Exemplary Affect: ❖
Corruption and Transparency in Popular Cultures

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies a critical reflection on a corruption vs. transparency discourse, and its attendant structures of feeling, in contemporary East Asian cultural texts. These texts illustrate how such a discourse can be deployed to assert exemplary status for accomplished individuals or members of privileged groups—a status, however, particularly vulnerable to scandal. Feeling exemplary in this sense is a paradox of progressive ethics. I analyze a video made in support of the Sunflower Movement that effectively uses *kawaii*, meaning cute or lovable, as a political term to strategically posit (and perhaps subtly question) an open, exuberant happiness as a designator of a democratic people, and Satoshi Kon's anime film *Paprika*, based on the science fiction novel of the same name. The latter explores the nightmarish dream of interpersonal transparency made literal in institutional contexts, while refusing a neat opposition between transparency and corruption. Because of their detailed illustration of and commentary on exemplary affect, I argue that contemporary East Asian cultural texts are an important resource for developing a critical understanding of neoliberal and postdevelopmental discourses of transparency and corruption.

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Recent large scale democracy movements in East Asia, such as those in Taiwan and Hong Kong, have generated new and reignited older discussions about democracy, sovereignty, autonomy, rights, transparency, and corruption, bringing up as well the problem of a lack of critical vocabulary on these ideas in political cultures. This lack of critical political discourse makes it difficult to see the constitutive terms of democracy as ideas or signs deployed with interests and investments, and makes them ironically falsely transparent in effect regardless of intent.   However, in the South Asian context increasingly important work is being done on anti-corruption deployed as a neoliberal discourse. This paper posits that such a critical political project and vocabulary exists in the East Asian region in cultural texts. I engage the discussion on the discourse of corruption by analyzing cultural representations of transparency in East Asia, where developmental states were a central part of Cold War liberalism.

I look at two very different texts. One is a 2014 video that circulated on social media during the Sunflower Movement entitled "Happy- 跳舞守護台灣版 Pharrell Williams - Protect Taiwan [Dance] Edition." This video makes a demand for protection against the threat to the "original, lovable, democratic, genuine" characteristics of people and life in Taiwan. This video is thus a part of politicalized popular culture, and I analyze its strategy of representation as an effective one in, first and most directly, utilizing affect garnered through a contemporary anti-corruption discourse to make a demand on the viewer. Secondly, I argue that its visual representational elements allow for a reading of ambivalent muteness on the actual source of the threat that calls attention to the limits of present political vocabularies. I then look at an anime film, Satoshi Kon's *Paprika* (2006), which offers a meditation on the question of postdevelopmental discourses of anti-corruption and a corresponding nightmarish ideal of full transparency or disclosure at the interpersonal and professional levels. This Japanese cultural text has circulated regionally in the same contemporary period in which Asia-based scholars of neoliberalism have identified a growing dissatisfaction with the developmental states in East Asia, expressed in part through an anti-corruption discourse. I read the characters' (and the film's) ambivalent obsession with transparency at all levels as a provocative engagement with that anti-corruption discourse.

In the Works Cited list, I have entered the legal edition of this film, purchased on Amazon, and containing English subtitles. However, for most of

my analysis and the accompanying screen captures, I have used a version streamed on a pirate website (now shut down), that is more likely to be one of the venues through which the film was viewed regionally. This version contains English and Chinese subtitles, and I consider both in my readings. In what follows, I identify an exemplary affect as central to the liberal or progressive imaginary in both these texts and argue for a reading of the cultural representation of transparency that problematizes the idea of political innocence and allows corruption to be viewed as an idea and structural concept.

I. The Problem of Democratic Exemplarity

An infectious cuteness punctuates the political vocabulary of a video made to Pharrell Williams's "Happy," promoting protection for Taiwan as a democratic society under threat from Chinese free trade agreements.[1] The well shot and carefully conceptualized video is made up of a series of short cuts of people—individuals, pairs, and groups, from different walks of life, social classes, and races—dancing happily, sunnily and sometimes exuberantly in primarily outdoor settings in different parts of the island, suggesting a sense of individual openness, freedom and social harmony. This correlation between setting and feeling calls to mind one of Sara Ahmed's functions of happiness as "shaping what coheres as a world" (2). At the end of the video, however, just before showing dozens of people in sequence standing, looking at the camera and holding signs saying "守護台灣" （rendered in English subtitles as "Protect our Taiwan"), is a sequence of four individuals with signs describing the contemporary Taiwanese people as "original," "lovable," "democratic," and "genuine." The word translated as "lovable" is 可愛 [*ke ai*]. This two-character word is usually translated as "cute" or *kawaii* (from Japanese, where the contemporary usage of the term originated, and where it became associated with consumerism, commodities, and visual culture). It is used in the list with the other three less surprising words as a politicized adjective that, in the context of the larger movement, is a self-description of a national population wary of Chinese neoliberalism and Taiwan's parliamentary procedures (especially the older model associated

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[1] The video was produced by Ed Wu and circulated on Facebook in 2014 during the Sunflower Movement. It is viewable on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1GGC23vz6Q) and Vimeo, where Taiwanfred Films has a channel (https://vimeo.com/taiwanfred).

with the KMT, or Kuomindang, which has a larger mainlander constituency, is perceived as more Chinese than Taiwanese, and held the majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan, but the critique was not exclusive to that party). In this wariness, both China and Taiwan's Parliament are inflected as corrupt and nontransparent. The Sunflower moniker, representing transparency, also invokes this inflection through opposition. While strategic and apparently effective, this cute, open happiness in the video is also a problem—as signified in the video's final question, "Happy is easy, isn't it?" It is not my intention to criticize this strategic usage of "cuteness." Rather I want to look into it as a problem, as the mark of a limit in the available discourse, and ask under what conditions and with what difficulties the happy innocence with nothing to hide that it suggests can come to signify politically as one trope for democracy among others and as a defining characteristic of an opposing figure to corruption.[2]

This video is not by any means the first instance of cuteness in political discourse in Taiwan. Yin C. Chuang identifies one origin of the localized use of political *kawaii* (as a Japanese "style" characterized by "juvenility, sweetness, and innocence") in the ascension to power of the oppositional DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) after years of single party and martial law rule by the KMT (3). Chuang argues that the DPP promoted consumption of cute commodities associated with its candidate, Chen Shui-bian, as a strategy for "advancing democracy," "constructing collective imagination and national identities," and, ultimately, "securing power" (11), beginning with Chen's successful mayoral campaign in Taipei and then deployed more pervasively in his presidential campaigns (2000, 2004), which brought the DPP to executive power for the first time. Chuang astutely and meticulously points out the role that *kawaii* has played in political history where it tends to be overlooked. While recognizing the importance of the cultural history Chuang provides in this article, I want to point out that the association of democracy with *kawaii*

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[2] While the sunflower moniker is a powerful symbol in domestic and international media representations, some of the local discussions around it call attention to the ideas that it evokes as a problem in popular political discourse. As Ian Rowen puts it, explaining how the movement dispersed after the occupation: "Strikingly, none of these groups chose to maintain the 'Sunflower' moniker, despite the symbol's wide appeal and high profile. Said Yun during Democracy Tautin's [民主鬥陣] heated naming debate, 'We don't feel like a few dozen of us have the right to appropriate the name of a movement of hundreds of thousands. Besides, even though most of the people in our group were inside the occupation from the beginning, we never chose the name Sunflower anyway. The media just started calling us that because of some florist'" (17).

consumerism in this framework involves a simultaneous disarticulation from critical practice: Chuang emphasizes that with *kawaii* consumerism offering such an accessible venue for political participation, it is not necessary for ordinary people, in their political activities and education, to follow any "policy debates," participate in "protest activities," or read any "difficult articles" (12). In other words, this part of the formulation of *kawaii* entails a reduction of the political agency of the people to bodily and affective responses that are induced by commodities and somehow devoid of intellectual and critical reflection.[3] This is not to say that such a reduction is intentional in this article or in any political usage of *kawaii*, but that the latter can be used to invoke a lingering underlying paternalism toward the people that places all capacity for effective political thought in the governing agencies and not in the governed.

As a counterexample, the "Protect Taiwan" video puts *kawaii* into an overtly critical political practice in which a demand is made. Sianne Ngai has argued persuasively for cuteness as a "mute" ability to call forth "an unusually intense and yet strangely ambivalent kind of empathy" (4). Drawing on previous formulations of cuteness, Ngai argues that cute objects, in their "insistence on getting something from us (care, affection, intimacy)," are "really performative statements, and more specifically, demands" (98). While Ngai is not talking about power in such an explicitly political context, *kawaii* does seem to help the video effectively ask something of its audience, something akin to "care." The video states its demand unequivocally in the title on its YouTube posting: "Happy- 跳舞守護台灣版 Pharrell Williams - Protect Taiwan [Dance] Edition." With such a direct statement the video's demand is far from mouthless Hello-Kitty mute; however, the performative demand arguably evokes the desired protectionist response or affect most effectively by way of the cute visual style that highlights the "innocence" and "vulnerability" of the represented object, and not as much through the stated

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[3] "Popular cultural commodities offer a very accessible means of political participation. There is no need for policy debates or protest activities, and no need to read difficult articles. . . . Politics is no longer restricted, but available for everyone to take part in now. The material forms of ABC [A-Bian Culture] commodities emancipate politics from being an exclusive arena shared by the so-called elite, to a marketplace where everybody can purchase and consume a series of tangible, visible, audible and sensible cultural commodities" (12). In the latter descriptors, Chuang describes the experience of possessing these political objects in bodily, sensory terms, while also bypassing any possible intellectual component to consumerist political participation. In this overall formulation, ironically, intellectual political work seems relegated exclusively to the "so-called elite."

demand in the title. This performativity demonstrates how cuteness can be an effective cultural strategy, one that involves significant critical thought and agency, in a paternalist political framework.

The demand may be mute in other ways that are not as intentional. For example, if the demand is to protect Taiwan, what exactly it needs to be protected from is not so explicitly stated. The movement it supported had specific demands, yet what underlying problem it addressed is a question still being raised. In a plenary lecture at the last Inter-Asia Cultural Studies conference, Chua Beng-Huat suggested that the fact that it was able to attract such a large following was a result of its being actually a response to a new, acute sense of the precariousness of the economic future for those presently in their early twenties, citing how over the last ten years locations across Asia have created new terms to designate emerging classes of young people looking for work or not having enough work. Chua notes that there is not yet a commonly used term to refer to this precarity, and that the demand for "democracy"—or more specifically in this case, for democratic process for free trade agreements with China—is a concrete and immediately available way to register it obliquely, one that incurs the loss of a more thorough critique of capitalism. In an interview with Jeffrey Wasserstrom for Dissent on the Sunflower Movement, political scientist Shelley Rigger appreciates how, in Taiwan, the unusual fact that responsibility for the economic situation can be attributed to China means that the effects of neoliberalism, unlike in most of the world, are not considered inevitable (as in the economic realism of "there is no alternative"). However, this sense of other possibilities occurs with the attendant cost of misattributing responsibility and obscuring the larger source of the problem.[4]

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[4] In a recent article analyzing the class and other historical and cultural factors leading to the Sunflower Movement and the recent presidential election, Christopher Isset writes,

> The bigger question, though, is whether the DPP can deliver economic expansion while preserving Taiwan's independence. . . . So far, rather than address this situation head-on, the DPP has assiduously avoided any whiff of class politics. Instead, it appeals to populist tendencies—especially among ethnic Taiwanese. It blames stagnant wages and stubborn unemployment on China and the KMT's pro-China policies. . . .
> Both the DPP and the KMT urgently want Taiwan to sign onto the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Negotiated entirely in secret without China's participation, the TPP promises signatories 'comprehensive market access,' or the full dismantling of trade barriers. Joining would undoubtedly give neighboring nations a greater stake in the current arrangement in the Taiwan straits, with trade and investment facilitating interdependence between member states. But a new round of liberalization won't fix

　　In the same interview Rigger explains to Dissent's predominantly non-Chinese readership how students in Chinese societies occupy a "protected political status" in which they are considered not to have political interests and therefore are granted a privileged moral as well as social position. The sunflower moniker, linked to the privileged image of the student protestor (even though there were many different groups involved, not only student groups), connected its own symbolics of transparency and innocence to the political disinterestedness already associated with the social position of the student. In the "Protect Taiwan" video, the innocence and vulnerability called up in the visual and affective performativity of the *kawaii* designation is successful precisely to the extent that it can enact precisely this denial of political interestedness and implicatedness in a variety of subjects (not exclusive to students). This in turn allows the self-designated adorable innocence, with its "ambivalent empathy," to attain a kind of modern, democratic exemplarity: the ability to be involved in a protest and still perceived as a rightful model, standing in a disinterested, morally and politically objective, position. Such a position is paradoxical, since it is impossible to be both political and disinterested. Although it does not take up a worked out argument in this visual and musical medium, the exemplarity is effective at what Ngai calls a mutely affective level, for example in the open happiness and harmony of most of the dancing clips, or in the poignancy of the still, silent, camera-directed gazes at the end. It is both empowered and temporally precarious, posed against the now shameful, stigmatized shadow of the corrupt past that refuses to go away completely, and vulnerable to "falling short" (Ding 57) in the present or future.[5]　A related example of the

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Taiwan's slow growth, rising income inequality, inflated housing prices, ecological degradation, or high youth unemployment.

Globally, the restructuring of trade inaugurated in the 1980s has greatly favored the 1 percent, leaving financially strapped governments less capable of delivering benefits to their populations. Taiwan is no exception: real wage growth has stagnated since 2000, and inequality has spiked.

[5]　In using the term exemplarity, I am influenced by analyses of feminist politics and debates in Taiwan. Hans Huang draws on the earlier work of Naifei Ding and Jen-peng Liu to "elucidate the makings of two governing and gendered subject positions and the moral-sexual order to which they give rise. I term 'sage-king' the regulatory regime of 'virtuous custom' formed under the KMT administration during the Cold War, while designating as 'sage-queen' the seemingly liberal and yet deeply disciplinary regime of 'sexual autonomy' espoused by state feminism" (24). In a more recent article, Ding delineates the Cold War formations of international feminism, including its calling forth an exemplary "positional superiority" that is however based on disavowal, a "forgetting [that] in turn enables a post-war Cold War sentiment that conflates and projects outward its anti-communism as

persistent possibility of "falling short" for such exemplariness is the sexual assault scandal that ended the post-Sunflower Movement political aspirations of one of the two main movement leaders (so far, at least). Brian Hioe and Wen Liu have analyzed this development, and the more general conservative criticism of the occupation aspect of the movement which claimed that it was all for sex, especially through the sexual shaming of one female participant.[6] What I want to point out is that this shaming can be understood as an attempt to delegitimize the movement by tarnishing the reputation of the leaders and participants, demoting them to corruption as non-exemplary subjects.

While partly invoked by the self-naming of *kawaii* and its affective performative power, democratic exemplarity is not necessarily an intentional effect of the political strategy behind the video or even the movement, rather it is a product of larger forces, such as the long history of Cold War surveillance and violently enforced social norms. It is neither a subjectivity in the usual sense (not a formation), nor is it a motivation, but it is rather a position, perceived as objective and without investments, that can be claimed for effective political speech and action toward progressive social change—a position that can be temporarily inhabited by sufficiently privileged groups and subjects. Democratic exemplarity is, most importantly, a paradox, since democracy is based on the idea of equality among subjects while exemplarity, like individualism, raises some subjects above others.[7] However, democracy itself has long been theorized as a paradoxical idea, perhaps most notably by Chantal Mouffe who sees it as a productively paradoxical combination of democratic values, centering the rule of the people, and liberalism, prioritizing instead individual rights and the protection of private property.[8] Further complicating the use of concepts related to democracy in political discourse in Taiwan, and perhaps in many sites that developed according to Cold War models of liberalism, is a tendency for democracy (itself not taken for granted

anti-authoritarianism" (60). Such a position is based on the very divides (and notions of sovereignty and individual autonomy from U.S. led liberalism) that Cold War pedagogies assume as fact, and Ding considers the actual and necessary crossings of such divides in feminist practice as productive failures. Ding also states that hope is occasioned "in locales to the side yet central in Cold War politics, such as Taiwan—where a moral exemplarity is exhorted but tends to fall short" (57).

[6] For a detailed and insightful account of this issue, see Hioe and Liu's online essay "A Sexualized Movement without Sexual Rights: Chen Wei-Ting's Scandal and Taiwanese Civic Nationalism."

[7] Chua Beng-Huat has argued that meritocracy, especially in education, produces the unwanted effect of individualism in developmental, communitarian and non-liberal Singaporean democracy into the 1990s. See *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* 26-27.

[8] See *The Democratic Paradox*.

at all but imagined as perpetually threatened or hindered, and partially displaced both temporally and geopolitically) to be equated with liberalism, especially property rights, enfolding the politically effective and modern discourse of rights into older patrilineal modes of ownership.[9]

Perhaps such democratic paradoxes and catachreses are reflected in the problem suggested by the final question of the video, "Happy is easy, isn't it?" To return to Ahmed's formulation, a celebration of transparency as happy openness without this final question mark would allow happiness to unproblematically evoke a set of associations with the right kind of "life choices" and to "redescribe social norms as social goods" (2). This in turn would erase what is left out, what is mute, in the performative demand within its conditions of possibility. Making this a question instead problematizes any redescribed "social norms" associated with this particular happiness as not taken for granted, or in formation and hard to grasp (and in this case to occupy temporarily a social norm is to be more exemplary than common or normal). Whether or not intended as simply rhetorical, when read through the complexities of what Ngai terms ambivalent empathy, the question refers to what is foreclosed or cannot at present be addressed in political discourse. As I will explore in more detail in the last two sections of this paper, East Asian popular culture is an important conceptual resource in exploring this problem of the political, even (or perhaps most effectively) when not explicitly about the political sphere or social movements, as it produces and reflects on the problem of transparency in ways that are at present harder to do in more direct engagements.

Recent work on anti-corruption as a discourse of neoliberalism, by South Asian scholars such as Partha Chatterjee, Shuddhabrata Sengupta, and Prabhat Patnaik, is a helpful theoretical resource for these questions. In "Neoliberalism and Democracy," Patnaik writes on how the use of "corruption" in neoliberal discourse delegitimizes older forms of governance and further paves the way for neoliberal reform because it "discredits the political class" while the corporate economic origin of the corruption remains imperceptible. Chatterjee further complicates the notion of corruption itself, arguing that

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[9] Here I am indebted to Lucifer Hung's forthcoming essay "Habitats for Whom or What: Approaching New Formations of Affect Politics and Transgender Bodily 'Housing' by Re-reading Recent Struggles on the Ownership of Land/Residence in Taiwan." This paper is a "queer reading against normalized imagination of 'residence (as) rights' based absolutely on property ownership and hetero-reproductive familial narrative."

when the charge of corruption is focused on state agencies, corruption becomes located in a more narrow field considered to be politics and creates the sense of a pure or anti-political notion of the people (similar to that discussed above as a structural effect of the politicization of *kawaii*), who are then understood to be threatened by corruption and not tied to the administrative and bureaucratic offices that actually proliferate into many levels of society.[10] The extensive and proliferating network of sub-governance of the postcolonial states that Chatterjee identifies in South Asia is characteristic of the Japanese empire as well as the British, perhaps especially so in places that also maintain the extensive bureaucratic structures of the Chinese state.

Taking a position explicitly against critiques of anti-corruption movements that lack a simultaneous critique of the state, Sengupta argues that anti-corruption discourse localizes corruption in what are determined by existing laws as illegal transactions, morally castigating as well as criminalizing vulnerable populations who suffer more hardship if confined to the rule of law, and asks readers to consider the question of corruption from the point of view of the disenfranchised: "For the vast majorities who face the glare of documents, the demand for transparency, the imperative to come clean and be visible—corruption offers an occasional patch of friendly shade. Corruption, at least as a certain looseness with the law and with the regulatory power of the legal apparatus, is what keeps this society humane at its deeper, darker recesses." For the purposes of this paper, I want to point out that such demands for transparency at the level of the individual, and charges of corruption as moral castigation, can be used effectively as threats against individuals of other classes when they are both made visible and perceived as unruly, precisely as in the charges of sex work levied against one of the female participants of the movement mentioned above.[11]

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[10] In this online essay "Against Corruption = Against Politics," Chatterjee, drawing on Laclau, writes: "The categorization of corruption as something that belongs to the domain of 'the political' (in the popular sense, i.e., ministers, MPs, MLAs, bureaucrats) ensures that corruption can never touch 'the people.' It is something that only characterizes the enemy. The heart of the current anti-corruption movement, its principal moral and emotional force, is that it is anti-political. Politics here, needless to say, only means parliament, ministers, government offices, etc. Anna Hazare, Prashant Bhushan, Arvind Kejriwal, Kiran Bedi are not political. Hence they are pure, with the people."

[11] In this paper I am influenced by how these analyses complicate and critique the corruption/ innocence structure of the anti-corruption discourses, including when this critique is focused on the targeting of the state and what are seen as old fashioned modes of governance as corrupt. However, it is possible that when the latter position is accompanied by unquestioned faith in legal processes

South Asian discussions on the discourse of corruption can be considered in relation to cultural texts circulating in East Asia, where the proliferating administrative and bureaucratic levels of governance, partly instituted regionally during Japanese imperialism, were later deployed specifically toward the aims of developmental states in the Cold War. [12] In areas considered strategic to the US project of containing communism, surveillance apparatuses looked for deviations from social norms that exceeded political designations. For the purposes of this paper, then, the anti-corruption discourse, common throughout Asia, has to be situated in relation to surveillance deployments and other elements of East Asian regional Cold War and post-Cold War formations, including what Yin-bin Ning has termed "neo-moralism" as a constitutive factor in contemporary progressive governance. [13]

In East Asia, Cold War formations began to shift into or incorporate neoliberal policies with respect to globalization only when what were perceived as the significant gains of Cold War developmentalism began to give way, and the centralized, planned economy began to come under critique. In some East Asian sites, including Taiwan, neoliberalism was also implemented in more limited ways than in other parts of the world. [14] According to Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill, trade liberalization had happened in Japan by the 1980s. They also emphasize that although new "cluster" policies "contain neoliberal elements . . . [overall] the trajectory is

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and the ability and willingness of the state to regulate the market fairly in the face of the incursion of neoliberalism, the corruption/innocence structure might be unintentionally revived.

[12] See Hill, Park and Saito on corruption, bureaucracy, and the iron triangle in Japan, the idea of Confucian nonindividualistc postdevelopmentalism, and Japan's role as a partial model for S. Korea's and Taiwan's developmental neoliberalism.

[13] Ning writes: "Universal progressivism meant that progressiveness is not seen as relative to a specific and historical societal condition; that the progressiveness of a cause is not measured against a specific context, but the embodiment of a universal value. Thus it is self-justified and intrinsically good—Gender equality, animal protection, constitutional democracy, same-sex marriage, environmental protection and the protection of minors—such universal values are the eternal ideals of humanity as demonstrated by modern western civilization, applicable in any time and space. And yet, in its struggle to become mainstream practice, moral progressivism has absorbed many aspects of moral conservatism, whilst the latter has also occupied the mainstream by appropriating many elements of progressive rhetoric and ideas. Thus emerged the situation where moral progressivism and moral conservatism alternate in dominance or govern jointly—and this scenario is what I refer to as 'neo-moralism.' Although my main object of description is the situation in Taiwan, this might be a point of reference in our observation of the world after the Cold War" (127).

[14] In Taiwan this was especially true in the 90s. "When the economy was liberalized in the 1990s, the KMT bucked neoliberal trends and responded to increasing popular unrest with worker-friendly measures. Modest government insurance for the elderly and unemployed was introduced, workplace safety regulations were tightened, the cost of labor was allowed to rise, and a world-class single-payer health insurance program was inaugurated" (Isset).

from developmentalism to postdevelopmentalism, not to neoliberalism" (30). According to Jinn-yuh Hsu, "neoliberal measures, such as privatization, financial liberalization, and public-private partnership, took place in Taiwan in the late 1980s" (298). Hsu identifies and analyzes the surprising but not unique combination of populist rhetoric with implementation of neoliberal policies in Taiwan, emphasizing how "the enactment of neoliberal agendas did not entail the seamless imposition of a uniform hegemonic template, but dynamic and contingent processes . . ." (297). Overall, these scholars have argued that the shifts have to be understood not only internationally (as opening up to "global markets"), but also regionally, as East Asian economies operate differently and have developed in relation to one another. [15] Regionally, the recent policy changes and incursion of new values have been accompanied by a discourse of corruption often aimed at the central role of the state in developmentalism.[16]

I would like to suggest that, although surprising when it appears in political culture, the affective effectivity of the cuteness/corruption dyad comes to make sense in a regional, residual Cold War cultural imaginary that as often as not represents the problematics of political or social innocence. To understand the role of culture as both representing and reflecting on this question, in the rest of this paper I look at a critically acclaimed text that examines the idea of transparency in relation to values partly derived from Cold War liberalism and postdevelopmentalism: Satoshi Kon's 2006 anime film *Paprika*. It is based on the 1993 science fiction novel of the same name by Yasutaka Tsutsui. I refer to the novel in some depth while discussing the anime film when the novel is helpful in drawing out a reading of transparency and corruption. The novel is clarifying in this regard, as its narration goes into descriptive details about administrative matters in "public-private partnership" (Hsu), including the constituencies of the funders, naming the exact titles and

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[15] See Hill, Park and Saito.

[16] In the discourse of corruption and/as non-transparency aimed at existing parliamentary procedures in state-controlled economies, there are similarities to a process Patnaik describes (but not with regard to the extent of the weakening of the state he alludes to): "The 'corruption' discourse facilitates the ushering in of corporate rule by dismantling potential obstacles to it [i.e. a democratically elected parliament that could be used to regulate the economy]" (42). In Patnaik's view, this in turn paves the way for the desire of a strong man figure further propagated through corporate marketing of the candidate. These are the conditions for the rise of corporate fascism. Fascism, then, is corporate rule; not that of a strong authoritarian state but a strong man or authoritarian ruler backed by corporate power whose interests are invisible and a weak state that cannot regulate the economy or check executive power.

identities of trustees, board members, etc. My goal is not to uncover the meaning of the texts in any decisive way; rather I closely read both texts as imaginative resources for thinking through the question of transparency in relation to the regional weakening of or challenges to the developmental state (including the state's backlashes) and the relative imperceptibility of emerging modes of market and global governance that accompany the shifts discussed above. While leaving out most of the administrative governance plot, much of the emotional power of the film results from the fact that it manages, in meticulous visual detail, to represent the dream of transparency as both utopic and nightmarish, and at once interpersonal and political. The plots of the novel and film are both based on the attempt to avoid a potentially devastating scandal involving accomplished researchers who have achieved the most exemplary status.

II. Thinking through Transparency

Corruption is everywhere in *Paprika*, and the characters most vulnerable to its charge are internationally known researchers whose elite institution, as repeatedly emphasized in the novel, is run and funded by a board with representatives from both the state and private industry. The role of virtual sexual therapy in their experimental psychotherapy methods is a large part of what makes them potentially vulnerable to sexual stigma. This possibility is heightened by the novel's emphasis on how the protagonists and antagonists, like many university professors across Asia, all live as well as work on grounds owned by their employer, the Institute for Psychiatric Research.[17] Although where the researchers live is not clear in the film, such a collective living environment provided by a large employer recalls the company housing where the film's director spent some of his early childhood, when his father worked for Nippon Express in Hokkaido (Osmond 11). Further, such research institutes increasingly combine state and private funding, vigorously promoting technological innovation in the sciences, such as the medical field. In its competitiveness, indicated throughout the film in the praise given to its top researchers Atsuko Chiba and Kosaku Tokita (e.g., "the scientist of the century," etc.), the Institute for Psychiatric Research exhibits some of the

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[17] I have used the English name of the institute from the translation of the novel. Near the beginning of the film (about nine minutes in), we get a brief glimpse of the name written in characters across a building-front window: 精神医療総合研究所.

characteristics that have been identified as marking Japan's shift into "postdevelopmentalism," e.g., "knowledge-based competition in the world economy and value creation based on intellectual assets" (Fujita and Hill 44). In the novel, Chiba and Tokita have been nominated for a Nobel Prize, which they are awarded in a climactic scene, and the combined private and state funding sources are laid out in some detail as part of the preliminary scandal-avoidance plot. The new emphasis on innovation in such institutes is opposed to the developmental priority of "catching up" (Fujita and Hill 30-31), but with the still centralized state an indication of "Japan's managed openness to the world economy" (52). In such a fully institutionalized state/corporate setting, and as suggested by the literature on postdevelopmentalism, there may not be much of a role for entrepreneurial individualism. However these texts imagine a place for a vulnerable exemplary individualism, created in the valuing of education by the developmental state and fostering of an educational and academic research system that produces competitiveness.[18]

Both book and film are named for a dream therapist, Paprika, the spicy teenage avatar of Chiba (Figures 1-3). Paprika works at night "getting rough"[19] with older, powerful men, including Chiba's colleague and senior administrator, Shima (in the novel, also "President of the incorporated foundation that owned the Institute," [17], appointed as such by the Minister of Education, [92]), Konakawa, a high-ranking detective (again in the novel, his exact position is designated: "Chief Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police Department . . . one rank down from Chief Commissioner," [142]) and Noda, who only appears in the novel, a "Director of Development" (24) in the automobile industry, who also sits on the board. Unlike her avatar Paprika, Chiba herself epitomizes exemplariness, as a young (late 20s), beautiful, exhausted and stern director at the Institute and an accomplished and much admired psychoanalyst in charge of developing innovative therapeutic applications for the "DC mini" (Figure 4]. Resembling a sex toy, the DC mini is a device that allows the analyst to enter and to intervene in the dreams of the patient. *Paprika* is an SF anime set in the near future or alternative present,

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[18] See Chua for a discussion of how individualism to a certain extent was produced in Singapore's developmental meritocracy (26-27) and the production of "human capital" through education (62) even as it contradicted the hegemonic emphasis on collectivism and was seen as a corrupt Western attribute.

[19] Quoted from English subtitles. The Chinese subtitles say, "治療開始了" or "the therapy is starting," which in context has strong sexual connotations (see Figure 3). This phrase is repeated by Osanai in another scene which is also sexualized.

where devices that can scan patients dreams and present them in full on computer screens already exist. The DC mini is a new device, still being developed by the inventor, Chiba's colleague Tokita, an obese *otaku* who, although clearly a genius, lacks self-discipline and has trouble communicating verbally. Although teenage Paprika is cute when it suits her (to make a client feel more comfortable, for example) according to the more ordinary meanings of that term, it is arguably Tokita, not Paprika, who embodies the characteristics of *kawaii*.

In *Paprika*, the story of a competitive research effort to create a device that dissolves intersubjective boundaries, making even the unconscious transparent, is also the story of a series of "personal favors" for powerful administrators—favors that require all manner of intimacies between researchers and senior administrators, police, and funders/trustees. Because of this layering of plots, the exploration of corruption and transparency is simultaneously interpersonal and political.[20] *Paprika* represents corruption structurally, as embedded in economic and institutional conditions, rather than attempting to produce purity for the protagonists by locating corruption entirely in particular classes, individuals, or camps. Circulating regionally after developmental states in East Asia had begun to come under popular critique, *Paprika* situates a dreamlike yet nightmarish idea of transparency in relation to an ambivalent valuing of accountability for both professional and personal behavior in institutional settings. Instead of detailing layers of administrative governance as in the novel, the film represents the institutional encompassing of all aspects of life visually. It repeatedly frames the characters doing their jobs, at all times of day and night, in grey-greenish, squarish, cubicle-like enclosures: cars, garages, offices and elevators (Figures 5-7). However, like the good behavior they exhort, the frames are continuously "falling short" and failing to contain psychological and imaginary material—the latter is constantly leaking into and out of the frames.[21]

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[20] "She was glad not to be seen as some kind of teenage prostitute for middle-aged men, being passed from one client to the next through personal introduction" (Tsutsui 151).

"She wondered if she was actually no better than a woman in a massage parlor, relieving sexual frustration and restoring confidence. Such misgivings were an integral part of her unique treatment. Nevertheless, Paprika could continue her treatment based on erotic experiences without feeling too guilty about it. That resulted from her affection toward her patients, an affection she called 'reverse rapport.' She always felt irresistibly attracted towards men of high social standing" (175).

[21] From the initial image of a tiny toy truck out of which squeezes a full-sized clown, the opening scenes all present boxlike structures out of or into which leak uncontainable streams of colorful, complex, and dynamic images. The film begins with a dream sequence that segues to a small, dark

The film uses the anime medium to address the idea of transparency by drawing a parallel between the surreal imagery of dreams, the Internet, and anime itself (Figure 8), which, in being uncontainable, is directly contrasted to the enclosures described above. Although opposed to the said claustrophobic frames, this dream imagery is far from innocent. Through the unfinished figure of the DC Mini, the film ruminates at length on what it sets up as a two-sided potential in making widely accessible the animated images that come from the mind: one, they have the ability to invade and contaminate the minds of others; two, they might create a harmonious world based on a hitherto impossible interpersonal understanding through total transparency of individuals to one another. The 1993 novel is all about dreams, not the Internet, but extends the idea of the dream to image-saturated culture, where subconscious images take on, by the end, an independent agency and have the power to damage and to heal. In this sense, the pre-Internet era novel anticipates both cybersex and cybersex therapy.

In the dual nature of the therapeutic potential of the device, transparency, figured as the literal sharing of dreams, garners residual Cold War affect: Chiba says of a colleague who lost his mind after using the device: "he was invaded by a collective dream." The socialist overtones may be only in the English translation of that line (Figure 9]. All levels of the setup of the plot, though, explore fears of the collapse of intersubjective boundaries and the exposure of other's and one's own illicit behavior and embarrassing desires [Figure 8 also illustrates this point]. Rumors capitalize on the fear of a "contagious schizophrenia" that is one result of the misuse of the DC Mini before its completion. This malady is only treatable by using the device in a way that involves virtual sexual therapy. The novel takes this much further than the film; in the former sex in one scene is "as shameful as possible" (Tsutsui 267), and includes graphic exhibitionist rape fantasy. However, in both texts, this therapy consolidates discreet, competing alliances among the powerful elite clients and the researchers, who operate in technologically and academically cutting edge but socially conservative circles, recalling one aspect of Ning's formulation of neo-moralism.

An unsettling similarity between the protagonists (exemplary,

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hotel room where the dream therapy is taking place, followed by the dreamlike opening credits sequence that features Paprika's energetic whimsical flight through the nighttime cityscape—via the literal framing of advertisement images—until she morphs into Chiba, who appears pale and tired, framed in the boxy greys of her car window and then a parking structure.

accomplished researchers) and the antagonists (their rivals) illustrates a marked failure of the purity effect of the discourse of corruption. As a result of the secret sexual therapy central to the protagonists' most innovative and lauded work, the markers of baseness and corruption cannot be restricted to the antagonists. The explicitly corrupt antagonists have stolen a DC mini and are intentionally "infecting" unsuspecting researchers and psychiatrists working on the DC mini with patients' illnesses, sometimes leading to their complete mental breakdown and even deaths. For the antagonists, undercover theft and egregious attacks are part of their plan to fully take over the Institute (which is already run by the Chairman) by discrediting Chiba, Tokita and Shima. In the novel this is somewhat different: Shima is in charge of the Institute, while the Chairman character is instead a jealous and resentful vice-president who wants to be in control. Ultimately, however, in both cases the antagonists want to discredit the exemplary Shima-Chiba-Tokita team to further their own institutional power and benefit by claiming responsibility for the sterling reputation of the Institute. The antagonists' power maneuvering necessitates covert action, yet this is not entirely different from the protagonists' situation: the secrecy and dependence on illicit therapy techniques bonds the sympathetic protagonist characters into an exclusive comradeship of elites who also have to use increasingly covert measures protect their own interests. The plot thus ends up presenting a heterosexualized form of secret therapy for men who have repressed homoerotic and other unacceptable desires, in order to help save the institute from corruption by closeted, sexually active antagonists. Exacerbating this contradiction is the fact that the covert operations of the protagonists are set in motion through the personal favors that initiate Paprika's treatment of Konakawa and determine its sex work-like representation (Figure 10], which she undertakes at the behest of her boss, Shima, Konakawa's old friend.[22] Such favors are a form of non-transparency that is an important part of the discourse of corruption when focused on the political.

"Organic corruption," a concept put forward by Hsing-Wen Chang and Wing-Kwong Wong, allows a reading of the all characters operating in these structures, including the most pure (Tokita), as necessarily impure.[23] This is

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[22] See Patnaik on political favors and the "necessity of corruption" in neoliberalism (40).

[23] Shuddhabrata Sengupta also argues against taking corruption as a discrete fact—as something locatable with a specific origin and as always exploitative or bad, and does so without recourse to finding a solution in the law or parliamentary procedure. Sengupta argues from the position of the

most clearly represented in the Chiba/Paprika characterization. Rather than troping on the duplicitousness of women, her gendered impurity is represented as having its own ethical possibilities. Unlike Tokita who yearns for total transparency and in his apparent purity forgets to provide access codes for potentially harmful inventions, Chiba/Paprika uses her disguises, her undisclosed roles, and her secret sexual superpowers to save the institute and her colleagues' lives, with the mixed interest of   advancement for herself and her friends, significant developments in psychiatric care despite overriding social taboos toward both mental illness and its treatments, and in the novel, the development of a zero-emissions vehicle that has put Noda under attack by the automobile industry. Not only Chiba but even the naive administrator (Shima) and the childlike, purely scientific mind (Tokita) get drawn into the secret operations of dream therapy and participate in covering it up.

Ambivalence around Chiba's sexuality generated by Paprika's therapy methods is apparently resolved by the romance subplot and final announcement of Chiba's marriage to Tokita. However, this is a strange and incomplete resolution given that Konakawa expects to continue to see Paprika in his dreams. In the novel this expectation is explained as an effect of the "transcendent independence" (as opposed to "empirical independence") of the character Paprika from her avatar narrative, by way of a lasting side effect of the use of the DC mini: anaphylaxis—acquired hypersensitivity. As used in the film, anaphylaxis refers to an accumulated hypersensitivity to the DC mini and the virtual experiences of dream therapy, including sexual, for those who have been initiated into this practice. This means that the ability to enter another's consciousness is no longer dependent on use of the device or even on being asleep, and the dream material, like Paprika herself, can acquire an independent existence that neither the device nor narrative closure can terminate. Like the moe icon, young Paprika and her sexual therapy takes on an independent existence that is uncontainable by Chiba, Tokita and the textual narratives that first imagined her and first put her into practice. The

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most exploited, the undocumented, and the undocumentable: "Imagine that there is no 'honest living' to be made. . . . When wages are horribly low, it is the circulation of surplus in the form of a bribe that brings food to many tables, and also makes way for some things to be done. Ask an ill paid clerk, a linesman, a postman, a government school teacher, a health worker, or a policeman what it means to raise a family on the pittance that they earn. Ask an industrial worker in NOIDA how much of his or her wage would be eaten by rent if he or she did not live in an illegal settlement. Then talk to me about corruption. If by corruption, we mean a hollowing out of the things that make life worth living in dignity, then the low wage is as much a sign of corruption as the bribe."

anime foregrounds this visually in Paprika's ability to move into and out of any finite, framed image in the real or dream landscapes of the film, thereby figuring freedom and containment (and anime, too, as this pairing) simultaneously. The avatar as moe icon transcends the original narrative and takes on her own existence, not singly or empirically, but in multiplying frames or texts. Paprika transcends her creators' will and continues to exist beyond the ending of the narrative (like many characters, although this is not usually reflected in the narrative itself) and its morass of visual enclosures as an agential figure in culture beyond the novel and film per se.[24]

If Paprika transcends her narrative confines as an avatar and a character, she does not transcend the secret social conditions of Chiba's life that produced the need for her—on the contrary, she just acquires unlimited access to go deeper into them. This paradox of freedom is addressed in the oft-remarked upon anime editing techniques. Beginning with the opening credit sequence of the film, Paprika moves through the unconscious-becoming-real imaginings endlessly: she morphs from a motorcycle driver on the freeway, into the picture of a girl on a flying contraption painted on a passing truck; she then flies off the painted ad on the truck into the night sky, then morphing into the pictures on billboard ads, etc. By the end of the film, the images she is morphing in and out of are mazelike and covert networks that spiral downwards as well as taking her up in the air. The frames/texts she moves into and out of in the opening credits are products of the social world, framed and contained gendered images. In the final climatic scenes she moves in the same way, but the frames are darker, more libidinal: they are the unconscious labyrinths of her powerful colleagues. These are the libidinal framings of the psychic part of the conditions that necessitated her emergence in the first place, and they propel her beautiful, oddly free movement. Neither she nor her powerful colleagues are the unfettered agent of this movement: her freedom is actually made possible by her creators in spite of themselves, because they are increasingly affected by anaphylaxis.

This anaphylactic inflection of freedom from narrative constraints creates a sense of anxiety and makes for an ending that is not completely settled because it does not produce (as some narratives constraints do) a subject understood to be free in another sense—free of the endless and nontransparent

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[24] See Azuma and Galbraith on *moe* desire and the trans-textual existence of the object that incites it; see Teri Silvio on the cultural life of icons as animation in Taiwan.

networks through which it has been formed; in other words, free to make respectable choices.[25] As all Paprika's choices and options are embedded in and contained by layers of relationship obligations and power struggles expressed through introductions and personal favors, ethical choice can't be understood as an act free of these often covert and always socially interested framings. Among both the protagonists and antagonists, there is no absolute outside to this proliferating network.

Chiba's final marriage announcement, perhaps, seems to indicate a closure to and release from "organic corruption" through the appropriation of what Lisa Yoneyama has theorized as the media construction, in US occupied Japan, of a Cold War white American feminist subject, one who freely "chooses heteronormative, bourgeois domesticity" (902-03).[26] However, even with the marriage announcement, this text resists such an uncritical appropriation of liberal personhood. Instead Paprika/Chiba cannot be so easily read as embodying ethical autonomy, precisely because all her relations are clearly bound up in the power-laden networks that form the very basis of the plot. (This is even inclusive of the marriage relation, which is described on the card itself not as a romantic choice but as a changing of her last name to Tokita.) Her triumphant story thus does not smoothly reproduce the logic of liberal ethicality. Without it, her independent transcendence as a character is a kind of immanence at the level of the social—it is an ability to explore the secret caverns of this network ("its deeper, darker recesses" as Sengupta says) and view it from its own precipitous heights. Her form of "anaphylactic" freedom grants her accumulating sensitivities that allow her to go deeper into such a network, including its libidinal recesses, rather than transcending it as an autonomous subject.

My there is no outside to corruption reading is not meant to suggest that

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[25] See Reddy and Nguyen on the critique of freedom in US liberalism and neoliberalism, and Lin Chien-ting on how Taiwanese writer Chen Yingzhen's novels challenge a liberal feminist sociological positivism that governs modern discourse about legitimacy through a paradigm of free choice that is actually inaccessible to many.

[26] In her article, Yoneyama is theorizing the emergence of a Cold War white American liberal subject of feminism: "By obscuring the equally profound cultural limitations imposed on mainstream, white American women, it establishes them as subjects of free will, agency, and choice, while casting non-white, non-American women as objects of their rescue. Cold War feminism's relationship to racial and cultural differences is thus one of disavowal: it insists on the pure and universal category of gender unfettered by relations of power, while establishing its normative subject by marking others with the disavowed racial and other critical differences" (902). Defined against Japanese women, white American women are constituted as "subjects of free will who are not bound by tradition but who spontaneously choose heteronormative, bourgeois domesticity" (902-03).

there is no way, in *Paprika*'s universe, to imagine social change. On the contrary I want to highlight its cultural significance as a text that so thoroughly fails to produce the purity effect of exemplary affect in a psychologically inflected narrative about organic institutional and personal corruption. The film represents accomplished but student-like researchers—who are in a sense agents of positive change—as themselves of necessity not innocent, not without investments. This is the case even for Tokita, who is described by other characters as innocent, childlike and desiring pure knowledge. Tokita is visually associated with dolls and toys, "mute" in his communicational difficulties,[27] and one critic has gone so far as to observe that "Chiba and Tokita look almost *exactly* like a girl and her oversized teddy" (Osmond 118). Cuteness is of course not necessarily innocent in anime—but anti-corruption discourse could attempt to render it so in another kind of text. Instead, *Paprika* visualizes corruption structurally as part of the conditions of possibility of the narrative and not as simply localized in its antagonists. In this film even the most sincere dream of transparency has to be seen as interested, as necessarily taken up with given investments, without glossing it with a false purity or truth, perhaps the only way an ethical critique of neoliberal or postdevelopmental economic and social injustices can be staged.

III. "What about the rest of it?": Feeling exemplary[28]

In its psychotherapy mystery plot, *Paprika* illustrates transparency operating as a kind of moral compass or standard, met at the personal level by discarding or purging the unacceptable. This transparency as standard is also met, perhaps less cruelly but thoroughly ironically, by covering up the unacceptable in individuals and in personal lives. A further irony is that regardless of both these processes aimed at individuals, institutions continue to operate in completely nontransparent ways. In this sense as well, this is not

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[27] This verbal awkwardness holds in both the film and novel. In the latter it is explored in some detail in narrative passages, one of which describes Tokita's eyes as similar to those in the dolls and icons analyzed by cuteness theorists such as Ngai: "This sloppily obese man spoke in such an infantile tone that he seemed incapable of engaging in any proper conversation. As Director of Development for a leading motor company, Noda wouldn't normally have given him a second glance. But he somehow felt a liking for this man. It certainly helped that Noda gave preferential treatment to genius. More than anything, however, the man's huge eyes were limpid and quite beautiful. . . . He seemed lost in thought. *A pure man without a malicious bone in his body.* That was Noda's judgement as an expert in human observation" (Tsutsui 97).

[28] This phrasing draws on Heather Love's influential study, *Feeling Backward*.

a story uncritically or moralistically about locating goodness or corruption in a target or focal point. On the contrary, it poignantly references the production of the disposable and the foreclosed in the long march toward technological and social progress, and even in the dream of transparency itself.

At the climax of the film's opening dream sequence, the dreamer (Konakawa) is chasing a "perp," who appears to have already been shot, in a long hallway that fades to white at the vanishing point. Konakawa's dream ends as he rushes past the prone perp and jumps into the vanishing point. The screen fades out and a voice says, "What about the rest of it?" Much of his secret therapy with Paprika involves attempting to find out what this sentence refers to and the symbolic identity of the man he chases in the dream. The latter turns out to be his best friend in college, as he appeared in a chase seen from a movie they had shot together. Konakawa describes their unfinished film as child's play, an endless chase thereby linking his own youth to the colorful, chaotic moving imagery that shapes the excessive aesthetic of this film. The friend, now dead, is also a symbolic part of himself that had to be forgotten, and since that time he developed a phobia of the cinema. In the larger story, this source of his anxiety neurosis and panic attacks has several illuminating parallels.

With the possible exception of Tokita (a professional researcher in such a rarified position that he is unencumbered by considerations of application and consequences) all the main characters achieve exemplariness at the cost of a fraught relationship to others and/or an aspect of themselves that they have had to attempt to discard or hide. Moreover, these relationships are highlighted throughout the storyline: In addition to Konakawa and his childhood friend ("the other me"), there are Chiba and her secret avatar Paprika, as well as the elderly, paralyzed and proto-fascist Chairman, the most powerful antagonist, and his young sidekick and secret lover, the "dangerously handsome" Osanai, who operates as a kind of avatar for him (Tsutsui 13). The Chairman arguably has more control over real life Osanai than Chiba has over the virtual Paprika; however, the Chairman and Chiba are compared to each other in this regard, with the same remark from different characters but usually aimed at Chiba: "You remind me of a certain baldy I know."

The therapy of Konakawa (and Noda in the novel in a parallel plot) is presented in detail as he tries to discover the identity and meaning of his

doppelganger, as a kind of archetypal case study in exemplariness, involving the casting away of another character and part of the self to achieve a status both desired and expected of him. As presented in the therapy, the source of his anxiety includes two primary factors. First is competition within professional ranks and the accompanying extreme levels of stress: this is the capitalism factor as located in the present and in the globalizing economy. This factor is further exacerbated by the fact that the anxiety neurosis itself must be kept under wraps or it would damage their professional reputation as much as public knowledge of the experimental therapy would. Second, and much more centrally, is the poignantly drawn sacrifice of others and a part of his own capacities and desires. Most important, this sacrifice exists painfully alongside a strong sense of obligation to the discarded or disavowed subjects and desires: in Konakawa's storyline the question, "What about the rest of it?" is repeatedly invoked with great anxiety. I call this the normativity vs. obligation factor, which is unresolvable, diegetically located in memories of the Cold War period of the characters' youth, and accessible through dreams.[29]

At the end of the film as the therapy reaches its odd closure, the dream as the repository of what had been foreclosed and disposed of in the characters' future-oriented development makes its power felt and leaves its mark like a surreal hole in the reality of the present. Indeed after Paprika has subdued the schizophrenic dream parade and the Chairman, someone asks if they have all awakened yet or not as the camera pans across a cityscape now dotted with damage from the dream, resembling a city after a bombing. Even earlier, when Konakawa—leading the potentially revealing investigation after several of Chiba's colleagues suffer dangerous breakdowns—asserts that it is impossible to press charges against a dream, the therapy process he undergoes and the DC mini theft plot both present dreams and fiction as a powerful part of reality.

Moving forward into a successful future in this story means playing a valued role in national security and scientific progress outlined more globally. However, perhaps unexpectedly, in affective terms this kind of success is figured not at all as exuberance but as a lingering and painfully obligated attachment to and even disavowed shameful desire for what has been sacrificed in order for exemplary status to be achieved. On the contrary, rather than in the accomplishments of the present reality and its drive to create a

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[29] This obligation may be similar to "horizontal guanxi" as observed by Aihwa Ong in a study of neoliberal managerialism in Shanghai (235-9).

more advanced future, the pleasure the film conveys is in the vivid and dynamic, obsessively detailed moving-image dream material itself with all its terror and its odd temporality. This is evoked directly in the closing sequence where Konakawa, in a breakthrough moment in his therapy, finally goes to the theater on Paprika's recommendation. The camera pans past posters of Kon's three previous films and stops momentarily on a fourth poster for *Dreaming Kids*—the film Paprika recommended. The film ends as Konakawa, saying "one adult," buys a ticket. The *Dreaming Kids* poster shows three children standing together side by side. They are outdoors, gazing into the cloudy sky in the distance, and viewed from the back, so as film viewers we share their perspective. In a temporal twist, the movie's title and poster refers to a story just outside the frame of this narrative, a story that is both located in the future (as perhaps Kon's next film, in juxtaposition with the previous three) and addresses the obligation to what has been foreclosed in the past in order for the present to be.[30] In a sense, in buying the ticket, Konakawa has jumped into the vanishing point again as the screen fades to black this time. It is a provocative ending that avoids resolution, and by the final invocation of childhood it also gestures abruptly toward valuing "the rest of it." The psychotherapy mystery plot reveals that this value inhabits the present as well, but as a denial that causes a constitutional anxiety. In this insight, the importance of this text in thinking through transparency is most apparent. The story persistently values the unsuitable and recognizes the omnipresence of the impure, thereby rendering exemplariness ambivalent and the purity effects of anti-corruption untenable. This "falling short" is perhaps another type of hopeful failure (Ding 57) in the divisions that constitute the post-Cold War world.

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[30] In looking at what was foreclosed in the past in order for the present to be what it is, I am drawing on Linh U. Hua's analysis of Octavia Butler's much analyzed time-travel novel *Kindred*. Hua theorizes "speculative futurism" as a temporality that causes the protagonist to unwittingly accept the inevitability of the developmental history of global capitalism, as the novel dramatically illustrates how it is this history that has led to the protagonist's existence. Hua defines "speculative futurism" as a temporality of racialized capitalism: "Speculative time underscores a correlation between whiteness and futurity that is secured through contractual investments in the slave trade, investments that are sentimentalized into historical narrative by liberal philosophy as the developmental time of the subject" (391). Such a speculative futurist reading practice (by both characters and critics) misses what the science fiction temporality of the novel itself actually opens up: "temporal disunity leaves room for dynamic possibility, giving each enacted event the space for radical action" (400).

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Figures

1.

感觉就在这附近
I have a feeling he's near.

2.

自己不总是对的吧
Don't think you're always right.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.