge it as such, emphasizing a seemingly uneven power dynamic that renders the speaker as vulnerable to the listener. However, dependency is not necessarily harmful in such relationships as Susan M. Behuniak describes it as a distinguishing feature of people with Alzheimer's disease in her article "The living dead? The construction of people with Alzheimer's disease as zombies," asserting it as a natural occurrence in one's life.[39] In a similar way as people with Alzheimer's, corpses are dependent on those around them as they rely on Necroware to function, and the relationship between Watson and Friday go beyond this

basic exchange of command-and-obey for a corpse engineer and corpse. What is notable is that they both saw Friday's corpsehood as a continuation of their research together as, prior to his death, he instructs Watson: "You carry on [*sic*] break open my grave and use my corpse. If I feel the soul [*sic*] I'll give this signal. Like this. Then, our theory can be proven."[40] They agree that if the corpse Friday taps Watson on the nose twice with his pen, then that will indicate his possession of a soul. As a corpse, Friday is vulnerable in his relationship with Watson, yet the latter, despite his fixation on instilling the capability of living speech in Friday for most of their travels, still abides by their agreement and defers to Friday's instructions toward the film's climax.

As interdependence is necessary in communication between corpse and non-corpse, it then becomes necessary in redefining the soul. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry echoes this sentiment in "A Zombie Manifesto" as they say that "in the zombie's purest form as an ontic/hauntic object, transformation must be created outside the body, proclaimed by others."[41] And so the corpse's soul is not located within the body but outside it through the acknowledgment of the able-bodied non-corpse. However, for the corpse soul to be recognized as a legitimate soul, the idea of living speech as prerequisite for the soul needs to be undone. Watson determines Friday's soul by undoing his preconceptions of living speech, replacing it with corpse speech—a mode of communication that is dependent on both the speaker and hearer to succeed. The soul is more than language then, it is a process whose scope goes beyond the individual to the community.

However, the corpse speech this paper has addressed so far is vocalized through Friday, a white male corpse, and so the corpse speech model delineated crips living speech to a limited

extent in terms of race and gender. Throughout *EoC*, Watson and Friday interact with not only corpses from western nations but also those from colonized populations in India, Japan, and Afghanistan. However, these interactions are brief and for the most part violent as these corpses act as agents of colonization as dictated by their Necroware. Colonization of these bodies demand a separate reading of how corpse speech is rendered through a marginalized body that is not only physically colonized by Necroware but ideologically through another national power. However, with their limited portrayal in the film, how these corpses speak remains unclear.

Empire of Corpses as a Postcolonial Text

Yet, while *EoC* limits its scope to Friday's experience, much can be said about the film's overarching postcolonial critique in its reworking of key Western colonialist texts to contend with these new regimes of the body once death is no longer a "natural" stopping point in its service to the nation. It is significant to mention that for Japan, intertextuality already has strong ties to imperialism and colonialism as its tradition of transculturating Western cultural texts began during the Meiji period when it sought to strengthen the nation by modeling itself after the forerunners of Western modernity—Europe and the US.[42] More so than a conversation with the past, intertextuality contributes to the making of the nation's rhetorical history as its ‘’strategic appropriation of the past' . . . confer[s] identity, motivate[s] commitment, and frame[s] action" among its key players.[43] This rhetorical history includes cultural relics, such that literature, film, and other media can be "translated" from their original context to rework meaning within another. Such narratives, according to Barry and Elmes, "create a discourse of direction (whether about *becoming, being,* or *having been*) to understand and influence one another's actions [my

emphasis]"[44] From this perspective, intertextuality offers multiple contact sites between nations to negotiate their past, present, and future histories. While my focus is not on Japan's postcolonial history per se, I demonstrate how the present moment derives from a colonialist past whose far-ranging effects led to Japan's modernity.

As if in conversation, or even continuance, of Meiji era ideals of the Japanese nation, *EoC's* intertextual references revolve around the 18th and 19th century, a time (for Western subjects) of discovery fueled by rapid progress in industrial and technological achievement. While Great Britain's colonial projects began centuries prior, this historical moment marks the merging of the nation's colonial projects with industry and technology to redefine humanity's ventures into the unknown. The unknown are both physical and spiritual: from far off lands in *Robinson Crusoe* to the limits of the human soul in *Frankenstein*, *EoC* appropriates specific elements of classical landmark texts in Western literature to wed the postcolonial and biopolitical aspects of a colonial empire like Great Britain with Mbembe's death worlds. The inclusion of a necropolitical theme in *EoC* imagines this speculative past with the use of posthuman technology to harness and exploit labor unto and into death.

Of the western nations, Great Britain in particular has a close connection to Japan as both were island empires with ambitions of imperial and colonial rule. It is no coincidence then that the former's cultural texts during a time of political, social, and cultural shifts in East Asia are especially resonant in *EoC's* reworking of empire at home and abroad. An assemblage of scientists from fiction and nonfiction take center point in this narrative, where the combined knowledge and technologies developed by figures like John Watson, Victor Frankenstein, Thomas Edison, and Charles Babbage (as a supercomputer) evoke a speculative past where the

ambitions of biotechnology are actually achieved and utilized as a vital component of nation-building across the world's powers. As the intertextual and intertemporal references in *EoC* recognizes "the simultaneous presence of multiple, interlinked realities," it is "well positioned for capturing the diversity and complexity present in strategic discourse" that "offer[s] a firm a focal point – an identity – for making decisions about the future"[45] But what is problematic about intertextual use of such texts is the original imperialist context they were born from and their revitalization as they assume new forms. As Gayatri Spivak remarks in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," to disregard the role of imperialism as "a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" only "attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms.[46] What I see then is an opportunity to use *EoC* to critically "rectify and invite comparisons with [its] creative [colonial] antecedents."[47] What EoC does is create postcolonial discourse in a longer tradition of colonial Western texts by inserting Japan into this Western colonial legacy.

In this section, I provide a brief contextualization of key texts EoC uses in relation to the three eras in which they were published: the Scientific Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and Age of Discovery in Europe. As my focus is on the factors that enabled the expansion of the British empire, I discuss the technologies that bound these eras together rather than their chronology.

The Scientific Revolution (1543-1687) in Europe produced the means by which Europe could explore the unknown in two ways: the physical world and the so-called "spiritual" world. For the former, the invention of navigational devices like the astrolabe and magnetic compass enabled overseas exploration that resulted in contact with the New World. The result was a

globalized trade economy built on colonialism and slavery which characterized the Age of Discovery until the 18th century. During this time, narratives of exploration, conquest, and empire like *The Tempest* (1611) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) captured the anxieties, hopes, and fantasies of Europeans who were now faced with a world that was, until then, imaginary. *The Tempest* reflects this mood as the story revolves around Prospero and his daughter Miranda who were abandoned on an island inhabited by fantastical beings. Through means of magic, Prospero made Caliban and Ariel, the island's natives, his servants. Post-colonial studies scholars have written extensively on Caliban, who embodies the abject colonial subject of European travel narratives (which I will discuss further later). *Robinson Crusoe* follows a similar trajectory of shipwreck followed by survival on an island with hostile inhabitants. However, Crusoe's narrative lacks the fantastical elements of magic and focuses more on the transatlantic trade that flourished during this time. Crusoe embarks on an expedition to procure more slaves in West Africa for his plantations in Brazil and later finds himself shipwrecked on an island inhabited by cannibals. After rescuing one of the cannibals' captives, the man pledges his life to Crusoe, whereby the latter names him Friday. Like Prospero and Caliban, Crusoe teaches Friday English, a significant act in colonial ventures that Europeans used as a standard of civility. This focus on speech is significant as it becomes the basis upon proving the existence of the soul in *EoC*.

In addition to the unknown territories of land and sea, this spirit of European exploration extended to nature as well. The creation of the telescope and microscope enabled humans to peer into formerly invisible realms whose workings were once relegated to the divine: the universe and the natural world. Life and death were no longer a matter of religion, but processes that could be understood through empirical means. As science continued to uncover the mysteries of

the body once left to the divine, the idea that man, like God, could create life no longer seemed a far-off possibility. Mary Shelley explores this idea in *Frankenstein* (1818), where the scientist Victor Frankenstein disrupts the balance of nature and science in his attempt to create life from the dead. However, the results are tragic; Frankenstein's perfect man turns out to be a "monster" who does not receive the love of his creator but is instead shunned by all those around him. *Frankenstein* takes the colonial project and its economy of slavery to a new level with its use of science and technology to create the abject. The novel's critical take on the advancements of the Scientific Revolution could be interpreted as a warning about the heedless pursuit of scientific knowledge and its consequences. Frankenstein's hubris led to his attempt at creating life, an act once limited to God, and the result was the monster, an amalgamation of corpses simulating life. *EoC* picks up on this theme, yet on a larger scale as the British government's successful use of Necroware leads to a new age of slavery through the corpse. However, while Frankenstein makes an appearance in *EoC*, he plays the role of the antagonist, the scientist gone awry in his selfish desire to create a wife and remake the world in his own image. It is up to John Watson from the *Sherlock Holmes* literary series (1887-1927) to stop him. Watson encapsulates the naïve hopes of science to better humankind, embodying the spirit of scientific deduction, logic, and reasoning from his literary predecessor. While Frankenstein represents what happens when science is pushed to its destructive limits, Watson represents its ideals.

Frankenstein's warning about the heedless pursuit of knowledge revealed the building friction between science and religion at the time. As with *Frankenstein*, *EoC* attempts to reveal the existence of the soul. Watson and Friday's research in the film references the 21 grams experiment conducted in 1907 by Duncan MacDougall who theorized the weight of the soul to

be 21 grams due to the difference in the body's mass before and after death. Based on this premise, the pair seek out Alexei Karamazov, a corpse engineer on the run from the Russian government who is said to have Victor's Notes. In adapting his character from *The Brothers Karamazov*, *EoC* transfers Ivan Karamazov's nihilism to Alexei as he questioned faith and free will on the use of Necroware. Upon their meeting, Alexei is already disillusioned by the realities of Necroware, believing it to be an enslaving technology rather than a miracle one. While not stated in the film, Ivan Karamazov's argument in the book encapsulates Alexei's views on the uses of Necroware, that is, if there was no such belief in immortality to hold humans accountable for their actions, then "nothing would be immoral" and "that egoism, even to crime, must become not only lawful but even recognized as the inevitable, the most rational, even honorable outcome of his position." In *EoC*, Necroware negates the idea of immortality as the corpse does not appear to retain a sense of self after its reanimation (until Friday shows otherwise). As such, nothing is immoral. Even the use of technology to govern life and death could be determined by humans. Through such engineering of death, what lies ahead in such a future is a literal death world through the systematic rehabilitation of the living into the living dead. In other words, Necroware justifies its complete control over the body politic. What Watson sought to do then, by proving the existence of the soul via speech, would validate the corpse's status as human, critiquing ableist and racist notions of intelligence that justified slavery in colonial enterprises—an act that would destroy the nation's labor force in industry and war and reinstitute a morality that the world of *EoC* seems to have abandoned.

With new discoveries to be had, the Scientific Revolution further pushed the limits of labor and production that the Industrial Revolution achieved. With the steam engine, work

became mechanized to endanger an industry once reliant on human labor. Work was no longer seasonal nor limited to daylight, but perpetual. As a result, humans became expendable in light of an alternative that did not tire, demand wages, nor unionize. But as machines increasingly replaced humans, fears around the former's uprising, their complete replacement of humans, and even the possibility of their sentience arose. The taboo topic of creating artificial life resurfaced, except this time, it was through technology rather than science. While the Scientific Revolution produced Frankenstein's Monster, it could be said the Industrial Revolution had its own equivalent with the android Hadaly from Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel *The Future Eve* (1886). In the narrative, a fictional Thomas Edison attempts to create the perfect woman for his friend Lord Ewald who is distressed by the dissonance between his fiancée Alicia's physical beauty and unbecoming personality. Named Hadaly, the android bears the physical semblance of Alicia, but with the personality of a "proper" woman. Despite being born from misogyny in the original novel, Hadaly in *EoC* serves as a contrast to Friday as android and corpse pose two different paths humanity could take in the near future.

Amidst the advancements in Europe during these three overlapping periods, its colonial ventures had the farthest-reaching impact across the sea. While written nearly a century apart, the British empire still retains the same colonial ideologies in *A Ride to Khiva* (1876) and the James Bond series (1953-1966). The former is an adventure narrative about British officer Frederick Burnaby who travels across central Asia to uncover Russia's plans in the Great Game, an extended conflict between Great Britain and Russia over their colonial expansions in Central and South Asia that ran from 1830 to 1907. *EoC* reenacts some of the armed conflicts as Burnaby leads Watson's party across Central Asia to meet with Karamazov, a corpse engineer who

defected from Russia. The scenes of their travel in central Asia reveal the gruesome reality of corpse soldiers and the future of colonialism during the Anglo-Afghan Wars where both British and Afghan corpse armies are locked in a perpetual stalemate as neither can die. As such, Burnaby describes war as nothing more than a game as life no longer has sacred value. It is a literal representation of the Great Game itself. *A Ride to Khiva* was based on the real-life British intelligence officer of the same name whose travels were well-known among his Victorian contemporaries. James Bond serves as a modern interpretation of Burnaby as the famous 20th century spy expands Burnaby's travels across the globe in service of the British empire. But regardless of time and setting, both agents reveal how colonialism was, and is, still very much alive.

Slavery and Intertextuality

While the futuristic past envisioned in *EoC* seems better suited to a science fictional world, it is not so different from slave narratives of the past as *EoC*'s mass manufacturing of othered bodies still relies on biological otherness as a justification for slavery. However, to clarify, *EoC's* approach to slavery is reminiscent of the Second Slavery in the Greater Caribbean rather than the Cotton South for the former's reinvention of the "technologies of slavery" during the mid-nineteenth century.[48] Alongside the Industrial Revolution, other events like the abolitionist policies of the British Empire and the Haitian Revolution compelled planters in the Greater Caribbean to "actively reinvented slavery in response to a different moment in the history of world capitalism." [49] Its result was the plantation complex, "the site of modernity's first emergence"[50]

The new form of slavery arising from the plantation complex draws parallels to *EoC's* use of Necroware to create corpses as the goal of both are to produce an enhanced labor force. However, what is concerning for *EoC* is that the metaphorical figure of the corpse encompasses slavery on multiple levels that include not only the enslavement of the body, but the body after death and, in extension, its soul. While death guaranteed slaves freedom, the use of biotechnology like Necroware ensures that death is no longer a possibility for the corpse. The necropolitical lens of biopolitics and postcolonialism reveal the state's dependence on creating new regimes of disability to suit a precariously posthuman world. By rejecting a linear narrative through the interweaving of multiple texts, *EoC*, as a text in conversation with other speculative fiction neo-slave narratives, "work to reclaim lost voices, to critique traditional historical methods associated with white, nondisabled men, and to use fiction and nonrealism to expose many of the untruths and absences of the historical record and cultural memory of slavery."[51] The ableist discourse in *EoC* is one based on voice, where the parameters of speech determine the existence of a soul. In other words, disability in speech, and in extension, "able-mindedness" has become the justification for the corpse's enslavement, drawing a parallel to real life where pseudoscientific justifications around race and intelligence resulted in the enslavement of brown and black bodies.[52]

In continuance with the themes of colonialism, technology, and death, speculative sci-fi interpretations of the human body and its past(s) and future(s) abound in *EoC*. Friday's reanimated corpse body alludes to 19th century anxieties about xenophobia underpinning Frankenstein's monster. The film's opening scene of Watson installing Necroware into Friday recalls the life-giving experiment Frankenstein performed on his monster. However, while

Frankenstein's monster was destroyed for his otherness, the "soulless monsters" in *EoC* are preserved for their productive value as workers of the empire. Similar to its reinvention of slavery in the Greater Caribbean during the mid-nineteenth century, Britain used the tools of its time to harness the other in new ways to maintain its imperialist agenda.

However, Friday is not a simple character representing the other. He occupies a slippery position as he is both other (corpse) and not-other (White). This paradox is readily apparent in his corpse name. After M coerces Watson and Friday into service of the British empire, the former confers Friday the code name "Noble Savage 007." Friday's code name calls up pre-existing connections of British empire and imperialism with the reference to James Bond. As mentioned before, it could be said that James Bond is a modern interpretation of the 19th century British adventurer cum imperialist heralded in Victorian literature like Frederick Burnaby. However, the imperialism here is less overt than that of his predecessors as Bond

> establishes a new form of (cultural) imperialism: his journeys are either attempts to once more foreground and perhaps to reaffirm the traditions and values of a prewar British nation and a British Empire symbolized by Bond; or, Bond can also be seen as a mobile imperial marker travelling across parts of the globe in the attempt to test new, *imaginative forms of empire*, in which Britain can remain at the centre and all the world's her stage [my emphasis]. [53]

While Frenk and Krug later positions Bond as more nomadic than British, Bond's Britishness is still a measure by which non-British others are portrayed in the films. Similarly, his transnational mobility allows him to enact such "imaginative forms of empire" abroad. Along these lines, Friday's travel across continents parallels that of Bond's and the imagined empire in his narrative

are filled with the corpses Watson seeks to study. Hence, *EoC* is an example of a new form of empire Britain attempts to create via Necroware—an empire of corpses. But it is not just the literal dead *EoC's* name refers to, as Frenk and Krug describes imperialism itself as "*undead*, an unfinished project haunting the collective unconscious which popular mass entertainment addresses," and, I add, revives.[54] As Krasotkin stated, the British empire's new frontier is that of death, and with it, a restructuring of the world order.[55] As the plantation system marked the beginning of modernity, so too, does the corpse herald a new era continuing what Rood describes as the "bio-economic specificity of black labor," where Black slaves were deemed a profitable labor force due to their biological "resistance" to the imagined degenerative effects tropical climates yielded on their white counterparts.[56] Similarly, the corpse's undead biology makes them suited to everlasting toil. As a result, the plantation system sought not only to "maximize the yield on captives' life energy," but its focus on monocropping "forced the land to the edge of its ability to sustain life."[57] In effect, the new shape biopolitics take in the speculative future is a deathworld that relies on the bio-economic specificity of the corpse to eke out what life there is in both body and land.

However, as mentioned previously, the other half of Friday's code name ("Noble Savage") and the name Watson gives to him upon his revival complicates the corpse's relationship with Bond's Britishness. While Friday's original name before his death was never mentioned in the film, Watson's naming him Friday is significant for the friction it causes with his whiteness. Friday, a composite figure referencing Friday from *Robinson Crusoe* and Caliban from *The Tempest,* casts whiteness onto this character who was previously used to embody the savage element British colonizers attributed to black and brown bodies. As Friday from

Robinson Crusoe was named for his inability to speak to Crusoe upon their first meeting, the same event in *EoC* leads Watson to name Friday "Friday." While most likely coincidental, it is also noteworthy to mention the possible relationship *Robinson Crusoe's* Friday has with Caliban in *The Tempest*. Friday was a Carib cannibal, a major indigenous group of the Caribbean, and perhaps coincidentally, the words "Carib" and "Caribbean" are similar to the name "Caliban." But while Crusoe's Friday was a literal representation of the other, Caliban's figure calls upon the metaphorical. Prospero describes him as "A freckled whelp hag-born--not honour'd with/A human shape," whereas Trinculo calls him ""A howling monster," half-fish half-monster."[58] These two lives intertwine in Friday's name, endowing him with an otherness that has trickled down through British history in its cultural texts.

While Watson's attempt to prove Friday's humanness through speech recalls the civilizing process enforced on colonial subjects, the former's approach to speech critiques the racist and ableist traditions embedded in colonial narratives. For the latter, racism and ableism underlie this act as the only acceptable form of speech is of Western origin. The underlying logic here is that self-consciousness and intelligence arises from language, a trait that was used to delineate human from beast. To return to *The Tempest*, Prospero's words to Caliban articulates this logic as he says, "I pitied thee,/Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour/One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,/ Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like/A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes/With words that made them known."[59] However, Caliban's retort to the "civilizing" nature of speech was that he had only learned to curse, which in itself, undoes the point of teaching speech in the first place.[60] This scene calls out the racist notions underlying speech, which *EoC* pushes further from an ableist perspective with

Friday's corpse speech as Friday is literally unable to form comprehensible words in English. A notable moment in EoC is Friday's first reaction to scream upon coming into contact with Victor's Notes in Japan, prompting Burnaby to say, "If this is what's considered the reappearance of the soul then I'd rather not let him suffer any longer!"[61] While Burnaby's reaction could be interpreted as pity for Friday's seeming expression of pain, the revelation—that corpses *did* have souls (and were thus human)—would unravel the labor force the British empire at home and abroad was dependent on. Upholding the ableism in speech would be in the majority's interest, thus any attempt outside the norm would be decried as gibberish (re: uncivilized).

While there is more to be said about *EoC's* place in the genealogy of postcolonial narratives, the film itself merits a close reading due to its critically postcolonial subtext to disability and posthumanism. Through its intertextual reworking of key Western colonial texts, it demonstrates how imperialism persists under a different guise while also showing hopeful glimpses of resistance.

"The story left for you brought about new life."
—Friday, *EoC*

Contrary to the overcoming narrative it set out to be, *EoC* does not culminate in a "cure" for corpsehood. Friday does locate his soul, but it is not the soul his living self and Watson initially sought out—it is a corpse soul appropriate for the post-mortem body. Friday does not return to his pre-mortem self, nor does he desire to do so. Rather, he is compelled to determine

for himself who the corpse Friday is according to his own terms. In the film's epilogue, Friday writes the final words of the narrative he has up until then written for Watson:

> I…I will seek whether I have my own consciousness. I…I will answer when this consciousness arose or the time when it will arise. What I know is still limited. Dr. Watson. There are still many things I want to tell you. I exist here, as materialized information. That now…now I can continue existing in this way is all because of you. If it could be realized if only just one sentence I want to tell you I wish these words to be made real. The story left for you brought about new life.[62]

Though the corpse marks the endpoint of living, it also presents a new posthuman existence that resists able-bodied non-corpse fears of physical and seemingly cognitive death. The language of the post-mortem human is a bodily one whose affective nature as corpse speech and corpse silence reveals the tensions that persist in the living speech enforced by the able-bodied non-corpse. This model of the corpse speech/silence-soul-body extends beyond the fictional world of *EoC* to critique the link between able-bodied speech and cognition for people with disabilities in real life. In his letter, Friday identifies his corpse state as "new life," and not an extension or continuation of his pre-mortem self. His declaration of new life coincides with his referring to himself as "I" for the first time in his writing, an indication of Friday's own agency over his corpse body. Thus, it is perhaps appropriate here to reiterate the first words Watson spoke to him upon his awakening:

"Welcome back, Friday."

[1] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 14.

[2] Ibid., 14.

[3] Ibid., 11.

[4] Ibid., 12.

[5] Achilles Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* vol. 15, no.1 (Winter 2003): 40.

[6] Eli Clare. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure.* Durham: Duke University Press (2017), 157.

[7] The term "language breakdown" is similarly used in regards to dementia.

[8] Amit S. Rai, "Of Monsters: Biopower, Terrorism and Excess in Genealogies of Monstrosity," *Cultural* Studies vol. 18, no. 4 (2004): 539.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1998), 188.

[11] "Bodymind" is a materialist feminist disability studies concept developed by Margaret Price in her article "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain" that emphasizes the "rhizomatic" nature between body and mind to suggest how mental and physical processes in the body tend to act in tandem so that it is more fitting to refer to the body and mind as a single rather than dual entity (270-271).

[12] Chera Kee, *Not Your Average Zombie: Rehumanizing the Undead from Voodoo to Zombie Walks* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 2.

[13] Edward P. Comentale and Aaron Jaffe, "Introduction: The Zombie Research Center FAQ," in *The Year's Work at the Zombie Research Center*, edited by Edward P. Comentale and Aaron Jaffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 49-50.

[14] Jonathan P. Eburne, "Zombie Arts & Letters," in *The Year's Work at the Zombie Research Center*, edited by Edward P. Comentale and Aaron Jaffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 401.

[15] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 9-11.

[16] Kee, 17.

[17] Comentale and Jaffe, 50

[18] Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe, "Zombie Linguistics," in *The Year's Work at the Zombie Research Center*, edited by Edward P. Comentale and Aaron Jaffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 365.

[19] Emily Hutcheon and Gregor Wolbring, "'Cripping' Resilience: Contributions from Disability Studies to Resilience Theory," *M/C Journal* 16, no. 5 (August 2013). https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.697.

[20] Soldat-Jaffe, 386.

[21] Julia Kristeva, "New Forms of Revolt," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française*, Vol 22, No 2 (2014): 6.

[22] *Empire of Corpses,* directed by Ryoutarou Makihara (Japan: Toho Animation, 2015), DVD.

[23] However, Friday's linguistic capabilities may even be considered to surpass typical non-corpse standards as in addition to scribe, he also serves as a written translator for Watson on their travels.

[24] *Empire of Corpses*.

[25] Mladen Dolar, "The Linguistics of the Voice," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), 550.

[26] Ibid. 547.

[27] Julia Kristeva, "A Tragedy and a Dream: Disability Revisited," *Irish Theological Quarterly* vol. 78, no. 3 (June 2013): 225-226.

[28] Dolar, 549.

[29] This excludes the living humans who were rendered corpse-like through their Necroware implant and the corpses later controlled by The One. The One, or Frankenstein's monster, is considered the first and only corpse to have a soul. Unlike his descendants, The One is capable of living speech and because of that, is sought after by Watson and many others to determine how a soul can be recalled to the corpse body.

[30] Although Friday does growl at Watson once the latter regains consciousness aboard the USS Richmond after encountering Victor's Memorandum and The One in Japan, it does not count this as a voluntary speech act by Friday as he was still under the influence of The One's control. Similarly, when The One transfers his consciousness to Friday, in effect possessing him, Friday speaks, but it is through The One.

[31] *Empire of Corpses*.

[32] Dolar, 549.

[33] *Empire of Corpses*.

[34] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of the Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 24.

[35] Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 20.

[36] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*: *Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 64.

[37] Friday's corpse speech screams and pain screams are noticeably different as seen in a later scene when Watson tranquilizes Friday to prevent the corpse from shooting himself in the head. After stabbing Friday in the neck with an injection, the sound of Friday's screams have more weight to them, seeming to come from his chest, whereas his corpse speech screams are higher pitched and tense, seeming to originate in the throat as vocal cracking.

[38] Alyson Patsavas, "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* vol.8, no. 2 (2014): 203.

[39] Susan M. Behuniak, "The living dead? The construction of people with Alzheimer's disease as zombies," *Ageing and Society* vol. 31, no. 1 (January 2011): 87.

[40] *Empire of Corpses*.

[41] Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry, "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism," *Boundary 2* vol. 35, no.1 (2008): 105.

[42] Karen Laura Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 7-8.

[43] qtd. in Roy Suddaby, William M. Foster, and Chris Quinn Trank, "Rhetorical History as a Source of Competitive Advantage," *The Globalization of Strategy Research* vol. 27 (July 2010): 160.

While Suddaby discusses the notion of rhetorical history within corporate organizations, a similar framework exists on a macroscale for the nation, with political leaders in the role of stakeholders.

[44] Barry and Elmes, "Strategy Retold: Toward a Narrative View of Strategic Discourse," *Academy of Management Review* vol. 22 no. 2 (April 1997): 432.

[45] Barry and Elmes 430; Suddaby 166.

[46] Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 243.

[47] Thornber, 238

[48] Daniel B. Rood, *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

[49] Ibid., 8.

[50] Ibid., 8.

[51] Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 37.

[52] I borrow Sami Schalk's definition of the term "able-mindedness" to refer to "the socially constructed norm of mental capacity and ability that is typically posed in binary opposition to mental disability. Able-mindedness includes concepts such as rationality, reasonableness, sanity, intelligence, mental agility, self-awareness, social awareness, and control of thoughts and behaviors" (61).

[53] Joachim Frenk and Christian Krug, "Handovers of Empire: Transatlantic Transmissions in Popular Culture," in *Semiotic Encounters: Image, Text, and Trans-nation*, edited by Sarah Säckel, Walter Göbel, and Noha Hamdy (New York: Rodopi, 2009), 204.

[54] Ibid., 205.

[55] *Empire of Corpses.*

[56] Rood, 12-13.

[57] Ibid., 12.

[58] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, edited by William George Clark and John Glover. The Works of William Shakespeare, Cambridge edition (Project Gutenberg, 1863), 1.2.283-84, 2.2.169. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23042/23042-h/23042-h.htm.

[59] Ibid., 1.2.354-59.

[60] Ibid., 1.2.363-64.

[61] *Empire of Corpses.*

[62] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Rather than arrive at a conclusive stopping point in my research on vocal "ability," I find myself returning to my chapters knowing how much more needs to be said. It is ironic that in attempting to study the voice, I myself struggled to contain it for the same reason I chose it in the first place: because of "how difficult it is to locate and discipline its invisible and intangible form." This is apparent in my interdisciplinary approach that, when left unchecked, grew into a much more complex entity than I originally planned at this project's outset. Despite being equipped with the methodologies of Asian cultural studies, disability studies, queer theory, *and* postcolonial studies, I, still yet, thought just how much more could be done if I delved into just *one more* field. With each chapter, the list grew longer and longer, and with it, the difficulty of balancing the theories and concepts so vital to each. While the unruliness of my approach became its own problem, the need for so many fields of study reveal how the subject of the voice is "rhizomatic" in nature.[1]

The expansive range of inquiry was also one that could not adequately give my case studies the attention they so deserved in such a limited space. The desire to write in breadth led to an unfortunate disconnect between the chapters so each only offered a limited study of the voice in its unique valences. In Chapter II, I demonstrated how women's voices offer other modes of being that do not rely on a rigid gender binary encapsulated by the nation. In Chapter III, I examined how current voice synthesis technologies like Vocaloid provides a model by

which we can listen to how digital voices, especially women's, are altered to (re)imagine the nation within transnational relations. And finally, in Chapter IV, I theorized how the voice, as a symbol of nation-building, can shift from a precarious marker of humanness to new posthuman subjectivities. Given enough time and resources, each chapter can be developed into its own project better devoted toward articulating a stricter framework and primary audience. Nevertheless, despite the unwieldy form it took, the organic "spread" of my project was a generative one as it gave me the space to experiment and play with the voice, a medium that in itself defies restraint. It was here, in my first attempt to do Asian studies in my "own way" as an Asian American trans boi, I was able to learn what queer joy and pleasure is in my own voice.[2]

In the future, I hope to return to this project, having listened to and met other voices that gleefully share in the failures of the "human condition." While this dissertation is just a small offering toward dewesternizing "Asia," I hope I accomplished just a little bit of that with my own voice.

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[1] I borrow this metaphor from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's fabulous book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

[2] Kuan-Hsing Chen. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

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