Narratives and Memory: The Nanking Atrocity

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Narratives and Memory: The Nanking Atrocity

Abstract
Historical narratives and memories are highly-politicized and evolve in response to geopolitical developments. The Nanking Atrocity exemplifies the mutability and exploitation of historical narratives and public memory. Although the Atrocity occurred in the early stages of WWII and was adjudicated immediately following the conclusion of the war, it was not until several decades later, in the 1980s, that geopolitical shifts made the event relevant both domestically and internationally. By examining the factors that have influenced these narratives, it is possible to better comprehend the developments that have produced the highly-contested, contemporary Nanking Atrocity memories. The current international disputes between China and Japan, with the U.S. as a self-elected mediator, signify the consequences of public memory exploitation. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the factors that lead a nation to adopt public memory and construct historical narratives in order to overcome future obstacles in scholarship and international diplomacy.

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Senior Thesis

Narratives and Memory:
The Nanking Atrocity

by

E Caitlin Brown

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The report of the investigation undertaken as a Senior Thesis, to carry one course of credit in the Asian Studies Program

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ABSTRACT

Historical narratives and memories are highly-politicized and evolve in response to geopolitical developments. The Nanking Atrocity exemplifies the mutability and exploitation of historical narratives and public memory. Although the Atrocity occurred in the early stages of WWII and was adjudicated immediately following the conclusion of the war, it was not until several decades later, in the 1980s, that geopolitical shifts made the event relevant both domestically and internationally. By examining the factors that have influenced these narratives, it is possible to better comprehend the developments that have produced the highly-contested, contemporary Nanking Atrocity memories. The current international disputes between China and Japan, with the U.S. as a self-elected mediator, signify the consequences of public memory exploitation. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the factors that lead a nation to adopt public memory and construct historical narratives in order to overcome future obstacles in scholarship and international diplomacy.
DEDICATION

TO

All those who made this thesis possible, in large ways and small.
Shiwei Chen, for his constant guidance and patience, without which, this project would have never been actualized;
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“We see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic structure.”
John of Salisbury
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Shiwei Chen
Carla Arnell
Ying Wu
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Narratives and Memory: The Nanking Atrocity

Introduction

For all countries, the horrors of war become essential material in public memory construction, serving as interwoven threads in a national sense of identity. For both the Allies and the Axis nations, World War II had an irreparable impact on public memory. The brutal realities of this war remain constant in each nation’s collective memory of the era, as evidenced by the incredible attention that these events maintain in all spheres of society. World War II is a topic that is endlessly examined through scholarship and research and is a defining element in national education. The all-pervasiveness of World War II memory is demonstrated by the literary and cinematic obsession with these events, as the heroes and villains of the war are the focus of innumerable films, novels, and television shows.

Through public memory, the amalgamation of literary, cinematic, journalistic, and educational representations, a nation forms and reforms historical narratives. Although these narratives are constructed collectively through both official and unofficial sources, there is an undeniable rhetoric to these memories. The dynamic nature of public memory and historical narratives is evidenced by the Nanking Atrocity\(^1\), an event that has garnered significant international attention in the last several decades.

The proponents of historical narratives severely underexamine the fluidity of

\(^1\) This thesis will refer to the event as the Nanking Atrocity, although this title is less common than the Western “Rape of Nanking.” Given the political nature of most labels for the event, “Atrocity” is the least rhetorical, most accessible term of reference and will therefore be used subsequently. The nature of Nanking denominations will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter III.
these memories. Whether it be the popularity of certain memories or the very interpretations of events that fluctuate over time, there rarely exist any immutable, unchangeable national histories. Even such significant historical moments as the Holocaust, which now maintains a near ubiquitous placement in the memories of involved nations, are not ultimately impervious to the effects of time. The Nanking Atrocity exemplifies this variability; although the event occurred in the early stages of WWII and was adjudicated immediately following the conclusion of the war, Nanking Atrocity debates did not gain such international (or even domestic) attention until several decades later, when the shifting course of geopolitics made the event, once again, relevant. Economic and political developments within each nation necessitated the cultivation of a national identity. As this thesis will demonstrate, the pursuit of a unifying national identity led to evolving perceptions of the Atrocity in China, Japan, and the U.S. Ironically, these national identities are no more immutable than the historical narratives on which they are founded. Thus, popularized by works such as Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, the dynamics of Japan’s 1937 seizure of China’s Nationalist capital, Nanking, reentered the international consciousness and became a highly-contested topic. These debates over the nature of the invasion were imbued with a sense of outrage that was directed not only at the Japanese aggressors, but also at the forces that prevented prior knowledge of these war crimes. For, while some early post-WWII generations may have known peripherally about the Nanking Atrocity, China’s sufferings were largely obscured by the formal onset of World War II, the subsequent trials, and the Cold War. Internally, even Chinese society was preoccupied
with other domestic debacles that directly followed the conclusion of WWII, including the Nationalist-Communist civil war, the Great Famine, and the Cultural Revolution. These domestic challenges directed attention away from the Japanese atrocities and remained the major constructive (and destructive) force in Chinese national identity until the country’s political and economic status was secure enough to allow otherwise. Therefore, when Rape of Nanking memories were more widely publicized the 1980s and 90s by figures like Chang, the world responded with unexpected voracity.

This resurgence of Nanking memory instigated tensions between China and Japan, as many Atrocity texts criticized Japan’s supposed lack of official apology and the country’s revisionist tendencies in education and diplomacy. Many audiences were sympathetic to this belated outrage, and new scholarship concerning the event and its aftermath became increasingly common. In this context, the public memory reconstruction of the U.S., China, and Japan gained an international audience as each country asserted new interpretations of the events and furthered selected historical narratives. China began to present a narrative of victimhood in a forgotten Holocaust and one that is arguably worse, given its unspoken, unrecognized nature. Consequently, Japan became perceived as a revisionist aggressor, capable of shocking atrocities and unwilling to address its own dark wartime memories. The victim-aggressor narratives debated between China and Japan provided the U.S. with the role of “objective” witness, protector of the “truth,” and qualified arbiter.

As a result of the shifting tides of geopolitics, Nanking Atrocity memories are complex and dynamic and are affected by shifting economic concerns, political agendas,
and cultural misconceptions. Memory carries an individual and national importance, allowing for both personal and public reconciliation of tragedy. However, as the evolving and contested nature of valid, ethical Nanking commemoration demonstrates, the collectivization and politicization of memory reshapes historical understandings and thus implicates international relations. The staggering variety of “official” Nanking narratives reveals the manipulation of these tragic memories for evolving political aspirations and has undermined the stability of national identities. The current international disputes between China and Japan, with the U.S. as a self-elected mediator, signify the consequences of public memory exploitation. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the factors that lead a nation to adopt public memory and construct historical narratives in order to overcome future obstacles in scholarship and international diplomacy.
Chapter I: Immediate Reactions and the Tokyo Tribunals

Japan, similar to Germany, was involved in international trials for crimes committed during World War II. The Japanese parallel of the Nuremberg Trials, the International Military Tribunals for the Far East (IMFTE), commenced on May 3rd, 1946. The rulings concerning the Nanking Atrocity became the preeminent topic of the trials as Chinese victims and Japanese defendants testified in court. In his section of Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi’s collected scholarship, Timothy Brook reveals the ways in which the adjudication of the Nanking Atrocity at the trials began to concretize selected interpretations of the incident:

China regarded the incident as the most atrocious event of the war and highlighted the brutalities at Nanking among the cases that it submitted to the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC) between 1944 and 1946. The United States…had a different concern, which was to use the incident as a linchpin for its argument that the leaders of Japan conspired to commit war crimes throughout the region and throughout the war. As a consequence of this double interest, two Japanese were convicted as A-class war criminals and executed for ‘crimes against peace.’

The Tokyo Tribunals provided these three nations the opportunity to formalize their perceptions of Japan’s actions. As Takashi Yoshida notes in, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” the responses to the Nanking Atrocity during the war were far removed from the immediate post-war reflections of the Tokyo Tribunals. Generally, Chinese officials and civilians alike had looked past the atrocities committed in Nanking during the war as only a single example of greater aggressions at the time; similarly, in

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the midst of war, the majority of Japanese society had not fully contemplated the nature
of the crimes committed at Nanking but celebrated each victory against the Chinese.\(^3\)
Therefore, the trials serve as an important landmark in the construction of Nanking
Atrocity memory. However, although the committees at the tribunals reached a
conclusive ruling that found twenty-five Japanese defendants guilty of various crimes
and, more symbolically significant, sentenced seven Japanese officials to death, there
existed competing persuasive forces and procedural failings at the trials which would
later influence the formation of competing wartime memories.

While the Tokyo Tribunals are often considered to be the parallel for Germany’s
Nuremberg trials, there are several key distinctions between the two legal proceedings.
As Brook notes in his writing, the temporal contextualization of the tribunals was
significant: “Unlike Nuremberg, which judged German leaders expeditiously, Tokyo
dragged on for two and a half years. More to the point, Tokyo fell under the shadow of
the Cold War, trying to dispense justice after the political alignments that had enabled it
to be convened, had dissolved.”\(^4\) The proceedings of the trials, in which truths of a past
historical period were decided, coincided with the coming of a new historical milieu—the
Cold War. As adjudicators become temporally separated from the Atrocity, memories
and interpretations of the event became imbued with the social concerns of new political
realities. The rulings of the Tokyo Tribunals are therefore inextricable from the historical

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\(^4\) Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 150.
context in which they were decided. Furthermore, there were significant evidential issues present in the tribunal proceedings:

The principle source on which the prosecution relied for evidence regarding the Rape of Nanking was Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone. The sixty-nine documents in these books were generated by the German and American members of the International Committee (IC) for the Nanking Safety Zone (NSZ). During the first two months of the Japanese occupation, the IC sought to secure the safety of the Chinese population in Nanking. The books were published in 1939 and distributed worldwide in the hope of stimulating international support for China’s struggles against Japan. The effort would yield unexpected results after the war, for substantial portions of the books were read directly into the war crimes record. The prosecution solicited additional evidence from some of the American members of the IC, who were asked to testify, either in person or by written affidavit, about what they knew and experienced. The court’s reliance on their testimony meant that the IC was pivotal in shaping the tribunal’s perception of Japanese conduct during the capture of Nanking. The bench’s reconstruction of the event in its final judgements closely follows that account.5

The court’s elevated legal valuation of the IC transcripts as a primary source of evidence reveals the gradual formation of perpetuated narratives of American intervention. The observations of expats living in Nanking at the time of the Japanese occupation, including the words of now-celebrated notables such as Minnie Vautrin and John Rabe, were compiled and disseminated for the clear purpose of gaining sympathy for China’s sufferings and encouraging international intervention. These figures have become cemented in modern Nanking memory as martyrs and heroes for their actions. While the sincerity of their efforts is not contested, there remains a significant obstacle in accepting these observations as unbiased, well-informed, and viable for legal usage.

Tensions regarding the court’s decision are exemplified in the dissent of Radhabinod Pal. Although there were four tribunal members who opposed the majority

5 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 152.
ruling, Pal’s dissent is the most commonly referenced and evoked in Nanking Atrocity debates. Pal rejected the tribunal proceedings, arguing that “the guilt adhered not to the individuals who stood before the bench but to history, specifically the history of Western imperialism in Asia. Until that legacy was resolved, Western nations had no authority to hold Japan responsible for evils committed during the war.”

6 Pal viewed the trials as representative of a grander international power struggle that the U.S. was unqualified to adjudicate. It is important to note that, Pal, the main dissenter in the Tribunal’s ruling, was invited to serve as a representative of India; Brook implies that this was a symbolic gesture, as Pal and others invited to serve were victims of Japanese aggression and imperialism and therefore, theoretically, shared a common perspective. 7 However, despite this potential empathy for the Chinese victims of Japanese imperialist aggression, Pal could not justify the tribunal proceedings, which he considered to be little more than one-sided victor’s justice. For, while Pal recognized the reality of Japan’s brutality and the actuality of the event, he was “disturbed by the retrospective moral uses to which the prosecution put the event, prompting him to decline to capitalize ‘rape’ and to install the word in scare quotes when he used it. He preferred to speak in terms of ‘the Nanking Incident.’”

8 Thus, Pal’s dissent against the majority rulings are inextricably linked to his condemnation of China and the United States’ ends-justify-means memory reconstruction. Pal refused to agree with a sentencing that sought to draw a continuous thread among and serve as a blanket charge for Japan’s historical aggressions. Pal,

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6 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 150.
7 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 158.
8 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 159.
therefore, separated from the majority opinion on the grounds that Japan’s actions in Nanking could not necessarily be tied to official imperial orders in Japan and could not be considered the catalyst for other atrocities committed subsequently:

The Rape of Nanking was thus installed as the moment of origin for a long series of ‘similar atrocities’ stretching across Southeast Asia and into the Pacific. The continuity that the prosecution alleged between Nanking and subsequent Japanese war crimes proved that misdeeds were consistent and so must have emanated conspiratorially from the central government. The underlying goal of the American-dominated prosecution in arguing for the continuity, Pal believed, was to identify the mistreatment of American servicemen in the Pacific as being of the same category as the brutalization of Nanking residents.9

Although the motivations behind Pal’s dissent are similarly questioned, his distrust of the court’s rulings and the implications of these official, constructed Nanking Atrocity perceptions are not ungrounded. The ultimate success of the Tokyo Tribunals has become highly debated in recent years, as Brook notes:

Scholarly assessments since the 1970s have wondered whether Tokyo achieved anything more than victors’ justice. This sense of disrepute has led popular writers more recently to continue dismantling the Tokyo judgement, though by arguing in quite the other direction: not that the postwar victors’ judgements on Japan were too harsh, but that they were too weak; that Japan has still to bear its ‘legal burden,’ particularly for what happened in Nanking.10

Even such commonly referenced sources as the History Channel echo this sense of doubt, both in the American agenda and the lingering impressions of the trial, noting that “Some observers thought that Emperor Hirohito should have been tried for his tacit approval of Japanese policy during the war, but he was protected by U.S. authorities who saw him as a symbol of Japanese unity and conservatism, both favorable traits in the

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9 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 164.
10 Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 150.
postwar U.S. view.”11 From scholarly investigation to the most accessible online sources, uncertainty and inconclusiveness regarding the Tokyo outcomes is perpetuated. This sense of lingering reservation is perhaps the most significant distinction between the Nuremberg trials and the Tokyo Tribunals; while each platform allowed for the delegation of responsibility and blame and for the construction of official memory, the Tokyo Tribunals did not result in any long-term, meaningful reparations.

The effects of this doubt are evident in the instability of Nanking Atrocity memories. As Fujiwara Akira states in “The Nanking Atrocity: An Interpretive Overview” and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi notes in “The Messiness of Historical Reality,” the trial findings, including death tolls and agreements over monetary reparations, were formally agreed upon by both China and Japan through the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty: “Indeed, the Japanese text enjoins accepting the trials (saiban) as valid and binding.”12 For many decades after the war, there was relatively little debate between nations about appropriate Nanking memory. In his essay, Wakabayashi posits that the reasoning for this lack of reflection stemmed from the desire to divert attention away from domestic issues in China:

For classes branded ‘the black five antirevolutionaries’—capitalists, landlords, intellectuals, criminals, and KMT (right-wing) sympathizers—those other problems [Cultural Revolution, Great Leap Forward, the Great Famine] were certainly more recent than Japanese aggression and probably more painful too. Even females who had been raped or recruited in the war as ‘comfort women’ suffered persecution for allegedly consorting with the enemy. Thus, for more than thirty years after the war, Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but especially in the PRC, directed most of their wrath at ‘traitors to the Han race’ and class enemies—at other Chinese rather than Japanese.

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than at the Japanese. Terrible though it was, as massacres go in history, Nanking had been largely forgotten.\(^\text{13}\)

During these early post-war years, China had not yet collectivized and politicized Nanking memory in the pursuit of a unifying national identity. Rather, domestic power struggles focused attention inward, and the atrocities committed by Japan were largely overlooked by official groups. For those of whom the recollections of pain were still fresh—for instance, the forced sex slaves known as “comfort women”—there were few outlets to gain sympathy or reparation. Thus, in the early post-war years, the Atrocity was approached without the animosity that is a marked feature of modern Sino-Japanese debates. As Wakabayashi discusses in his essay, initial reflections on the incident revealed almost a shared sense of victimhood: “Both regimes [PRC and KMT] presumed that Japanese militarism had been hateful, but voiced little overt criticism on the grounds that ordinary Japanese, like ordinary Chinese, had been its victims.”\(^\text{14}\)

International perceptions of the major involved countries were complex given Japan’s own losses in World War II and the United States’ own acts of war crimes. In his article, “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” Joshua A. Fogel echoes arguments presented by Wakabayashi that even the perception of America as the heroic interventionist nation were not immediately adopted. Rather, and in stark contrast, the Chinese government perpetuated an intentionally negative image of America and the nation’s involvement during the Nanking Atrocity:

\[\ldots\text{the PRC has always hampered serious scholarship on history in order to control the interpretation of it. The PRC government also strategically exploits history}\]

against international enemies, and deploys it to inspire shame in potential trading partners. For example, it used the Atrocity as an ideological, albeit irrational, anti-U.S. surrogate during the Korean War. In 1952, the PRC regime tried to implicate Americans in the Atrocity by claiming that the International Committee (IC)—an organization of Westerners who actually saved many thousands of Chinese civilians in the Nanking Safety Zone (NSZ)—was a gang of Western imperialists complicit with the Japanese invaders. The PRC would again use the Atrocity during the 1960s to criticize the U.S. role in building up bases in Japan.\footnote{Joshua A. Fogel, “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” in The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 260.}

This depiction of American involvement is corroborated in Wakabayashi’s essay, as well, which reads,

The PRC in the 1950s also insinuated complicity by U.S. residents in Nanking who reputedly ‘entertained themselves with beef, roast duck, sweet potatoes and other fresh food’ while the invaders ran amok. The PRC also accused U.S. residents of creating a refugee area, the Nanking Safety Zone (NSZ), so that Chinese could be more easily killed. Today, a different PRC line depicts those same Americans, plus Nazi Party member and ‘good German’ John Rabe, as heroic friends of China who rescued Nanking citizens from slaughter.\footnote{Wakabayashi, “The Messiness of Historical Reality,” 4.}

While such key Nanking texts like Chang’s The Rape of Nanking famously celebrate the Western protection of innocent Chinese against Japanese invaders, thereby popularizing this narrative of involvement, history reveals more complicated, dynamic, and inconsistent representations throughout the post-war decades. Brook asserts the implications of these complex Nanking memories in his article, arguing that these memories have ultimately been more detrimental than beneficial to each society in overcoming historical differences. Rather than attempt to bridge identification separations between groups, Brook argues that these instances of denial or vengeance ‘“thicken’ conceptions of who they are by packing the event with particularized cultural identities.
and exclusive collective memories through which they can honor themselves and disdain others. These are unilateral histories, not histories of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{17} In order for memory to serve its proponents, Brook argues, it must be reflective of a more collective interpretation of events.

While the validity or historical accuracy of these representations is not the subject of this project, the construction of collective memory and the factors that influenced the process of remembering this event are. Each nation’s individual pursuit for a concrete, inviolable wartime memory demonstrates the fragility and vulnerability of historical consciousness. The fragmentation of Nanking memories and interpretations can be traced to the Tokyo Tribunals, which played a monumental role in the concretization of Atrocity narratives. However, these concretizations are inextricable from the historical context of the Tribunals. As the trials were temporally separated from the event, the rulings that secured Atrocity interpretations were imbued with the concerns of new political realities and historical junctures like the Cold War. The well-intentioned search for “truth” in Atrocity remembrance allows for the reconstruction of these memories, a process which is steeped in the context of historical differences and contemporary goals. These events are thus dislocated from the only context in which they were ever sanctified and have, consequently, become the symbolic placeholder for larger international debates.

\textsuperscript{17} Brook, “Radhabinod Pal on the Rape of Nanking,” 173.
Chapter II: Major Issues

This thesis does not aim to participate in the factual disputes regarding the Nanking Atrocity; an excess of scholarship is already devoted to the study of these elements, with little progress in the unification of international interpretations of the event. However, despite the obstacles posed by discussion of these factual issues, it is essential to establish a general understanding of the topics in order to analyze the rhetorical construction and reconstruction of Nanking memory. These foundational topics include naming of the event and death tolls. While contestation over death toll figures represents a battle over facts, the issue of naming reveals a more implicit argument about the nature of the Atrocity. Although these issues may initially appear minor, debates over death toll figures and proper referents dominate Nanking scholarship and have, unfortunately, resulted in increased tensions between China and Japan. Furthermore, the reality of Nanking scholarship is that debate over such fundamental factors as naming and fatalities often impedes reconciliation or more fruitful analysis of the event. Thus, examination of these topics provides insight as to the challenges of Nanking scholarship and demonstrates the ambiguity of Nanking memory.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter’s analysis of memory formation in the early post-war years, the various contributing elements in Nanking narratives are characterized by an openness to interpretation. An immediate issue posed by the lack of clarity and conclusiveness in the Tokyo Tribunals is as fundamental as the naming of the event; as a result of the varying Atrocity narratives presented at the trials, no singular term was ever used to address the event. The Nanking Atrocity is thus referred to by a
myriad of variations: the Rape of Nanking, the Nanking Incident, the Nanking Holocaust, the Nanking Atrocity, and the Nanking Massacre, to name a few. While the issue of naming may appear superficial in nature, there is an important rhetorical significance to the various ways in which the event is referred. Generally, different nomenclature for the event reflect ideological distinctions; the variety of terms that nations use to refer to the Atrocity reveals the variety of perceptions. For example, “Incident” is often considered to be reflective of a nation’s unrecognition of the event given the term’s generality. From the perspective of Chinese scholars, the Japanese use of this unspecific term implies an avoidance of the topic. However, “Incident” is not the only term used by the Japanese in reference to the Atrocity; other variations include the “Massive Butchery,” which has been adopted by some Japanese historians in order to denote the shockingly senseless brutality of Japanese soldiers.18 “Rape” is a term that highlights the rampant sexual abuse of Japanese troops against Chinese women; this term became widely popular internationally, as Akira notes, due to the Tokyo Tribunal focus on criminal treatment of civilians:

…..the ‘Rape of Nanking,’ as it was first called in 1937-38, became known the world over because of the huge number of rapes and mass murders committed against civilians. These atrocities took center stage at the Tokyo war crimes trials where Chinese victims and foreign witnesses testified, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) emphasizes the issue today by seeking out ever more victims and witnesses. Thus, crimes against the general civilian population remains the key point in the debate over Nanking.19

The term “Rape of Nanking” both establishes and perpetuates a standard memory of the event by prioritizing atrocities committed against innocent civilians. As noted in Chapter I, tribunal committee member Radhabinod Pal rejected this politicized naming, instead choosing to refer to the events as the “Nanking Incident.” However, despite his efforts to adopt a more politically-neutral form of naming, “Incident” has itself become generally recognized as a revisionist form of address. Therefore, despite his intentions, Pal’s lexical choice has only further contributed to the rhetorical memory of the event and its current presentations. An even more obviously rhetorical framing of the event is constructed through the use of the term “holocaust.” Popularized by Chang’s The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II, the sensitive nature of this form of address has exacerbated the tensions surrounding Atrocity debates. Wakabayashi examines the historical usage of the term “Holocaust” and the rhetorical influences that led to its appropriation:

Only in the 1970s did ‘holocaust’—which, with a small h, had generically denoted calamities involving fire—become ‘the Holocaust’…. ‘The Holocaust’ became a template for ‘the Ta-t’u’-sha’—also upper cased with a definite article—standing for the Nanking Atrocity, and by extension, for Japanese war crimes in China that demand post hoc individual compensation. As with “Rape,” “Holocaust” denotes a specific political interpretation of the events. The use of this term in reference to the Nanking Atrocity illustrates a larger argument that not only posits a genocidal element to the Nanking murders but also elevates the cross-cultural significance of the events to that of the Holocaust. Patrizia Violi notes the rhetorical significance of these various forms of address in her article, “Educating for

Nationhood: A Semiotic Reading of the Memorial Hall for Victims of the Nanking Massacre by Japanese Invaders,” claiming that “Lexical choice is obviously an important way of categorizing the event and transmitting conceptions of it.”21 The highly politicized and rhetorical nature of the naming of the Nanking Atrocity demonstrates the complexity of the topic and remains a substantial, if comparatively superficial, element in Nanking debates.

Perhaps the most common and most symbolic topic in Nanking scholarship and debate is the issue of death tolls. Since the Nanking Atrocity was situated in the grander context of the Second Sino-Japanese war, there remains difficulty in determining an accurate death toll estimate. Although a death toll was initially established and agreed upon by involved nations at the Tokyo Tribunals, the figure has been a topic of contention between Japan and China since the 1980s with little in the way of new, fruitful scholarship. The renewed interest in the death toll figures in China and Japan has stemmed in part from the lack of clarity regarding important distinctions. For instance, the Tokyo Tribunals failed to set in clear, unambiguous terms, whether the death toll estimate includes non-civilians. In the 1980s, Japanese revisionist textbooks referred to the event as an “illusion,” given the lack of clear source material to corroborate Chinese claims and figures. In response, the PRC issued statements denouncing this inadmission of wrongdoing and asserting a new death toll that exceeded the previously agreed upon figure of 200,000 to 300,000 casualties over the course of a five-month period temporally

and stretching geographically from Shanghai to Nanking; here, Wakabayashi argues, “The tacit distinction between ‘death tolls’ and ‘massacre-victim tolls’ disappeared, so that ‘over 300,000’ now stood for nonbelligerents murdered in the city and excluded troops killed in action from Shanghai to Nanking in August to December.” This new representation of death toll figures led to an onslaught of international debate between China and Japan as scholars and non-scholars alike contributed what they considered to be the more accurate assessment of Chinese fatalities. From an outside perspective, this shift in the Chinese manner of conceptualizing the death toll (from including soldiers to representing solely civilian deaths) reveals the vagueness of the original figures and presents important questions regarding the assessment of damages to human life: should the death toll estimates include non-civilians? Furthermore, how many Chinese soldiers died on active duty, and how many POW soldiers were killed? In response to such questions, investigation during the trials and scholarship in the following decades have sought to locate exactly Japanese Imperial Army orders or definitions of “POW.” Although Akira finds clear evidence that Japanese soldiers knowingly violated international codes of POW treatment, there are additional factors that impact perceptions of the death toll debate, such as the crucial delineating factor of geographical and temporal boundaries. The death toll figures are often contested because temporal and geographical boundaries for the incident were never formally established. Although the Atrocity is considered the Nanking Atrocity, death toll estimates increase and decrease depending on whether similar atrocities in neighboring villages are considered and

whether the pre-occupation casualties are considered.

Furthermore, many contest the death figures on the grounds that not all damages can be attributed to the Japanese invaders. For instance, there were crimes committed internally between Chinese groups: “Even the leftist Kasahara Tokushi admits that T’ang Sheng-chih, the Chinese commander at Nanking, ordered some of his units to shoot and kill others that tried to flee. Deniers also cite pro-Chinese wartime Western journalists who reported that much of the death and carnage had resulted from Chinese earth-scorching and dyke blasting tactics, or from KMT rapacity that caused mass starvation.”

Even less commonly analyzed are the Chinese civilian deaths that can be attributed to Americans: “….severe collateral damage resulted from U.S. air raids on Japanese targets in Chinese cities, the worst of which was in December 1944, when eighty-four B-29s indiscriminately attacked Hankow with incendiary bombs, causing fires that lasted three days.” From these factors, it is clear that the international debate concerning death toll figures is, in many ways, futile. The lack of attention paid to the various instances of American- or Chinese-caused fatalities during the period reflects a disinterest in the “truth” beyond the value of perpetuating a symbolic argument. Although there is value to determining a realistic death toll, this topic is often used as a shorthand in or an introduction to debates about the larger issues of the Atrocity. Furthermore, arguments over death tolls have been notorious by groups that use this issue symbolically in order to assert a hierarchy of suffering in WWII history. By arguing for the upward revision of

previously-established death tolls, these groups attempt to fortify beyond any counterargument China’s victim status. While China certainly was victimized during WWII, the main proponents of death toll arguments often undermine real scholarly efforts to determine the number of fatalities, thus demonstrating the symbolic nature of this topic in many Atrocity debates.

The issues of naming and death tolls reflect the general ambiguity and inconclusiveness in understandings of the Nanking Atrocity. Given the fundamental nature of these topics within the larger context of Atrocity debates, it is important to recognize not only the complexity of these issues but their lack of transparency and scholarship as well. The rhetorical implementation of these various sub-arguments demonstrates the seemingly symbolic quality of many Nanking disagreements as well as inconsistency and instability in the foundations of Nanking Atrocity memory.
Chapter III: Wartime Reporting and Journalistic Interpretations

In the evaluation of Atrocity memory construction, wartime reporting plays an invaluable role. Wartime reporting, like contemporary memorializations of the events, presents purposive interpretations of the Nanking Atrocity. Furthermore, changes in journalistic depictions of Japanese actions reflect the shifts in national and political goals, just as the later shifts in Nanking memory formation represent the flux of international relations. However, unlike the later platforms for Nanking memory construction, wartime reporting reflects the evolving goals of each nation concurrent with the unfolding of the events. These interpretations are cemented in history and can serve as reference points for the modern interpretations of the Nanking Atrocity and in the examination of the ways in which national goals have influenced the development of Atrocity memory.

Throughout the course of the war, Chinese, U.S., and Japanese coverage of the events evolved. The Japanese invasion of major Chinese cities pushed news outlets into the mainland. With this diffusion of the country’s foremost reporters and the destruction of resources, the accessibility of information about Japanese actions decreased. So dislocated from reliable wartime coverage, the journalist’s developing understandings of the war led to shifting public perceptions of Japanese aggressions. In some instances, Western reports and English-language news outlets covered Japanese atrocities in greater detail than their Chinese counterparts. Consequently, Japanese, Chinese, and Western domestic reports of the war were responsive to outside, international publications detailing the events: Chinese journalists responded to Western and Japanese reports; Japan responded to Western and Chinese reports; Western reports responded to Chinese
and Japanese publications. Thus, in order to comprehend the evolution of Atrocity perceptions, the development of wartime interpretations of Japanese actions, documented through journalistic reports, must be examined internally for each country and within the larger context of international coverage.

Even though wartime reporting does not reflect Nanking “memories” so much as the immediate international responses to the events, these sources became instrumental in later memory construction and critical analysis. In his section of Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi’s text, Takashi Yoshida argues that an important component of Nanking denial is the observation that “the Western media in 1937-38 rarely mentioned Japanese misdeeds at Nanking….In sum, the argument goes, there is no documented proof of a Nanking Atrocity that dates from the wartime era when it reputedly took place; therefore, the event never really occurred.”²⁵ Clearly, the nature of wartime Nanking coverage is influential to the modern debates regarding the events. However, as Yoshida notes, there are journalistic records that prove not only that the Atrocity occurred, but that each country reported on the events contemporaneously. Although it may seem unnecessary to highlight that wartime reporting proves (with some margins of error) the actuality of the Atrocity, this is an important recognition given modern Nanking denial within sects of Japanese society.

Furthermore, these journalistic interpretations of the events, as Yoshida argues, share another important commonality—the reflection of political and social aspirations: “During the Asia-Pacific War of 1931-45, ethnocentrism, nationalism, national interests,

and demonization of the enemy heavily influenced American, Chinese, and Japanese views of atrocities in Nanking. Western and Asian wartime reporting demonstrate that the collectivization of memory is goal-oriented in nature and that these narratives are constructed using preexisting interpretive templates of political or social values. Thus, from these journalistic representations of the Nanking Atrocity, later cultural devices such as textbooks, monuments, films, and literature found material for their own remembering of the wartime period, thereby demonstrating the transmissive and accumulative nature of memory construction. The implications of these early stages of memory formation cannot be undermined, as these “shared” experiences become the foundations of national identity, wielded to justify the consequences of political aspirations and the manifestations of nationalism.

**Chinese Wartime Reporting:**

Despite Japanese claims about the lack of official, un-biased coverage of the events in Nanking, there is evidence of regular Chinese reporting during the period, although these reports differ significantly from later interpretations of the war. As Parks Coble notes in his article, “The Legacy of China’s Wartime Reporting, 1937-1945: Can the Past serve the Present?,” the invasion of Japanese forces created a national drive for journalistic coverage even despite logistical setbacks:

Japan’s invasion of China in the summer of 1937 initially dealt a devastating blow to China’s publishing industry. Not only were facilities destroyed, but the Japanese occupation of coastal China forced most writers and publishers inland….Yet the war stimulated public demand for news. Despite all of the destruction and disruption, journals and newspapers continued to be published, often from temporary locations.

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26 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 262.
as Chinese forces retreated. The public’s thirst for war coverage elevated the war correspondent to the peak of the journalistic profession. Even heretofore literary figures began to turn to wartime reporting and propaganda work during the national crisis.27

From the early years of the Second-Sino Japanese war, then, journalism was an invaluable resource in educating the Chinese public about Japanese actions and beginning to formalize perception of the unfolding events. Yoshida references regional newspapers like the Hankow Ta-kung-pao, which began publishing details of the Japanese approach as early as the autumn of 1937,28 demonstrating the pervasiveness of war coverage. Significantly, this journalistic overage existed despite the fragmented nature of China’s political sphere: there is evidence of both KMT and Communist Party wartime reporting, even specifically of the Nanking Atrocity: “On 10 March 1938, the KMT regime broadcast in Japanese a report entitled, ‘Barbaric Acts by the Imperial Army’ that more or less repeated the Hankow Ta-kung-pao reports….One of the earliest Chinese citations of the Nanking Atrocity appeared in a CCP weekly published at Hankow, the Ch’un-chung, dated 1 January 1938. It reported, though in a highly garbled fashion, the 100-man killing contest….”29 With the progressing movement of Japanese forces into major Chinese territories, this journalistic coverage provided crucial information to the public. However, this coverage has a greater significance to contemporary debates about the Nanking Atrocity than its role as proof of the existence of Japanese cruelties; wartime reports of the Nanking Atrocity present a departure from the more widely-known

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interpretations of Iris Chang or other leading figures in modern Nanking memory revival. China’s wartime interpretations of Japanese atrocities present a heroic narrative of resistance rather than the tales of Chinese victimization that dominate contemporary reflections. In order to better assess the complexities of modern Nanking scholarship and debates, it is important to examine the war-era representations of the Nanking Atrocity.

The nature of Chinese wartime reporting can be understood as the product of two national goals: to maintain morale in the long, brutal onslaught of Japan’s invasion, against which Chinese forces struggled to maintain ground, and to encourage increasingly-necessary Western support and sympathy. The former goal was manifested through a “victor” or “hero” narrative that existed in the early postwar years but is all but nonexistent in modern representations of the Nanking Atrocity. The latter goal shares comparatively more similarities with modern representations of the events and must be examined in the context of Western wartime depictions of Japanese actions.

To maintain the narrative of a heroic resistance, Chinese wartime reporters shouldered the burden of not only informing the public but serving as a propagandistic tool as well. The strategies used to achieve both goals simultaneously is worthy of further scholarship, as the optimistic spin on wartime efforts became increasingly difficult as Chinese forces suffered a mostly-unbroken stream of military setbacks in these years. As Coble examines in his article, this responsibility led most publications to assert the prowess of the Chinese military and the resilience of the country in the wake of Japanese cruelty.\textsuperscript{30} In his article, Coble references two publications, \textit{Kangzhan sanrikan} (The War

of Resistance Semiweekly) and *Nahan* (War Cry), both of which framed coverage of Japanese advances within portrayals of China’s heroic and continuous resistance.31 These journals, created with the intent of commending the country’s wartime spirit, demonstrate national recognition of the need for public optimism. Furthermore, as Coble argues, this journalistic optimism was not always ungrounded:

The peak of the heroic resistance approach came with China’s victory at Taierzhuang (Shangdong). After months of losses and retreats, a genuine battlefield win breathed new life into Chinese reporting on the war. Taierzhuang was thus a genuine psychological boost for those who had been trying to put the best possible spin on China’s earlier setbacks. The Chinese press had established ‘heroic resistance’ as the dominant narrative in the treatment of the war and now there was an actual battlefield victory. Even as Chinese forces retreated (Taierzhuang proved a very temporary success), the press tried to put the news in a positive light. ‘Long-term resistance’ became the new battle cry.32

It is possible that the Chinese success at Taierzhuang can, to some degree, be attributed to the constant production of uplifting wartime coverage. However, from a modern perspective, this optimism is complicated by the long-term militaristic success of Japanese forces in China. As Chinese forces continued to retreat, the logic of presenting militaristic setbacks as victories, or at least in imbuing these retreats with a sense of unconquerability, lessened dramatically. Coble reconciles this consistent and somewhat misleading positive representation of events and China’s continued retreat, arguing that this journalistic framing was not altogether undeserved:

It might seem odd that Chinese writers would try to portray the early war era as a ‘victory’ in the face of the long retreat. Yet there was more to this stance than simply the need to keep up morale. Many believed that despite the costs, fighting back was

a major step for China, especially when viewed against the nonresistance policy following Japan’s seizure of the northeast in September 1931.33

Given the history of Sino-Japanese conflict, China’s pursuit of resistance might therefore justify the extent of wartime optimism. This wartime spin of Chinese militaristic must then, like so many other facets of the Nanking Atrocity issue, be viewed in the larger historical context of Chinese-Japanese relations. Removed from the context of Japan’s occupation and China’s political fragmentation, the wartime reporting of Japan’s aggression may appear to misrepresent and distort Chinese losses to the public; in the light of these factors, though, China’s attempt to hold any ground against the Japanese forces can be viewed as an important historical moment. While Coble presents a strong argument for the justification of misleadingly positive reports, this notion of self-congratulation does not explain the proliferation and intentional persistence of Chinese narratives of victory. From the perspective of modern Nanking debates, this type of reporting, pervasive even during the Atrocity itself, problematizes the Chinese arguments about the shared national pain resulting from the specific event. If events like the Atrocity were overlooked or minimized in the pursuit of morale-boosting journalism, then the general recognition of the event and resulting widespread, collective suffering during the wartime era is contestable.

Ultimately, as Yoshida notes, Chinese reporting during the Second Sino-Japanese war did not differ in any significant manner from the nationalistic wartime reporting of other involved countries. Chinese publications can be problematized in the context of

modern debates but were not far removed from the goal-oriented journalism of Japan and the U.S. As Yoshida argues,

The tone of these Chinese reports was little different from wartime patriotic news accounts in other nations. These reports uncritically supported China’s military and political leaders, while cheering the deaths of Japanese troops and denouncing Japanese atrocities. On 17 December, the first reports of random Japanese killings and arson began to appear. Then, on the twenty-fifth, the press confirmed the previous report of Japanese atrocities in Nanking, including rape and looting; it estimated that 50,000 male refugees under forty years of age had been slaughtered after the city had fallen. This Chinese news writer stressed that Japanese atrocities in Nanking had produced outrage not only in China, but also abroad; and he also pointed out the hypocrisy of the Japanese government, which bore guilt for killing tens of thousands of innocent Chinese civilians while claiming to fight to establish eternal peace in East Asia.\(^{34}\)

Despite the inconsistencies that Chinese wartime journalism pose to modern Nanking Atrocity debates for its depictions of heroism and resilience in the face of Japanese victories, this manner of reporting is not specific to China. Regardless of the wartime logic of China’s optimistic reporting, this “heroic resistance” narrative demonstrates the evolution of Chinese interpretations of the Nanking Atrocity. Furthermore, China’s international discussions concerning the event in the wartime era reveal another significant development in Chinese Atrocity representations.

As previously mentioned, a crucial, secondary goal of Chinese reporting was to garner international sympathy and support. As the benefits of optimistic reporting diminished and Chinese losses increased, international aid became necessary to China’s victory. Yoshida examines this distinction between domestic Chinese reporting and international presentations of the Atrocity, stating,

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\(^{34}\) Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 250.
In wartime China, the KMT government did not regard the outrage in Nanking as the symbol of Japanese wartime cruelty, as the postwar People’s Republic has come to do. Instead, Chinese thought of Nanking as but one of innumerable Japanese atrocities in China at the time. Although Chinese delegates to the League of Nations did mention Nanking explicitly in protesting Japanese war crimes, they chose to emphasize Japan’s use of chemical weapons and air raids on open cities because these types of atrocities, they reckoned, would more likely win world sympathy and aid.35

The impacts of this concern for Western aid are less apparent at the general-public level than at the higher-level of Chinese delegates who would have had the opportunity to speak before Western officials; in an effort to gain Western sympathy without creating domestic distress over Japanese advances, most Chinese reports continued to discuss the acts of aggression through the lens of continued resilience:

Apart from arousing Chinese sentiment, Chinese writers sought to gain sympathy for China’s cause overseas by widely publicizing Japanese atrocities. Within China itself, however, most of the Salvationist writers always tied reports of victimhood with the call for continued resistance. These writers did not want to stress China’s helplessness before the Japanese onslaught. This approach is evident in some of the early descriptions of the Rape of Nanjing which appeared in the summer of 1938. The writer Liu Liangmo, for instance, published an article in the June 29, 1938 issue of Kangzhan sanrikan entitled “Kuai ba gaoyang biancheng tie de duwu” (Quickly take these lambs and make them into iron soldiers). The author, who was based in Changsha, was reacting to a detailed publication of Japanese atrocities issue by a local newspaper. He reprinted two photographs from the Rape of Nanjing….These images, no doubt new and shocking when first published, have since become so widely reproduced in photographic collections on Japanese atrocities in China as to become iconic. Indeed, Iris Chang reproduced both in her bestselling The Rape of Nanking. Chang supplies commentary for both which is actually very similar to the descriptions Liu had used in 1938.36

As the Japanese invasion progressed and China’s militaristic defense faced increasing challenges, this secondary goal of securing Western attention was pursued

35 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 262.
with greater urgency and depictions of heroic resistance gradually lessened.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, wartime reporting of the Nanking Atrocity differs from modern perceptions of the event not only in the sense that coverage generally depicted an optimistic Chinese perseverance, but that the general perception of the Atrocity was that, in the Chinese mentality, these events did not constitute the most noteworthy atrocity committed by the Japanese. This realization both exemplifies the extent of wartime horrors faced by the Chinese and problematizes the country’s later promotion of this event as the ultimate, undeniable symbol of Japanese imperialist aggression. As evidenced by her appropriation of the images earlier used by Liangmo, Chang reconstructs Nanking memory in a manner that overlooks China’s original perceptions of the event. Her title refers to the Atrocity as the forgotten Holocaust of WWII but fails to identify the role that China played in this forgetting. Although Chang uses the same material as Liangmo to forward her argument about Chinese victimization, she does not provide readers with the invaluable context and nature of the original Chinese arguments regarding the Nanking Atrocity. While Japanese revisionism deserves such denouncement, China’s own un-acknowledgement of the event should be examined as critically.

Furthermore, even when Chinese journalistic reports depicted Japanese cruelties, this presentation was not for the sake of unifying the Chinese public in a sense of victimization, as is the goal of modern reflections, but was rather accomplished in the pursuit of attracting Western aid. Usually, Chang-ian perceptions of Japanese brutality stemmed not from Chinese journalists but from Western writers and English-language

\textsuperscript{37} Coble, “The Legacy of China’s Wartime Reporting,” 444.
sources. As Yoshida notes, an English-language newspaper operating in Shanghai, the *China Press*, published reports following the Japanese invasion that emphasized the inhumanity of Japan’s actions and exacerbated preexisting views of Japanese society:

> These depredations in Nanking reinforced in the mind of this *China Press* writer images of Japanese lawlessness and barbarism that stemmed from earlier news reports of Japanese planes having bombed the USS *Panay* and HMS *Ladybird* and of having conducted indiscriminate air attacks on open cities such as Canton. Contemporaneous Chinese reports of Japanese depredations at Nanking thus reaffirmed and exacerbated earlier impressions of Japanese rapacity.  

> Given the frenzy of WWII, it is impossible to extract perceptions of these domestic events from the wider context of international warfare. For the *China Press* writer, it is clear that the Japanese atrocities committed in Nanking only served to reaffirm existing perceptions of the nation. These early discussions of the Nanking Atrocity as presented in the *China Press* writings are, therefore, imbued with a tone of Western anti-Japanese sentiment. Capitalizing on negative U.S. perceptions of Japan became a guidepost for Chinese diplomacy during the Second Sino-Japanese war. In their effort to gain Western support, Chinese delegates emphasized issues that a U.S. audience could empathize with. These efforts and the influence of Western concerns are exemplified in the experiences of Wellington Koo, or Koo Wei-jun, first delegate for the Republic of China in the League of Council.  

39 Koo’s history of political roles deserves attention: he was the Chinese Minister to Mexico and the United States; he served as a delegate in the Paris Peace Conference; he was the Chinese Beiyang Government’s Foreign Minister, Finance Minister, interim premier, prime minister, and interim

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38 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 250.
president; he was the Chinese Ambassador to Britain and the United States; and he played an instrumental role in the formation of the League of Nations. In a 1938 meeting, Koo “condemned Japan’s ‘cruel and barbarous conduct’ in Nanking and elsewhere” and “decried Japan’s indiscriminate bombings of open cities. His information about Nanking came from the New York Times by way of the Times of London, and he quoted from those reports to accuse the Japanese army” of its crimes.

Significantly, Koo relied heavily on these Western journalistic sources to present his case. In addition to the New York Times article discussing the Nanking Atrocity, Koo also referenced “a separate article in the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post to estimate 20,000 Chinese civilian deaths and assaults on thousands of women.” From this information, it is clear that there existed an interplay of Chinese and Western reporting.

In his efforts to persuade Western delegates at the League Council meetings to support China, Koo relied on Western coverage of the Nanking Atrocity. As with the China Press articles, Koo’s reliance on these international discussions of the events presents issues. If Chinese journalists and officials must refer to Western media in their discussions of Japanese atrocities, then there exists a possibility of inaccuracy, if not biased misrepresentation, in these reports. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi examines this issue of Western-Chinese wartime reporting in his chapter, “The Nanking 100-Man Killing Contest Debate, 1971-75.” The 100-man killing contest represents a major topic in modern Nanking debates and is considered symbolic of the mindless excessiveness of

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Japanese brutality. The 100-man killing contest was an important factor in the Tokyo Tribunal decisions and the excessive violence demonstrated in this event influenced rulings concerning Japanese culpability. However, the legitimacy of the issues is complicated by the fact that initial discussions of the event originated not in Chinese sources, but in Western coverage that responded to Japanese reports of the spree:

Chinese first learned of this ‘killing contest’ from English-language articles in the Japan Advertiser on 7 and 14 December 1937. Harold J. Timperley, an Australian reporter for the Manchester Guardian, reprinted these as ‘Appendix F: The Nanking ‘Murder Race’ in his 1938 document collection, What War Means; and, further-redacted accounts of the contest appeared in the 1 January 1938 issue of the China Weekly Review and other wartime Chinese publications, both Nationalist and Communist.43

While this manner of coverage may potentially benefit the range and immediacy of dissemination, this proliferation of information stemming from a singular, non-native source can pose issues of accuracy. As Wakabayashi notes, journalistic inaccuracies problematize the authenticity of this event and have led to debates between China and Japan about the punishment of the reported contest leaders:

The Japan Advertiser articles—quoted by Timperley and circulated in China—held that a ‘murder race’ took place between Kuyung and Purple Mountain (Tzuchinshan). These articles would be crucial as evidence in executing Noda Tsuyoshi (not Takeshi or Iwao) and Mukai Toshiaki for war crimes at the NMT. In works still in print as of July 2006, the late Iris Chang, Erwin Wickert, Jonathan D. Spence, and others cite these articles as historically factual…..One defendant, Noda, protested that the contest never even took place. Instead, he said, reporters for the Tokyo nichi-nichi shinbun—which ran the original articles later translated and digested in the Japan Advertiser—fabricated the story after the other defendant, Mukai, had bragged about the imaginary feats. For his part, Mukai insisted that he never really killed anyone but boasted that he had, hoping the publicity would attract ‘a better wife’ after he returned to Japan.44


The Chinese understandings of the 100-man killing contest stemmed not from Chinese sources, or even from China-based Western reporters; this coverage stemmed from an English-language publication that derived its information from a single Japanese report. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated in this chapter’s examination of Japanese wartime reporting, this publication operated under the same purpose of Chinese publications during the war era: glorifying and often overemphasizing national victories and to dehumanize the opponent. Consequently, the authenticity of these reports must be evaluated in the context of Japan’s nationalistic, goal-driven framing of journalistic coverage. Although Koo’s reliance on non-Chinese sources does not pose nearly the same challenges to modern Nanking debates as the 100-man killing contest reports do, it remains imperative in Nanking scholarship to examine the ways in which these initial depictions of Japanese aggressions were influenced by national goals and potentially subjected to factual inaccuracies.

Koo continued to decry Japanese aggressions despite the unreceptiveness of his League audience. He implored delegates to recognize the universal threat posed by Japanese success, arguing “that Japan was a threat not only to China, but also to the West.”

However, as the years of the Second Sino-Japanese war continued, Koo’s efforts did not secure the intended economic aid from the League, a goal of even greater importance to Chinese officials than that of acquiring international outrage and empathy:

It was essential for Chinese government leaders not only to score moral points, but also to secure practical aid from a reluctant League. This is why they sent a cable prior to the assembly meeting that instructed Koo to take pains highlighting Japan’s inhumane assault. But they did so in the context of that day. Thus, Chiang Kai-shek

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demanded that Koo tender a communique to the League Secretariat for circulation among member states in order to publicize as widely as possible Japan’s use of poison gas.\textsuperscript{46}

As with contemporary discussions of the Nanking Atrocity, early Chinese assertions of Japanese aggression catered to a wider, international audience in the pursuit of support. Like Koo’s careful emphasis of Japan’s use of poison gas, Iris Chang’s construction of Nanking memory frames the event in a similarly rhetorical manner. In “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” Fogel explains the potential motivation behind Chang’s choice in presentation:

….the late Iris Chang….based her plea for international recognition of the Atrocity on what she presents as irrefutable numbers. She pointed out in an interview on American television—repeated in a \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} interview—that the figure of 300,000 victims surpasses the combined death toll in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Her implicit aim here is to establish a hierarchy of victimhood with China on top, \textit{especially because most Westerners cringe before the number of civilian lives lost in nuclear attacks on those Japanese cities} [italics added]. But why not compare the death toll at Nanking with those of Stalingrad or Leningrad, where even more civilians were killed? The same moral hierarchy simply does not hold for Chang.\textsuperscript{47}

For Western audiences that had not yet discovered the brutality of Nazi Germany’s Holocaust and had not yet felt guilt for their nation’s own wartime atrocities, references to poison gas would have been the most accessible and impactful—as Yoshida notes, Western audiences would have, at the time, recalled recent “painful experiences” with poison gas from the Great War of 1914.\textsuperscript{48} Even then, China did not receive the aid Koo sought until the U.S. suffered its own national tragedy at the hands of Japanese aggressors in the form of Pearl Harbor. But for Chang’s era of Nanking remembering,

\textsuperscript{46} Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 252.
\textsuperscript{47} Fogel, “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” 274.
\textsuperscript{48} Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 254.
precisely targeted comparisons to the atomic bomb death tolls reflect stronger pathological appeals, enhancing the rhetorical strength of her argument. Thus, the appeals to Western sensibilities by Chang and Koo reveal a tactical shift but consistency in intention. Only with the eventual shifts in geopolitics, Yoshida argues, “did Nanking achieve unique status [as] the event that symbolized Japanese war crimes in China par excellence.”

In the postwar narratives of Nanking memory, shifts in the perceived value of earlier journalistic coverage reflect the changing political tides in China. During the early postwar years, for example, the international aid so persistently pursued under Chiang Kai-shek’s guidance was later disregarded in the Maoist era:

Contributions by Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist military or the United States and Britain were ignored during the Maoist period. Chiang’s stand at Shanghai in 1947 or the role of the Flying Tigers was simply not part of the public discourse. When the war was discussed during the Maoist years, the ‘China as victor’ approach dominated.

The news reports detailing Western intervention in Nanking or international militaristic or financial aid directly conflicted with the “heroic resistance” narrative of the Maoist era, which sought to eliminate evidence of Western influences from society. In order to mold wartime reports to fit more modern political goals and narratives, “today’s editors have to go beyond reprints in order to add more coverage of atrocities.”

However, these efforts to bypass the narrative limitations of China’s wartime journalism and focus more closely on the Nanking Atrocity as the symbol of Chinese patriotism and

Japanese aggression are problematic. Without concrete sources to support modern interpretations and relying only on memory to reconstruct Nanking narratives, writers are unable to present the past in a manner that is separate from contemporary beliefs and experiences. Coble recognizes this obstacle of modern Nanking remembrance, stating, “Anyone old enough to have lived through the war years and literate enough to have been a writer would also have lived through the traumas of the Maoist era….In trying to ‘remember’ the war against Japan, writers of memoirs are looking through a prism of many later-life traumas.”

Thus, a comparison of the war narratives presented in Chinese reporting and modern interpretations of the event demonstrates the evolution of Atrocity perceptions. As this section has demonstrated, the goals driving journalistic coverage shifted with the course of the war. However, whether the focus of these reports was to encourage public optimism and patriotism or to gain Western financial aid, the rhetorical nature of China’s wartime reporting remained a constant.

**Western/U.S. Wartime Reporting:**

In Nanking Atrocity narratives, the U.S. (with the assistance of other Western nationals) has been traditionally depicted as playing the role of a quiet, unbiased observer and even heroic interventionist during the Japanese invasion of China. This role was exemplified through the heavy reliance on Western sources in the Tokyo Tribunals and is

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53 Since many of the writers and figures discussed in this section (such as Timperley, Rabe, etc.) are not American but are nationals from Western countries generally, this section’s focus will be expanded to include an analysis of non-American sources as well.
still maintained through the championing of figures like John Rabe, “the Good Nazi,” and Minnie Vautrin, “the Goddess at Nanking,” in film and literature. The previous section on Chinese wartime reporting demonstrates the significant impact that Western journalism had Chinese coverage of Japanese aggressions. However, by examining the development of Western, and particularly American, coverage of Japan’s actions throughout the war, it becomes clear that, even for the “unbiased” U.S., which had minimal initial relation to the Sino-Japanese war, journalistic productions were subject to the changing goals of a nationalistic agenda. Ultimately, therefore, the modern perceptions of the U.S. and Western world generally as the unbiased observer in the Second Sino-Japanese war are contested in the larger context of geopolitical developments during the war.

The most well-known Western reporters in China during the wartime era were the members of the Nanking Safety Zone. In addition to providing humanitarian aid to those Chinese unable to flee the city in the weeks preceding the Japanese attack, these figures worked, much like Chinese officials, to garner Western support and aid. Yoshida examines the works of these NSZ figures, arguing that

The Relief Committee’s primary goal was to appeal to the world about the crisis [in Nanking] in order to get financial aid. For this reason, its members wrote or backed the publication of several books and pamphlets for dissemination abroad. These included Lewis Smythe’s *War Damage in the Nanking Area December, 1937 to March 1938*; Miner S. Bates’s *Crop Investigation in the Nanking Area and Sundry Economic Data*, and his *The Nanking Population: Employment, Earnings, and Expenditures*.54

These works represent the efforts of NSZ leaders and serve as important resources in modern Nanking Atrocity scholarship. In addition to these texts, the collected letters of

these figures to recipients abroad help establish wartime perceptions of the Nanking Atrocity. Some of these letters were even published in the works of Western writers who were not positioned at the Safety Zone, like Harold Timperley. George Fitch, born in China and a director of the Nanking Safety Zone, wrote such entries, which were later used in Timperley’s *What War Means*:

Fitch’s friends included Wellington Koo and Harold J. Timperley, an Australian correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* in Shanghai. Timperley received the letter [from Fitch] and included it in his expose, *What War Means*, though he concealed Fitch’s identity. This book was published in countries such as Britain, the United States, China, France, and even Japan—although imperial government censorship prevented ordinary Japanese from reading it.

As demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, there existed a significant interchange of ideas between Chinese and Western sources. Furthermore, the information provided by these sources sometimes served as the first reports documenting important events. According to David Askew’s “Part of the Numbers Issue: Demography and Civilian Victims,” Timperley, “a secret member of the Kuomintang [KMT] government’s International Propaganda Department, edited the first detailed account of the atrocities at Nanking.” As the first written account of the Nanking Atrocity, Timperley’s text carries significant value; his work provides not only proof of the account, but it also serves as a reference point for countless other Nanking texts. Consequently, Atrocity narratives that rely on the interpretations presented in Timperley’s text are rooted in Western, rather than Chinese, perceptions of the event.

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55 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 256.
56 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 256.
Furthermore, despite the best intentions of these humanitarian figures, their reports pose additional obstacles for modern scholarship given factual inaccuracies. Even when discussing the remaining population after the majority of the civilians fled Nanking, Western reporters present varying figures. John Rabe, who described the remaining residents as “‘the poorest of the poor’ who lacked the means to flee,” reported that “800,000 of the original population had left,” while other Westerners reported the figure as far less than 200,000:

Lily Abegg, who herself left Nanking on 29 November, wrote in a 19 December Frankfurter Zeitung article that it was 150,000. The New York Times on 16 December said that the NSZ ‘shelters 150,000.’ Arthur Menken wrote on 17 December in the Chicago Tribune that ‘[m]ore than 100,000 Chinese sought refuge in the zone,’ and on 18 December, F. Tillman Durdin wrote of ‘upward of 100,000 noncombatants’ in the NSZ with ‘residents, numbering upward of 50,000 who sought no sanctuary in the zone.’ These journalists believed that the entire population of Nanking city was about 150,000—with 100,000 inside and 50,000 outside the NSZ.

While the writings of these Westerns could theoretically aid Nanking research, the data that they present is ultimately unreliable as due to factual inaccuracy. As Askew explains, these figures likely stem from a Los Angeles Times article that discussed IC plans to provide sanctuary for 100,000 Nanking refugees but do not ultimately reflect the accurate numbers of Nanking residents. The amount of inaccurate information stemming from Western observers in China presents a significant obstacle to Nanking scholarship, especially when it is remembered that many Chinese sources derived information from Western outlets.

While factual inaccuracies are detrimental to this scholarship, the realization that

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58 Askew, “Part of the Numbers Issue,” 87.
59 Askew, “Part of the Numbers Issue,” 87-8.
Western wartime reporting was, as in China, influenced by changing political motivations is perhaps an even more troubling issue. While most early coverage of the Japanese invasion and the Atrocity provided crucial investigative reporting without overt nationalistic overtones, later journalistic representations prioritized asserting the myth of a Japanese “national character” through depictions of barbarism and inborn inhumanity. This clear change in the goals of Western reporting followed Japan’s attacks on Pearl Harbor, demonstrating the impact of geopolitics on international Nanking narratives:

The outrage in Nanking did not achieve symbolic status in either Japan or China during the war. In Japan, most people wholeheartedly supported the war effort and celebrated the capture of Nanking; and in China, Nanking was but one of many Japanese atrocities. By contrast, however, in the United States, and especially after Pearl Harbor, the Nanking Atrocity became a symbol of Japanese barbarism and ethnically encoded cruelty. Influential daily newspapers such as the New York Times and Chicago Daily News reported imperial army brutality in Nanking during and immediately after the event took place.60

Once the U.S. became involved in the world conflict, Western reportage increasingly emphasized, likely to a greater degree than even Chinese reports, the racial inferiority and inhumanity of the Japanese forces. Even Timperley, who had previously maintained a more objective, distanced tone in his early works on the Second Sino-Japanese war began to reflect this growing, international, anti-Japanese sentiment:

In 1942, Timperley published Japan: A World Problem in the United States. Contrary to his earlier 1938 volume [What War Means], which carefully avoided demonizing the entire Japanese people, this book explained Japanese aggression and atrocities through an alleged ‘national character.’ He stressed that deep-rooted psychological forces had driven the Japanese people as a whole to lust after world conquest….61

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60 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 257.
The evolution of Timperley’s writing on the Japanese invasion, therefore, exemplifies the larger developments in Western perceptions of the Nanking Atrocity and Japanese aggression generally. In the weeks and months following Pearl Harbor, a dramatic shift occurred in journalism, wherein writers began to construct the notion of a Japanese “character,” which could be wielded to explain the atrocities committed not only in China, but, of even more significance to these Western reporters, the Japanese atrocities committed in the U.S.

The importance of this shift in journalistic representation of Japanese aggressors cannot be understated, as it reflects crucial developments not only in the field of journalistic standards but in the U.S. treatment of American-Japanese. While journalism always, to some extent, relies on preexisting interpretive templates to frame national tragedies, the post-Pearl Harbor depictions of Japanese actions demonstrate a more startling type of nationalism in Western reporting—a nationalism that the “unbiased observer” Nanking narratives fail to address. Once the early conceptions of a “national character” were introduced into the national dialogue via wartime journalism, written depictions of the Japanese became progressively more racist and more associated with representations of Nazis, as exemplified by the works of James Young:

James Young, an American journalist who also had lived in Japan, published *Our Enemy*, a twenty-five-cent paperback in 1942—long after Hitler’s depredations against the Jews in Europe had become public knowledge. Young denounced Japan’s ‘national character’ as being inherently aggressive and barbarous. His book’s cover shows an ominously slant-eyed, buck-toothed Japanese soldier wearing glasses and a Nazi-like uniform. In his right hand, a knife drips blood; in the other is a torn U.S. flag….His mistrust and hatred probably derived from a two-month period of imprisonment in Japan in 1940. To him, even U.S.-born Japanese-
Americans were agents of imperial Japan preparing to aid Japanese troops when they landed on American shores.\footnote{Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 258.}

The “national character” argument in wartime reporting provided writers like James Young the platform to present personal experiences with Japanese captors as representative of a grander, irrefutable, monolithic image of Japan. The consequences of this framing are clear in the U.S. treatment of American-Japanese citizens. Following Pearl Harbor, the anti-Japanese racism exemplified in Young’s writing led to the justification of internment camps and other restrictions imposed against Japanese-American citizens. In the subsequent years and even modern-day debates, America’s unethical treatment of Japanese-Americans has remained a significant social issue in WWII memory.

Despite the proliferation of anti-Japanese-based reporting in the post-Pearl Harbor years, there were some groups who actively challenged these monolithic depictions. Yoshida examines the efforts of one such group, Amerasia, in attempting to deconstruct these stereotypical, racially-charged depictions of Japan’s barbaric “national character”:

In 1943, the editors of Amerasia, a left-liberal journal, expressed concern about the numerous books that popularized this monolithic negative image of the Japanese….They urged readers to reject stereotypes that pronounced all Japanese as united by dreams of world conquest and pointed out that the imperial government had to employ police to silence democrats, socialists, and communists who opposed the war effort.\footnote{Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 258-9.}

The articles published under Amerasia helped reveal the falsehoods inherent in the increasingly popular visions of Japan. Amerisia championed the works of one author, Taro Yashima, whose personal experiences with Japanese political imprisonment rivalled
those of Young. In *The New Sun*, Yashima presents these experiences, revealing the diversity of Japanese political thought as evidenced by his fellow prisoners, “ethnic minorities as well as Japanese socialists and communists, all of whom the police imprisoned as being harmful to the empire.” Thus, Yashima and other similar writers attempted to challenge the monolithic image of a brainwashed Japanese nationalism.

However, despite these efforts to right negative perceptions of the Japanese, the works of authors like Timperley and Young, as well as the publications of daily journals and news outlets, reveal the prevalence of this stereotypical reporting. Furthermore, Yoshida argues, despite journals like *Amerasia*, which presented alternatives to the “national character” arguments of Timperley, the arguments presented in such outlets did not represent majority views and ultimately had limited social impact:

*Amerasia* was highly exceptional in being a high-brow, leftist publication. In general, the American media paid scant attention to Japanese life after Pearl Harbor. Instead, a monolithic image of the Japanese as bestial barbarians, who committed butchery in Nanking, became increasingly popular in the United States. That image justified not only America’s war effort against imperial Japan and Japanese militarism, but also the mass murder of Japanese civilians by the fire bombing of major cities across the archipelago, ending with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During the Pacific War (1941-45), the Nanking Atrocity was one objective piece of ‘evidence’ that racially biased American authors used to ‘prove’ their point. For Western audiences, the arguments presented in journals like *Amerasia* uncomfortably challenged widely-held beliefs about Japanese barbarism. Thus, while there are some post-Pearl Harbor publications that refused to frame the war in the larger “national character” argument of Timperley and others, these sources were not, 

64 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 259.
ultimately, reflective of the leading war interpretations. Instead, these post-Pearl Harbor beliefs demonstrate the subjectivity and vulnerability of even Western wartime perceptions, a nation that was previously ambivalent about WWII involvement.

Despite the modern-day memories of Western interventionism and objectivity, the reality of Western wartime reporting reflects nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment that became increasingly accepted in post-Pearl Harbor media. While Western journalism was essential to the development of early records of the Nanking Atrocity, the majority of wartime coverage served to reinforce negative stereotypes and present a monolithic depiction of the Japanese—the pervasiveness of which allowed for the justification of Japanese internment camps. Although the U.S. has, through some reparative measures, attempted to repent for its own wartime atrocities, the narrative of Western impartiality must be reexamined in order to further Nanking scholarship. By continuing to perpetuate such a narrative of Western objectivity and intervention, scholars and journalists give countries such as the United States seeming justification for self-motivated international involvement. Despite the selfless actions of foreign NSZ representatives, these figures and their experiences cannot be considered representations of general Western perceptions during the war, as analysis of Western wartime reporting demonstrates the subjectivity and nationalism inherent in Western perceptions of Japanese aggressions.

**Japanese Wartime Reporting**

Similar to Chinese and Western wartime reports, Japanese journalistic coverage of the country’s gradual expansion into China was documented and presented within the larger context of nationalistic pursuits. Consequently, when events such as the Atrocity
were reported, a hyperbolically nationalistic tone was employed to elevate Japanese morale. This framing of wartime journalism in Japan has created significant modern debate over the legitimacy of issues discussed. As Fogel notes, the value of this nationalistic reporting outweighed potential consequences in the eyes of both soldiers and journalists: “Japanese soldiers who might have been able to report the scale of the killings obviously had no motivation to do so. Japanese journalists on the scene were subject to government censorship, or for the most part they suppressed the story voluntarily.”66 Just as Chinese and Western wartime reporting reflect political goals and social concerns of the era, Japanese journalism must also be examined from the perspective of national goals. Given these influences, it is crucial to recognize the unreliability of Japanese reportage that stems from the nationalistic tone of the writing:

In considering how ordinary postwar Japanese grasped this issue of culpability, we must examine the role played by the media in the wartime-to-postwar transition. German journalists and newspapers who praised Hitler and the Nazi war effort stopped publishing in the postwar era; Japanese journalists and newspapers that had played similar roles did not. They neither admitted nor atoned for whipping up hatred against China or for spreading lies about the war issued by Imperial Headquarters. Those wartime lies, for example, held that using the atomic bomb showed how desperate the United States had become, or that wearing thick clothing would protect people from radiation in further nuclear attacks.67

Since a major component of modern Atrocity debates is the wartime awareness and culpability of the general Japanese public, Wakabayashi’s argument about the role of journalists in spreading misinformation or censoring truths is important to consider. Even if the general public were exposed to journalistic coverage of the Nanking Atrocity, there

is little evidence that this reporting would have been accurate or equivalent to the standards of contemporary Nanking scholars in China. Rather, the reality of Japanese wartime reporting reflects the emphasis of nationalistic overtones instead of journalistic objectivity.

However, as with Chinese and Western coverage, Japanese wartime reporting did evolve over the course of the war. While later Japanese publications demonstrate a clear vilification of the Chinese, some early Japanese reports of victory in China were more moderate in their depictions of victims, despite the clearly nationalistic tone of the writings. While Japanese victories against the Chinese were celebrated in major social displays, early articles discussing these advances did not depict Chinese victims in the dehumanizing terms that characterize later reports. In “Massacres Near Mufushan,” Ono Kenji examines the Fukushima response to the fall of Nanking. Although the city held public festivals to celebrate the Japanese victory, the implications of this advance were not analyzed in full detail:

Nanking fell on 13 December, but Fukushima residents had been eagerly anticipating that historic event for several days. Partly in response to ‘guidance’ from military authorities, they held lantern parades and other celebratory events all over the prefecture—including Aizu-Wakamatsu barracks—to mark the capture of the enemy capital. Just at that point, on the fifteenth, came news that the local Sixty-fifth Regiment had taken this huge number of the enemy as prisoners of war (POWs). As might be imagined, the Fukushima press played up this joyful event to the fullest. For the next two days, however, there was no news about what became of those prisoners.68

These early Japanese reports of the fall of Nanking demonstrate a particular subset of nationalistic reporting—a type that celebrates the defeat of Chinese opponents

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and commends Japanese heroism without depicting the full violence of the scene or using supremacist language to condemn Chinese inferiority.

However, there were also early Japanese reports of the Nanking Atrocity which did actively highlight and champion the brutality of the Japanese forces. This form of reporting is most apparent in discussions of the 100-man killing contest. Reports of the contest were situated within the growing anticipation of the invasion of Nanking; as Yoshida describes, journalistic depictions of the contest, such as the original *Tokyo nichichi shinbun* article, the first to mention the contest, served to “[whip] up nationalism to a fever pitch.”69 In the weeks and months leading up to the invasion of Nanking, Japanese journalists sought to heighten nationalist sentiments through depictions militaristic prowess. For the most part, the mass public, under the guidance of news publications, celebrated these demonstrations of Japanese dominance and continued to support the war effort.

However, these depictions of Japanese militarism present a crucial issue in considering the impacts of wartime reporting on the general Japanese public. Public support of militaristic brutality cannot simply be attributed to the nationalistic overtones of wartime coverage; existing confidence in the righteousness of Japan’s actions were reinforced by another key element in the depictions of battlefront action: *Chinese* aggression against *Japanese* troops. Yoshida provides examples of this type of wartime

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reporting, demonstrating the ways in which Japanese articles emphasized Chinese aggression in order to justify Japan’s “defensive” tactics:

Japanese newspapers and other government-authorized media played up Chinese brutalities, particularly after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937 and its aftermath, when imperial armed forces expanded hostilities to central China. On 4 August 1937, for example, the Tokyo Asahi shinbun detailed killing and looting by Chinese troops in Tungchou, near Peiping….It condemned Chinese ‘savagery’ and expressed outrage at the murder of some 200 Japanese and Korean residents, including women, children, and infants. Other major daily newspapers at home highlighted Chinese barbarism at Tungchou as part of concerted campaigns to stir up anti-Chinese sentiments among ordinary Japanese.70

Japanese militaristic policies that could be considered inhumane, then, were justified through these depictions of Chinese “barbarism” and “savagery”—interestingly, the same terms used in Chinese wartime discussions of Japanese destruction. Chinese resistance was used to demonstrate the need for Japanese persistence and to assert Japan’s moral hierarchy in the war.

Furthermore, images of Chinese inferiority were reinforced through depictions of the Japanese Imperial army’s comparative civility. While the Japanese were patient, respectful, and generous, journalists claimed, the Chinese were uncivilly unresponsive to these displays:

When Japanese troops surrounded the walled city, the press played up Japan’s generosity and righteousness. To save the lives of Chinese soldiers as well as historical sites in Nanking, commander Matsui Iwane of the Central China Area Army (CCAA) urged his Chinese counterpart, T’ang Sheng-chih, to surrender, and waited a full day before launching his all-out attack. But, as the Tokyo Asahi shinbun put it, T’ang ‘rudely ignored Matsui’s generous attitude of bushido [the samurai ethos]’ and forced the imperial army to attack the city, thereby causing needless death and destruction.71

70 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 268.
These reports demonstrate the ways in which journalists encouraged the general public to reconcile Japanese destruction in China by presenting the Chinese as perpetrators and unwilling to cooperate in the pursuit of peace. From an analysis of these sources, then, it is clear that the Japanese public was familiarized with a significantly different narrative of militaristic exploits than the memories that they would be confronted with in more recent Nanking debates. These narratives either de-emphasized Chinese victimization or justified atrocities committed against the Chinese through the argument that the Japanese troops were left with no other alternative. Reports or literary representations during the war era that did not perpetuate this interpretation of Japanese militarism were effectively barred from dissemination in society. Thus, argues Yoshida, Army and government censors banned all account that even hinted at the possibility that Japanese troops were conducting atrocities, including works of fiction such as Ishikawa Tatsuo’s *Ikite iru heitai* (Living Soldiers). Thus, unlike in the United States, where articles seemingly sympathetic to the Japanese enemy might appear in journals such as *Amerasia*, only government-approved accounts could legally be published or circulated in wartime Japanese society.²

Ultimately, Japanese government censorship prevented writers from challenging the majority belief that Japanese aggressions in China were justified and worthy of national celebration. The reasonings for this careful concealment of more detailed descriptions of Chinese sufferings mirrors the U.S. justification for the proliferation of anti-Japanese texts—the concern that alternative narratives, which made the opponent more sympathetic, could seriously hamper war efforts. Yoshida argues that this

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consideration led the Japanese media to downplay or eliminate potentially negative reports of Japanese actions:

In wartime Japan, government-authorized accounts of fighting at Nanking and in China as a whole never discussed mass murder, rape, and looting by imperial armed forces for fear that the truth would damage their image and call into question Japan’s purative war aims of liberating Asians and creating a peaceful coprosperity sphere in the region.73

The general, accepted form of wartime reporting in Japan thus enabled unquestioning support of the military’s advances by presenting a narrative of Japanese heroism and chivalry in the face of Chinese barbarism. These reports effectively encouraged mass nationalistic sentiments and have led to significant obstacles in modern remembrance and reconciliation of the Atrocity in the Japanese consciousness. For those that were only ever introduced to the heroism of the Japanese army, Chinese depictions of rape and murder appear as a direct affront to history and national pride.

While these reports reflect the most widely-maintained narrative of Japanese actions, there were alternative depictions and arguments propagated in the war era by dissenting writers. Yoshida provides example of these publications, such as “Fassho kyo no Nihon” (Japan under the Threat of Fascism), printed in Seattle-based Kyokuto senso nyusu (Far-Eastern News), and Japanese translations of Timperley’s What War Means, translated by Japanese national Kaji Wataru and disseminated in Japan to the extent that forces actively sought to diminish their presence.74 These materials demonstrate early attempts to challenge the prevailing visions of Japanese militarism in China. Often, these

73 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 262.
74 Yoshida, “Wartime Accounts of the Nanking Atrocity,” 261.
efforts stemmed from a sense of resentment toward those ideological oppressors and censors. Wakabayashi references the work of a Japanese author, Seno Kappa, whose writing reflects this resentment: “As Seno Kappa’s bestselling semifictional autobiography Shonen H, relates: ‘More than the enemy who fire-bombed us, I hated those [Japanese] who kept deceiving us by lying or hiding the truth—the government, military, and newspapers.”  

For these writers, the censored, nationalistic, propagandistic message of most journalistic publications represented a greater danger than wartime enemies. Other writers like Suzuki Akira and Yamamoto Shichihei similarly voiced discontent with Japanese journalistic standards, as the media “avidly promoted imperialist aggression in the name of patriotism up to 1945, but these same journalists, often writing in the same papers, now fostered goodwill toward China by atoning for wartime sins.”

In addition to charging the Japanese media with inconsistent and even hypocritical reporting on the Second Sino-Japanese war, these writers condemned reporters for a committing a more specific offense in the pursuit of nationalism: overemphasizing or fabricating the 100-man killing contest. For Suzuki, it was “absurd it was for anyone to take [the Tokyo nichii nichii article] seriously at all—whether in 1937 or in 1972.” Suzuki’s main contention of the article concerned the sensationalist, entertainment-style of reporting that was employed. Reports of the 100-man killing

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contest, Suzuki argued, echoed the style and dramatization of silent films or medieval war tales and served to excite rather than inform:

Suzuki reasoned that Asami wrote a propaganda-cum-entertainment piece in an era when journalists did that as part of the war effort. As outside Western observers, we might liken these superhuman heroics to those depicted in the Japanese ‘three human bombs’ saga fabricated during the 1932 Shanghai Incident, to wartime John Wayne movies, to impossible exploits portrayed in the 1960s television series Combat or, more recently, to Rambo films.  

Suzuki’s critique of the hyperbolic descriptions of Japanese victories, exemplified in the 100-man killing contest reports, provides insight into the realities of Japanese wartime interpretations and the consequences of this nationalistic standard of journalism. As Wakabayashi notes, Suzuki felt that the trials and executions of the supposed leaders of the contest, Noda and Mukai, were based solely on the information provided in these ungrounded Japanese reports.  

Incidentally, these debates over the 100-man killing contest led to one of Japan’s most significant investigative reporting projects. Amid the growing international tensions in the postwar years, journalist Honda Katsuichi, a reporter for the Asahi shinbun, travelled through China in order to test existing Japanese perceptions of the war; however, Katsuichi’s findings supported an image not of Japanese heroism but of Chinese suffering:  

He toured the PRC for forty days in 1971 to interview victims of Japanese aggression, and published gut-wrenching reports accompanied by photographs in this newspaper from August to December. This was a tour de force in investigative reporting. It exposed in graphic detail fellow Japanese who perpetrated hideous atrocities. More than anyone else, Honda forced Japan to confront Nanking as an ethical issue for the first time since the IMTFE. In 1972 he republished these reports in Chugoku no Nihongun (The Japanese Army in China) and in Chugoku no tabi  

(Travels in China). The latter became a best-seller and appeared in paperback. A Chinese translation came out in 1972, but Honda had a negligible impact elsewhere because his writings on Nanking were not translated into English until 1999.\textsuperscript{80}

Despite the limitations that prevented Katsuichi’s work from becoming more widely-disseminated, his research serves as an important landmark in journalistic representations of Japanese aggressions in China. While the reports are not necessarily from the wartime era, Katsuichi’s images of China present an alternative to the standard narrative of Atrocity involvement in the years preceding the peak of the Nanking debates. In contrast to earlier reports that deemphasized Chinese victimhood in favor of Japanese nationalism, Katsuichi’s text presents the reality of Japanese brutality in China and delineates a shift in Japanese discussions of the Atrocity.

Japanese wartime reporting, like its Chinese and Western counterparts, reveals the ways in which nationalistic goals influenced the depictions of the Second Sino-Japanese war. Despite the separate narratives linked to each country in modern perceptions of the Nanking issue, China, the U.S., and Japan shared more commonalities in journalistic framing techniques than differences. Like the later cinematic, literary, and educational memorializations of the Nanking Atrocity, these materials established and reinforced an interpretive template for each society; however, wartime reports of the Atrocity are unique from these other sources by virtue of their immediate responsiveness to the events. Unlike the myriad of cinematic and literary texts that were created in the 1980s Nanking revival, many of which were created by writers and directors with no personal experiences of Nanking, these reports reflect the perceptions of individuals who lived

\textsuperscript{80} Wakabayashi, “The Nanking 100-Man Killing Contest Debate, 1971-75,” 121.
through the period. Although these texts are no more objective than the novels and films of modern Nanking commemoration, these early reports provide insight as to each country’s interpretations and national goals during the war. Unfortunately, wartime reporting has yet to receive substantial investigation in Atrocity scholarship. The ideas presented in wartime reporting can provide insight as to the ways that Nanking memory, and memory of national tragedies generally, is influenced by political goals. In order to examine the ways in which Nanking memories and narratives have evolved during the postwar years into their current form, it is crucial to analyze the ways that war-era reports have impacted this process of understanding and remembering.
Chapter IV: Educational Discourse Regarding the Atrocity

Education serves as a platform for the collectivization and dissemination of chosen, standardized interpretations of history. The role of education in preserving official memory has led the textbook debates between China and Japan to become an infamous topic in Atrocity scholarship. Public memory formation is certainly impacted by these official narratives; however, scholars cannot discredit the role of individual or group dynamics in the acceptance, rejection, or modification of these formal accounts of events. Like many issues related to the Nanking Atrocity, education is a topic that is both fundamental to future scholarship and decisively used as a symbolic argument by China and Japan. Given the role of educational materials in reflecting a national interpretation of historical events, the nature of China and Japan’s educational standards regarding the topic are worthy of examination.81

Chinese Educational Discourse

Controversy over each nation’s public education concerning the Nanking Atrocity did not arise until nearly half a century after the Tokyo Tribunals. While the tribunals allowed for what can be considered informal memory formation (since a conclusive interpretation of the events was never officially established), the ambiguity of the proceedings and rulings prevented the concretization of a single international understanding of each country’s role in the Second Sino-Japanese war. This topic is

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81 The Nanking Atrocity currently does not appear in any major high-school textbooks (the type of textbook examined in this chapter). Therefore, this chapter only examines Chinese and Japanese education of the event.
important for several reasons. Foremost, educational standards concerning the Atrocity in China and Japan are worthy of examination due to the significant role that this topic maintains in international disputes. As with issues such as proper naming and death toll figures for the Atrocity, appropriate educational discourse is often wielded as a placeholder argument—rather than discuss the nature of the event, China and Japan often perform this argument of ethics and culpability through more minor, secondary topics related to depictions of the event. As a result of the Tokyo Tribunals’ ambivalent rulings and the careful economic relationship between China and Japan in the postwar years, Atrocity acceptance and understanding are built on precarious geopolitical foundations. Consequently, each nation’s evolution of Nanking education has shifted with the course of geopolitics.

For several decades following the Atrocity and Tokyo Tribunals, discourse regarding these events, particularly in the realm of education, was limited. Scholars have analyzed the reasons for this delay, often criticizing China for manipulating the issue for political gain or condemning Japan for attempting to revise its own wartime involvement. In both cases, commentators often accomplish little more than presenting the most general assessments of the issue, prompting the need for a closer examination of Atrocity treatment in education through learning tools like museums and textbooks.

In “Textbooks and Patriotic Education: Wartime Memory Formation in China and Japan,” Daniel Sneider examines the development of Nanking education in China. In order to contextualize his analysis of history textbooks in Japan and China, Sneider presents the various political and historical factors in China that impacted education on
the Atrocity. He asserts that, in the post-war decades marked by the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Chinese society gleaned only an unofficial knowledge of the Atrocity through film: “….the wartime era was mainly portrayed through propagandistic films. The so-called ‘Red Classics,’ such as Tunnel Warfare and Landmine Warfare, depicted Communist guerillas of the Eighth Route Army in the north and New Fourth Army in the south successfully attacking the Japanese army.”

Early Chinese accounts of the Atrocity present a more uplifting, victorious interpretation of the events as Chinese soldiers battled fiercely against their Japanese opponents. Violi examines this memory dichotomy as “victor” and “victim” narratives:

….in China, it was only after Deng Xiaoping unleashed his economic reforms in the early 1980s that Chinese nationalists rediscovered Nanjing, together with new forms of remembering the past and new forms of social identification. A shift occurred at that point from a “victor narrative” to a “victim narrative” to use Peter Giest’s words. Significantly, this shift from a rhetoric of revolutionary heroism to a self-representation based on victimization and the exhibition of Japanese atrocities is associated with the new globalizing market economy and the increasing gap between rich and poor in Chinese society.

The former narrative of victory and heroism was apparent in China’s wartime reporting and post-war films, literature, and memorials—the foundational materials of China’s “informal” Nanking Atrocity memory. The victor’s narrative is dominant in China’s first Rape of Nanking memorial, which presents China’s invaluable heroism in the face of World War II’s fascist oppressors: “China is depicted as the ‘first country to fight the fascist aggressor,’ its contribution decisive in the outcome of the global conflict,

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pinning down millions of Japanese troops, allowing the West and the Soviet Union to concentrate their forces on Nazi Germany, and defeating Japanese forces in the battlefield.” The victor’s narrative as exemplified through this monument is distinctive from China’s later memories of the war, which are characterized by a sense of victimization. Furthermore, the conscious efforts of this museum to create a Chinese war memory, rather than an international narrative, are demonstrated through the site’s use of Chinese-only text: “The captions on the museum exhibits are only in Chinese—the audience for this history lesson is almost entirely internal, though museum officials say some 200,000 foreigners have visited since it opened in 1987, most of them Japanese.”

Therefore, the victorious, Chinese-centric nature of early post-war memory can be examined through China’s first Nanking museum.

The shift in Chinese war memory from “victor narrative” to “victim narrative” can thereby be analyzed through a comparison of postwar monuments. As Sneider notes, a secondary Nanjing museum was constructed contemporaneously with the aforementioned site. However, despite being completed in the eighties, reconstructions to the museum in the 2000s reflect an adaptation to shifting war memory: “The new museum conveys a narrative of Chinese victimization at the hands of a depraved Japanese army, connecting this to China’s history of humiliation at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialists.” In addition to this altered narrative, the museum also features another significant separation from its Beijing counterpart in the form of

84 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 45-46.
85 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 42.
86 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 43.
In contrast to the Beijing museum, the Nanjing Memorial is clearly aimed at a global as well as a Chinese audience. Captions are translated into Japanese and English and a gift shop offers an array of materials in foreign languages. It attracts more visitors than any other museum in China....“87 Almost as compelling as this transition in purpose and narrative are the methods by which the museum constructs this memory of Nanking. In an effort to mirror the pathological impact of other World War II commemorative sites, including the Washington, D.C. Holocaust Memorial, Yad Veshem in Jerusalem, Auschwitz, and Japanese memorials for atomic bombing victims, renovation director Zhu Cheng Shan reconstructed the site to convey the narrative of “not only of Chinese victims but also the foreigners who played a key role in trying to protect them and in telling the story of the massacre to the world….The message of the Nanjing Memorial is unrelentingly clear—this is China’s own Holocaust.”88

The decision to base renovations on Washington, D.C.’s Holocaust Memorial is reflective of the persuasive power of the site and the ethos of the narrative that it presents. The D.C. museum is renowned for its enforcement of a firsthand experience of the Holocaust through design layout and visual and audio cues. In “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” Carole Blair reflects on the rhetorical nature of important U.S. landmarks and remarks on the importance of understanding the materiality of rhetoric. In this article, Blair examines the rhetorical construction of the Washington, D.C. Holocaust Memorial and the influences that led to its formation:

87 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 43.
88 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 43.
At about the same time that the Holocaust Memorial Museum was built and dedicated, there was a strong movement of Holocaust denial in Europe and the United States. That the Museum was responding to that seems clear. At every turn, the visitor is situated as a ‘witness.’ And there are clear bids to establish the historical reality of the atrocities and horror with photographs, survivor narratives, graphic films, collections of personal possessions of victims, and reproductions of death camp accoutrements, like an oven and ‘medical experimentation’ labs.89

The parallels between the Nanking Memorial and the Washington, D.C. Holocaust Memorial are therefore even greater than material elements—the responsive nature of each monument to larger political debates demonstrates the significant role of such learning tools in the flux of historical consciousness. Just as the D.C. museum served to establish a dominant, “official” World War II narrative, the Nanking Memorial similarly countered revisionist tendencies in the postwar decades, as “Zhu claims that the idea for the construction of his museum was prompted by the dispute that erupted with Japan in 1982 over the revision of Japanese history textbooks to remove language describing the war as an ‘invasion’ and an act of aggression.”90 Thus, the physical renovations in Nanking memorials reflect the changing nature of public war memory in China. The role of educational tools like monuments and textbooks in establishing and adapting collective memory is significant, and therefore must be examined in the larger context of historical consciousness.

Initial perceptions of the war were steeped in the political aspirations of the Cold War, resulting in a specific historical narrative of the Atrocity. During the Cold War, “when the PRC still counted itself as part of the communist world, albeit in competition

90 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 45.
with the Soviet Union for leadership of that world, the Chinese Communists were also not eager to acknowledge a war of resistance in which China and the US were allied."⁹¹

Chinese wartime memory formation was complicated by the political milieu of the Cold War and the Communist era; as Sneider argues, these factors led to the complex, now-abandoned notions of a “victor’s narrative” in China:

Remembrance of the Nanjing Massacre posed particular challenges for Communist historical narratives about the war. The battle in Nanjing was entirely a KMT affair, without any Communist involvement—and it was hardly a heroic affair. The KMT government made initial efforts after the war to gather evidence of Japanese crimes to submit to the war crimes tribunals in Tokyo and those held in China, as well as to memorialize the event. But the civil war, and the Cold War that followed, cut off any further contacts with the wartime allies or even with Japanese seeking to illuminate the crimes of Imperial Japan.⁹²

Thus, the “victor narrative” that dominated post-war Chinese memory can be attributed, at least in part, to the political aspirations of the Communist party during the Cold War. However, to assume that this version of public memory was constructed entirely in response to political motivations would be a misrepresentation of the historical and social developments of the last several decades; for, as Sneider notes, the massive information revolution of the eighties and nineties is a contributing factor: “Chinese commentators also attribute this shift to the impact of the process of reform and opening after 1979, which brought with it a greater flow of information, including access to the translations of Western historians.”⁹³ Therefore, the shifting tides of geopolitics, along with other contributing social factors, led to a revision of Chinese war memory.

⁹¹ Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 44.
⁹² Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 44.
⁹³ Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 45.
The differences between the narratives that the two Nanking memorials present parallels the development of war memory through another key educational tool—textbooks. The textbook debate in international Nanking Atrocity discourse is, in reality, reflective of substantial social concerns regarding appropriate educational goals in the wake of wartime conflict, despite the cursory treatment with which this topic is often dealt. Generalized claims have often reduced the role of this issue to that of a symbolic argument. While Japan’s textbook dilemmas often serve as the foci of these debates, an examination of their Chinese counterparts provides significant insight as to the development of Nanking Atrocity education. As Sneider asserts, the initial construction of monuments dedicated to the Nanking Atrocity was a harbinger of greater education policy changes regarding the event. These changes were responsive to the growing social turmoil in Communist China and sought to reestablish a unifying historical narrative through the “Patriotic Education Campaign: “Begun in 1991, the campaign was designed to provide young Chinese with a version of history that de-emphasized the Maoist era narrative of class struggle within China in favor of the depiction of China as a victim of humiliation and brutality at the hands of foreign powers, going back to the days of the Opium war.”

Given the separate historical-social contextualizations of the pre- and post-campaign textbooks, Chinese society underwent substantial memory reconstruction throughout the postwar decades. While the former textbooks sought to unify Chinese society through a narrative of wartime achievement and collective heroism, later Atrocity

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education faced the need to pacify an increasingly fragmented and disillusioned society. The post-campaign narrative is one that, according to Sneider, “suits the nationalist mobilization of a populace no longer motivated by neo-Communist ideology.”

This narrative is perpetuated through the nation’s history textbook:

The standard textbook on Chinese contemporary and modern history, published by the state’s People’s Education Publishing House, was in circulation from the 1980s through the middle of the first decade of this century. Beginning in 2004, it was gradually replaced throughout the country by a new, completely revised textbook, *Chinese History*, which offered a significantly altered version of the wartime period, one more in tune with the Patriotic Education Campaign begun in the 90s.

While the former, pre-eighties history textbook in China presented little discussion of the Nanking Atrocity, occupying “only two paragraphs with only one photo of bodies being buried by Japanese soldiers,” the revised textbook gives greater analysis of the events and the motivations behind Japan’s brutality. This resource situates Japanese aggression within the larger scheme of Sino-Japanese relations, thereby indicating a causal relationship between earlier international conflicts and the Nanking Atrocity:

The war is set in the context of a Japanese imperial design to conquer China, going back to the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95 and proceeding through the Manchurian incident of 1931, growing tensions in Shanghai and northern China, and leading to the opening of full-scale war in 1937…This new patriotic version devotes far more space to a detailed description of the Nanjing massacre including graphic accounts of atrocities there and elsewhere in China. It poses a discussion subject for students: ‘Japanese rightwing forces vigorously deny that the Japanese military committed the Nanjing Massacre—the ultimate act of human cruelty—during its invasion of China.

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95 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 41.
96 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 46.
97 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 47.
They consider it a type of wartime behavior. What do you think of the issue?

The revised, campaign-approved history textbook not only devotes greater attention to analysis and contextualization of the Atrocity, but it also frames this information in a manner that questions the Japanese response to the events. Thus, Chinese educational discourse regarding the Atrocity has evolved from few but victor narrative depictions during the Communist era to modern interpretations that emphasize Chinese suffering and Japanese silence.

**Japanese Educational Discourse**

Perhaps as a result of such framing, the nature of Japanese education regarding the Nanking Atrocity has been a topic of international debate since the 1980s. In “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant: The Rape of Nanking in Japanese High-School Textbooks,” Christopher Barnard examines these debates, arguing that “….the Rape of Nanking has become one of the main foci of ideological struggle between those who want Japan to give a frank accounting of its past and apologise [sic] appropriately, and those who maintain the war was justified and the atrocities no more than of the type that are likely to occur in all wars.” While the textbook debates effectively serve as a sub-argument within the larger context of international Nanking discourse, research concerning this topic provides valuable insight as to the role of each nation in using educational tools to address its history. As Sneider notes, this attempt to overcome past

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wrongdoings through education is exemplified in the postwar efforts of European nations in establishing accurate, inclusive assessments of history: “In the postwar period in Europe, former combatants such as France and Germany, and Germany and Poland, have formed joint commissions to write common textbooks with the goal of removing a source of future conflict.”100 In contrast, Japan and China lack this international agreement as to proper treatment of the Nanking Atrocity in educational texts. Rather, Japan has been the subject of intense international criticism for its revisionist tendencies in school resources:

For critics, both inside and outside Japan, the content of those textbooks is evidence of a failure to take responsibility for the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War or to acknowledge the suffering the Japanese military imposed on conquered Asian nations and the crimes committed in combat with the Allies.101

From the perspective of international communities, Japan’s inadequate treatment of the past has become a significant obstacle to diplomacy. However, scholars often dispute these claims of revisionist aims. In “Far from Oblivion: The Nanking Massacre in Japanese Historical Writing for Children and Young Adults,” Matthew Penney notes that, even as Chang’s claims of Japanese revisionism were becoming cemented through the publication and popularity of her text, straightforward, detailed discussion of the Atrocity had already become integrated into Japanese textbooks:

Despite the recent approval of a pair of middle school textbooks branded ‘far-right’ by their critics, there are few signs that this pattern of frank discussion has been abandoned. Through most of the postwar period, the Japanese government was not willing to have detailed descriptions of the Nanking Massacre included in textbooks. One of the trends that paved the way for the inclusion of these types of forthright perspectives in officially sanctioned texts in the 1990s was the well-established presence of descriptions of the Nanking Massacre, often accompanied by violent

100 Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 37.
images, in popular works aimed at school-age children and young adults. Government silences could not withstand the flood of popular publication.¹⁰²

Encouraged by the influx of supplementary material, Japanese educators in the postwar decades gradually introduced discussion of the Atrocity into textbooks.

Furthermore, in “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” Joshua A. Fogel argues that China’s attention to Japanese educational standards is the result of careful political manipulation and is less reflective of a genuine interest in Atrocity education:

PRC government leaders like to remind their Japanese counterparts of Japan’s heinous wartime acts, usually at face-to-face meetings, and the Japanese government usually acquiesces in the interests of continuing this mammoth bilateral trade. In order to maintain this strategic card, the PRC regime has tried to keep the Nanking issue from imploding among its populace, potentially injuring these lucrative Japanese contacts….It must control public expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment by orchestrating demonstrations against Japan on other selected issues, such as the textbook controversy of the early 1980s, when the Japanese press leaked what proved to be inaccurate stories of the Ministry of Education’s plans to soften the description of Japanese aggression in World War II.¹⁰³

Regardless of the validity of Fogel’s assertion, it remains important to assess the nature of Atrocity discussion in Japanese textbooks. In this vein, innumerable works have been published on the Japanese treatment of the Nanking Atrocity in history textbooks. Through his research, Barnard refutes the generalizing claim that Japanese textbooks deny involvement in the Atrocity, although the extent of these discussions is often at least somewhat limited. Barnard argues that, although Japanese educational resources

generally discuss the events of the Rape of Nanking accurately, there is, to some degree, a “glossing over” of the events; Barnard asserts that the Japanese textbooks present this information in a manner that “isolates knowledge of the events from Japanese people and Japan”\(^\text{104}\) and that leaves room for interpretation and doubt. This finding is echoed in the scholarship of Yi Zou’s, whose article “Historical Narration of the Second Sino-Japanese War in Current Japanese High School History Textbooks: The Logic of Its Causal Interpretations” explores Atrocity discussion in textbooks as well. From these studies, it is clear that the textbook debates are characterized by greater nuance and subtlety than the general interpretations of the issue typically denote.

For Barnard, linguistic constructions allow the textbooks to address the events of the Atrocity without delineating responsibility: “….the perpetrators of the atrocity, namely the soldiers of the Imperial Japanese army, are not portrayed by the textbooks as being present at Nanking on an individual human level—but are only present on an organizational level,”\(^\text{105}\) which, consequently, means that “….Japanese soldiers, as individuals, are never criticized for perpetrating the atrocity.”\(^\text{106}\) As Barnard’s research concludes, there is a significant distinction in the individuality of perpetrators and victims as presented in Japanese texts; while victims are described in greater individual detail, the perpetrators of the Atrocity, Japanese soldiers, can only be inferred: “….the textbooks mention the Japanese army being at Nanking; and, since the Japanese army is made up of soldiers, who are Japanese people, one can assume that Japanese people are in the story

\(^{104}\) Barnard, “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant,” 522.
\(^{105}\) Barnard, “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant,” 522.
\(^{106}\) Barnard, “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant,” 523.
of the Nanking Massacre. But, nevertheless, this is not the same as ascribing the killing to Japanese people.”

This subtle linguistic framing, according to Barnard, holds substantial implications for the reader’s understanding of events. As Barnard explains, the distinction between peripherally condemning the actions of an organization and frankly condemning the actions of individuals can be understood as the difference between stating that the Holocaust was evil, and that the people who perpetrated the Holocaust were evil. As a result, while Japanese students may be influenced to share a critique of the event, there is no collective, national sense of atonement or responsibility.

Barnard finds that descriptions of the Atrocity further distance readers from perpetrators through the implication that the majority of Japanese society was unaware or incapable of altering the events of Nanking. Barnard argues that responsibility is delegated in such a manner that Japanese society is largely absolved of the burden of having known about the events: “….knowledge of Nanking is located in both space and time in such a way that this knowledge is not something that Japanese people are depicted as possessing until after the war, and, in fact, the main possessors of this knowledge are almost always parties who can be assumed to be anti-Japanese.”

Therefore, the language of the textbooks presents a narrative in which the average Japanese could not have been knowledgeable of the Nanking Atrocity, as this information was withheld by anti-Japanese groups. This narrative of the unknowing and therefore irreproachable Japanese public is supported by Barnard’s research. In his analysis of

107 Barnard, “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant,” 523.
Japanese textbooks, Barnard discusses passages that imply that Japanese public was unaware of the Atrocity but that also imply that the entire outside world knew of the event. Barnard criticizes this notion as improbable, arguing,

Was there no ‘governing elite,’ ‘aristocratic elite,’ ‘military elite,’ ‘diplomatic elite,’ intellectual elite,’ or ‘media elite’ in Japan who had access to foreign newspapers, foreign news services, short-wave radios, foreign acquaintances, accurate information from the front in China, and so on, and thereby found out about the Rape of Nanking?....[These arguments about the lack ] mean that the people in Japan who did know about the atrocity conveniently....have no explaining to do in the court of history since they have been swallowed up in the mass of unknowing Japanese people.110

It is difficult to support the argument that the Japanese public was entirely unaware of the Atrocity, Barnard asserts, due to the multitude of Japanese sources which could have provided this information. Although Nanking Atrocity events are examined by Japanese textbooks in greater detail than often credited, sentence-level constructions and vague explanations allow authors to delineate blame in such a way that the average Japanese reader is separated from any sense of responsibility. In contrast, Barnard’s research demonstrates the means by which these texts insulate Japanese society from blame by intimating that the typical citizen was prevented from knowing about the nature of the Atrocity by outside forces. Ultimately, while Barnard’s findings may reflect a general discussion of the Atrocity, his examination also reveals the various intricacies of textbook language that prevent a more agentive narrative of the events.

Zou’s article similarly presents the complexity of Japanese textbook interpretations. While Zou notes that all reviewed texts contained some mention of both

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110 Barnard, “Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant,” 526.
the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the Nanking Atrocity\textsuperscript{111}, in some texts, “the motivation of the war was purposively diluted, and rationalized by a reasonable interpretation.”\textsuperscript{112} By examining the causality of events as presented in Japanese textbooks, Zou reveals the inconsistencies of Nanking discussions in these references. By framing the events in a context that rationalizes the Atrocity by relying heavily on causal interpretations, Japanese textbooks, according to Zou, inhibit a complete, accurate understanding of the nature of Japan’s brutality.

As noted by Barnard, Zou, Sneider, and countless other Japanese textbook analysts, there is rarely a complete, unilateral avoidance of Atrocity discussion; however, there are often crucial topics and details left unexamined by these texts, such as the treatment of comfort women. While these texts seem to address, often in candid detail, the brutality inflicted upon innocent Chinese civilians, the topic of comfort women does not receive similar frankness:

Contrary to popular belief, Japanese textbooks by no means avoid some of the most controversial wartime moments. The widely used textbooks contain accounts, though not detailed ones, of the massacre of Chinese civilians in Nanjing in 1937 by Japanese forces. The textbooks tend to reflect the arguments among Japanese about this event including the issues of the numbers of victims and to what degree the massacre was an organized punishment, with racial overtones, of the Chinese. But the comfort women issue is dealt with in spare detail, sometimes only in a footnote (unlike, for example, the graphic and extensive descriptions offered in Korean textbooks).\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{113} Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 40.
While brutal treatment of men, women, and children during the Nanking Atrocity is generally addressed in textbooks, the controversial topic of Japan’s enslavement of both Chinese and Korean women into the sex trade are dealt with sparingly, if at all. Scholars have noted this absence and hypothesized its explanation. While there remains no clear, singular interpretation of the reasoning, this information, in addition to the linguistic nuances explored by Zou and Barnard, further reveals the complexities of the Japanese textbook debates.

In a comparative analysis of both Chinese and Japanese texts, Sneider argues that it is ultimately Chinese texts, rather than Japanese texts, that demonstrate a nationalistic presentation of the Atrocity. Through his research, Sneider found that Japanese textbooks tend to offer a more generalized discussion of the Atrocity and typically lack the patriotic overtones that characterize their Chinese counterparts:

The study found that Japanese textbooks are relatively devoid of overt attempts to promote patriotism and that they contain more information about controversial wartime issues such as the Nanjing Massacre than is widely believed. In contrast, Chinese textbooks, particularly after their revision a decade ago, are consciously aimed at promoting a nationalist view of the past as part of the country’s ‘patriotic education’ campaign.¹¹⁴

While Japanese textbooks may lack the explicitly nationalist messages of the post-Patriotic Education Campaign resources, Sneider cautions that this straightforwardness does not make Japanese educational materials more complete, as evidenced by the avoidance of the comfort women topic.¹¹⁵ This frankness in assessment and refrain from identification-driven narratives is not limited to events in which Japan served as the

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¹¹⁴ Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 35.
¹¹⁵ Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 37.
primary perpetrator; rather, the extent of this “dry chronology of events”\textsuperscript{116} is exemplified by the lack of social contextualization regarding issues that directly impacted Japanese civilians:

‘Even on the issues in which Japanese were victims (such as atomic bombing and Siberian internment), Japanese textbooks remain detached, making no moral judgement….This approach to history means that Japanese textbooks read more like chronological charts than coherent historical narrative.’\textsuperscript{117}

Rather than delineate blame in historical conflicts or pursue identification through shared trauma, Japanese textbooks, Sneider argues, tend to demonstrate a more progressive critique of war generally.\textsuperscript{118} However, Sneider also problematizes this treatment of wartime atrocities, arguing that readers are left without a clear, unambiguous means of interacting with the past:

The impassive neutral nature of Japanese high school history textbooks certainly reflects the inability of postwar Japan to resolve its own debate about the wartime past. But it also is the product….of the conscious decision of a nation, reflecting on its disastrous wartime defeat, to avoid the siren call of sentimental patriotism.\textsuperscript{119}

However, what Sneider views as an intentional distancing from sentimental patriotism may, in fact, reflect Barnard’s assessment of Japanese textbooks as condemning the event without condemning the parties responsible. Thus, Japanese textbooks reflect both a superficial admittance of the events and a sentence-level confusion of groups responsible. As a result, these texts dislocate perpetrators and

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{116}] Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 39.
\item[\textsuperscript{117}] Haruo Tohmatsu qtd. in Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 39-40.
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 51.
\item[\textsuperscript{119}] Sneider, “Textbooks and Patriotic Education,” 52.
\end{itemize}
distance readers from the event.

The multi-faceted nature of textbook interpretation and scholarship demonstrates one of the many obstacles present in the Nanking Atrocity debates. Ultimately, the nature of Japan’s treatment of the Atrocity through education holds significant implications for international discourse. In order to effectively establish a standardized discussion of the events, it is first important to investigate the reality of the textbook debates. Although the generalized claim that Japanese textbooks are revisionist in nature is here disputed through the invaluable research of scholars, the pervasiveness of this assumption in Atrocity debates poses obstacles for the future of international diplomacy. Each country continues to use the textbook debates as a platform for addressing more serious, foundational issues related to Nanking memory. As a result, these debates often accomplish little more than exacerbating international tensions. While there are inconsistencies in educational discourse concerning the Nanking Atrocity, this unreliability is the result of the inconclusiveness and ambivalence of early post-war discussions of the event. Thus, the nature of Atrocity education is reflective of not only modern but historical geopolitical influences as well. Educational materials represent only one form of Atrocity memory formation in modern society. In addition, as the following section will examine, cinematic and literary texts also play a significant role in accepting, challenging, and reinforcing interpretations of the event. To determine ways that China, Japan, and the U.S. can effectively address and overcome the Atrocity, it is necessary to examine the ways that these materials construct narratives and impact public memory.
Chapter V: Literary and Cinematic Representations

While textbooks and educational materials reflect what is often perceived to be more official memorializations of historical events, more “informal” mediums such as literature and cinema also serve to construct, revise, and perpetuate shared narratives. These narratives, like those supported in China and Japan’s educational resources, have evolved with the changes of geopolitics.

In the post-war era, efforts to memorialize the Nanking Atrocity were hampered by the physical destruction to publishing centers as a result of the Japanese invasion, the Chinese preoccupation with domestic conflicts, and each nation’s efforts to adapt to the challenges of modernity. As Michael Berry notes A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film, “Except for a small number of early works written during the War of Resistance, the literary history of the Nanjing Massacre is marked largely by silence until the sudden reemergence of the incident in political and literary discourses in the 1980s,”120 a fact that separates Nanking memorializations greatly from their Holocaust counterparts, which comprise an independent genre in literature and film. However, since the modern revival in Nanking memory, impacted in large part to the proliferation of Iris Chang’s The Rape of Nanking, there has been a surge in literary and cinematic representations of the event.

Given the significant increase in Nanking depictions in film and literature, it is important to determine the ways in which these various texts interpret, revise, and

120 Michael Berry, A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 136.
construct Atrocity narratives. Doing so is instrumental in understanding the modern status of not only “unofficial” or wider public discourse on the event but even in understanding more authoritative interpretations. These secondary interpretations of the Nanking Atrocity are invaluable for, as Berry asserts, “Memories, perceptions, and impressions of atrocity are often shaped not by the actual events of history but rather by how those events are represented, re-created, reconstructed, and, in some cases, deconstructed through the lens of popular culture.”

**Japanese Literature and Films: Disproving or Proving the “Facts” Using Sexual Violence**

Generally, despite cultivating the largest volume of scholarship on the topic, Japan produces the least amount of literary and cinematic representations of the Nanking Atrocity. The most famous literary representations of the even by Japanese authors come not from the modern era of Nanking scholarship, but from the earlier post-war years. However, these works do share a thematic similarity with modern left-wing Japanese productions. Japanese literary and cinematic representations of the even can thus be divided into two categories, goal-oriented toward asserting two separate Nanking narratives. These themes include disproving or proving the “facts” of the Atrocity using sexual violence as evidence. The first category includes the literary works of such acclaimed Japanese authors as Yukio Mishima and Endo Shusaku. Mishima, an outspoken writer with a preoccupation with Japan’s glory days of samurai ethics and wartime spirit, condemned Japan’s post-WWII concessions and Westernization:

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Mishima was deeply attracted to the austere patriotism and martial spirit of Japan’s past, which he contrasted unfavourably to the materialistic Westernized people and the prosperous society of Japan in the post-war era…. On November 25, 1970, after having that day delivered the final installment of The Sea of Fertility to his publisher, Mishima and four Shield Society followers seized control of the commanding general’s office at a military headquarters near downtown Tokyo. He gave a 10-minute speech from a balcony to a thousand assembled servicemen in which he urged them to overthrow Japan’s post-World War II constitution, which forbids war and Japanese rearmament. The soldiers’ response was unsympathetic, and Mishima then committed seppuku in the traditional manner, disemboweling himself with his sword, followed by decapitation at the hands of a follower.\(^{122}\)

Although Mishima’s depiction of Japanese aggressions in “Peonies” did not demonstrate an overt sympathy for Chinese rape victims, scholars such as Amanda Weiss deem this admission of Japanese sexual violence noteworthy, given the nation’s silence on this topic.\(^{123}\) Furthermore, this depiction of Japanese aggression, however unsympathetic to the actual suffering it produced, was instrumental in future left-wing cinematic representations of Japanese guilt. Considering how closely Mishima’s glorified nationalistic view of Japanese militarism mirrors that of modern-day right-wing revisionists in Japan, his short story “Peonies” is certainly an outlier not only from his other works but from general right-wing romanticized wartime depictions as well. In his translator’s note to “Peonies,” Arizona State University professor Anthony H. Chambers reconciles this contradiction, stating, “The implied antiwar, antimilitary message of ‘Peonies’ and its acknowledgement of the realities of war….come from a youthful Mishima who had not yet assumed the role and persona for which he is most clearly remembered today.”\(^{124}\)

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The humanness of the flowers is foreshadowed, even before the narrator is aware of their symbolic purpose. He feels eerily in the midst of a field of individual peonies, each with its own distinctive identity:

Each peony had its own character. When I looked out over the garden, the sightseers standing and squatting here and there obstructed my view; but, nevertheless, the peonies, casting heavy shadows one by one on the black soil, were unlike plants in full bloom at an ordinary flower garden. Each one, encircled by its own allotment of soil, seemed isolated from the rest. The overall impression was one of melancholy. The wide-open blooms, far too large for the squat shrubs they adorned, had an eerie vividness about them, as if they had just blossomed from the rain-dampened soil.125

The narrator is unsettled by the peonies and their individuality, noting immediately their distinctiveness from ordinary flower gardens. The foreshadowing is continued, as Mishima emphasized the personified quality of the flowers through subtle word choice:

“Stopping before a peony, he stood with his hands folded behind him and stared at the flower’s face.”126 Kawamata, the owner and cultivator of the garden, does not interact with any of the guests milling about. Rather, he holds almost a silent communication with the peonies, staring into each flowers’ “face.” Immediately following this subtle observation from the narrator, Kuasada brings this eeriness into full exposure through dialogue: “‘Five hundred and eighty plants—or five hundred and eighty persons,’ Kuasada said suddenly.”127 Here, the silent truth with Mishima carefully weaved through only a few short expository or dialogic notes becomes fully explicit, and the eeriness and dread felt be the reader is fully realized. Kuasada provides Kawamata’s backstory, hypothesizing the figure’s inherent need for recognition of his wrongdoings:

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125 Mishima, “Peonies,” 53.
126 Mishima, “Peonies,” 54.
127 Mishima, “Peonies,” 54.
‘According to the war-crime charges, he’s responsible for the massacre of tens of thousands. But the number the Colonel killed with his own hands, gladly and meticulously, was only five hundred and eighty. Moreover, they were all women. The Colonel took a personal interest only in killing women. After becoming the owner of this place, Kawamata strictly limited the number of peony plants to five hundred and eighty. It’s because he cultivated the flowers with his own hands that the peony garden has turned out this well. But what do you make of such a peculiar diversion? I’ve been thinking about it, and now I believe I’ve reached the right conclusion. He wanted to commemorate, in a secret way, his own evil. He has probably succeeded in fulfilling the evildoer’s most compelling need: to exhibit his own indelible evil without endangering himself.’

Like the narrator, we readers are expected to listen to Kawamata’s story in surprise.

The story ends with Kuasada’s narration—Mishima reveals nothing about the narrator’s reaction. So, then, it cannot be assumed that “Peonies” makes any overt claim about the ways in which Kawamata’s actions—either his killing or his commemoration—should be judged. Rather, the reader is left with a blank slate for reaction in absence of the guiding lens of the narrator’s response to the tale. However, Kuasada’s monologue provides the reader with more than objective facts—again, stylistic considerations like word choice reveal a deeper interpretation. The flower garden is both a “diversion” and an “exhibition”; Kuasada intuits that Kawamata’s hobby gives the appearance of some mental or emotional separation from the killings, but, reality, that this act is, on some conscious or subconscious level, an exhibition of carefully-orchestrated killings. For Kawamata, the artistry of the garden is symbolic of the artistry of these meticulous murders. Kuasada openly refers to the killings as evils that are indelible—impervious to the corrosive forces of time and forgetfulness. Does Kuasada assume that Kawamata wishes these memories of atrocity to be forgotten? In what ways would Kawamata be

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128 Mishima, “Peonies,” 54.
endangered, and in what ways is he removed from danger by virtue of the garden’s secret symbolism? These questions are left unanswered, and Mishima betrays no easy interpretation. However, this acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of rape during the war, and the realization that Japanese post-war methods of remembering (or “commemorating”) are open to reflection and even criticism, reflect a key separation from Mishima’s later unreserved, ubiquitous pride in Japanese militarism and serves as key inspiration for later left-wing condemnations of Japanese atrocities.

Endo Shusaku’s “Scandal” is another work, also by an acclaimed Japanese author, that similarly examines Japanese wartime atrocity; however, like in Mishima’s “Peonies,” this examination is peripheral and inconclusive. Additionally, Shusaku’s work was published much closer to the onset of modern Nanking debates than Mishima’s short story. Endo Shusaka is a major twentieth century writer in Japan; his seminal works include “Silence,” a novel that follows the story of Christian missionaries and the obstacles that they faced in feudal Japan, and “The Sea and Poison,” a novel that paints a decidedly negative image of Japanese medical experimentations on POWS, and “The Samurai,” a historical novel that follows the adventures of one samurai, who travels in pursuit of opening trade routes for his shogun.  

“Scandal,” published in 1986, “features a Japanese woman recalling her husband’s burning of Chinese women and children during the war.”

131 Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 446.
Shusaku’s work remains noteworthy for even such a peripheral treatment of the Atrocity. Although neither work presents on overt criticism of Nanking, Mishima’s “Peonies” and Shusaku’s “Scandal” are noteworthy given their frank treatment of Japanese aggression against Chinese, and, in particular, against Chinese women through sexual violence. Furthermore, these works are significant by virtue of the near absence of Atrocity-related literature or film—even these works only discuss the event peripherally. It was not more recently that representations of the events began to appear in Japanese cinema, and even then, these works were often created in response to Chinese film adaptations. Through cinema, the themes previously introduced are more obviously wielded: right-wing cinematic adaptations discount the Nanking Atrocity and pay particular attention to denying any evidence of sexual misconduct committed by Japanese soldiers, while left-wing films, responding to right-wing representations, depict vividly the sexual brutality of the forces in order to “prove” the Atrocity’s existence.

No Japanese project is more exemplary of the right-wing Nanking narrative than Mizushima Satoru’s proposed, *Nanking no Shinjitsu (The Truth about Nanking)*. Mizushima, angered by Chinese, and more recently, American depictions of the Nanking Atrocity, has begun planning his own three-part series to reveal the “truth” of the events. Mizushima, a director for the right-wing online news publication Channel Sakura and writer for the journal *Seiro*, took fault with the American documentary *Nanking* and immediately announced his own Atrocity project.¹³² As David McNeill reports in a

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December 2007 article for the Japan Times, Mizushima’s project has already gained support among conservative higher-ups in Japan:

The documentary is supported by more than a dozen lawmakers….including Nariaki Nakayama, an LDP member of the House of Councilors and an education minister under former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, and a panel of academics, including Shudo Higashinakano, a history professor at Asia University in Tokyo who provides much of its thin intellectual gruel.133

Although Mizushima is fairly independent in his aims to undermine Chinese and Western representations of Nanking, the open government support of his project is disconcerting given the outright denial that his works present. So far, only the first and last installments of the three-part series have been produced; the first section, devoted to the Tokyo Trials, was released as a film under the title *The Truth of Nanking: Seven Condemned Criminals in 2007*.134 The third section, *The Truth of Nanking 1937*, was developed as a manga.135 In her article, “Contested Images of Rape: The Nanjing Massacre in Chinese and Japanese Films,” scholar Amanda Weiss summarizes the plot of The Truth of Nanking:

*Truth* is a litany of right-wing conspiracy theories and xenophobia loosely constructed around the making of a Hollywood film on Nanjing—an imagined alternative to 2007’s Nanking. While preparing a documentary about Iris Chang, American producer/director Dan Shiotsuki and actress Anna Kinski encounter a sea of Chinese propaganda, lies, and intimidation. Female Chinese spies and female Chinese American machinations compromise Dan and Anna’s ‘search for truth’ at every turn. Their ultimate ‘discovery’: Nanjing simply didn’t happen, and the real victims were the Japanese soldiers executed after the postwar trials.136

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Appropriating the Chinese thematic device of the “discovery” or “proving” of Nanking in films about the event, Mizushima effectively turns this element on its head: now, the earnest search for truth by Americans Shiotsuki and Kinski result in the revelation that the Nanking Atrocity is a myth constructed through Chinese nationalistic propaganda. By making the fictional documentary about Chang, the most vocal modern proponent of Nanking awareness, Mizushima is able to undermine one of the conservative revisionists’ greatest challengers. Through their honest efforts to find the truth about Nanking and Chang, Shiotsuki and Kinski are validated and are viewed as credible; this credibility makes their ultimate realizations about the Atrocity and about Chang even more believable and horrific—her ethos is effectively decimated. Weiss examines the ways that these critical depictions of Chang are inextricably linked to one of the film’s underlying messages concerning the duplicity of Western and Chinese women, the very same groups that claim Japanese sexual violence:

*Truth* constructs the Nanjing issue as an attack on Japanese masculinity, addressing its invective toward women. In a revealing appropriations of the meaning of Chang’s death (who committed suicide in 2004 after a long struggle with depression), it concludes that she killed herself out of shame in realizing that her book was flawed. It also attacks her choice to commit suicide, since she was the mother of a young (male) child, making a nationalist appeal to motherhood. Throughout, Mizushima emphasizes the duplicitous nature of Chinese women and particularly Chinese American women, depicting them as prostitutes and spies engaging in ‘honeytrap’ plots.137

The traditional victim-aggressor narrative, perpetuated by Western and Chinese sources, is thereby inverted as Japanese men are subjected to the lures and deceit of Chinese and American women. However, if Mishima and Shusaku openly referenced

137 Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 448.
Japanese sexual aggression (without overtly demonstrating sympathy for the victims), why does Mizushima go to such lengths to reverse a once-accepted truth of wartime violence against women? Weiss presents a possible answer to this question in her analysis of the film’s glorification of Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Takeshi, who were executed for the 100-man killing contest. Weiss states, “As dignity, honor, racial superiority, and self-control are central to the right wing’s mythos of the Yamato hero, wartime rape is seen as an affront to their foundational narrative. The film thus aims to rescue the honor of the Japanese soldier by denying wartime sexual violence.” As the admission of this wartime violence may tarnish the purported chivalry and heroism of Japanese soldiers (think Japan’s wartime coverage of generosity toward Nanking residents) (and certainly, neither Shusaku nor Mishima have such explicitly romanticized views of these figures in their works), modern right-wing discussions of the Nanking Atrocity must make significant efforts to address and undermine claims of sexual violence. In order to depict a heroic narrative of Japanese militarism, figures like Mizushima absolve soldiers of any wrongdoing and even depict women as sexual aggressors.

In response, then, left-wing media makes an overt, conscious effort to emphasize narratives of Japanese sexual brutality. By emphasizing Japanese rape of Chinese women, and even by depicting Japanese de-masculinization via rape, these left-wing productions attempt to not only silence revisionist groups in Japan but to prove, much like the Chinese films, the actuality of the event itself. As with right-wing filmmakers,

these left-wing groups rely on 20th century literary classics to redefine the Nanking debates. One left-wing film, for example, retells the story of one of Edogawa Rampo’s classics, “The Caterpillar.” Rampo, a famous crime and mystery novelist, used grotesque imagery throughout his writing to shock readers—the origins of his dark, gothic style are credited in his pseudonym, which is meant to sound like “Edgar Allen Poe.”

Grotesque and dark imagery abound in his short story, “The Caterpillar.” In this work, a decorated Japanese war hero, Lieutenant Sunaga, returns to his wife, Tokiko, severely deformed, having lost all limbs and senses but sight. Although his wife initially serves her husband dutifully, she becomes increasingly more disgusted with his helplessness and deformity, considering his appearance monstrous and subhuman:

The left ear was entirely gone, and only a small black hole showed where it had once been. From the left side of his mouth across his cheek to beneath his eyes there was a pronounced twitch like a suture, while an ugly scar also crept across his right temple up to the top of his head. His throat caved in as if the flesh there had been scooped out, while his nose and mouth retained nothing of their original shapes.

Rampo’s descriptions of Sunaga, viewed through the perspective of Tokiko, are truly grotesque. Growing tired of caring for the helpless Sunaga, Tokiko begins to treat her husband sadistically, mocking and manipulating his now-unsatiable sexual urges and derives an almost sexual pleasure from the act of mistreating her husband. The physical disfigurement of the war hero, then, is mirrored by the moral disfigurement of his wife.

Notably, the story does not take place after the Second Sino-Japanese War but in

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the years following the Russo-Japanese war. Furthermore, Rampo offers no explicit condemnation of Sunaga’s wartime actions (Sunaga’s experiences are not disclosed at all), the de-masculinization and complete physical disfigurement of Sunaga seems to imply an inversion of the standard “war hero” narrative. In her Reuters review of the film, writer Maggie Lee examines these elements, stating,

Significantly politicizing and humanizing Edogawa Rampo’s 1929 horror-fantasy short story of entomological sexual instinct (banned from reprinting in 1939), his focus is on war’s impact on the civilian psyche and the hypocrisy of ‘patriotic duty,’ expressed through a woman’s sadomasochistic relationship with her husband after he is horribly maimed in battle. The original setting the Russo-Japanese War, from which Japan emerged victorious, is transposed to WWII, which ended in defeat.  

In direct response to right-wing filmmakers, directors such as Koji Wakamatsu employ the same tactic of using literary classics to retell the history of Nanking. Left-wing efforts further reflect their right-wing counterparts, as Wakamatsu, like Mizhushima, is recognized for his controversial productions. Prior to Caterpillar, Wakamatsu produced United Red Army, a critique of Japanese left-wing extremists. Although the work received some backlash, Wakamatsu’s pair films Caterpillar and United Red Army demonstrate a fair critique and appraisal of both political extremes in Japan. In Caterpillar, Wakamatsu undermines traditional visions of nationalistic, militaristic heroism by turning the classical “war hero” into a sexually frustrated invalid:

Caterpillar relates the downfall of the barbarous Lietuenant Kurokawa [Sunaga], a sexually abusive husband, rapist, and murderer. Kurokawa is horribly maimed during a battle in China and returns home mute, quadriplegic, and completely reliant on his wife Shigeko [Tokiko]. The townspeople revere Kurokawa as a ‘god of war,’

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whom Shigeko consents to nursing as the ‘wife of a god of war.’ Later, she tires of this arrangement and begins to mock his manner of speaking, parade him in front of others, and even rape him. Thus victimized by a woman, Kurokawa is haunted by the Chinese woman he murdered and eventually commits suicide.\textsuperscript{143}

Thus distorting the typical image of the Japanese war hero, Wakamatsu inverts the traditional perception of the Nanking Atrocity by making the aggressors victims (albeit unsympathetic ones) in their own right. Furthermore, the sexual violence that Kurokawa endures under his wife’s sadistic nursing leads him to reflect on his own brutalization of Chinese women during the war. Here, the common thematic device of sexual violence, depicted in both right-wing and left-wing Japanese films, is fully emphasized. As Eric Kohn notes in his film review for \textit{Indie Wire}, Wakamatsu’s directorial choices force viewers to confront the reality of Japanese sexual violence during the war, a carefully avoided topic in Japanese Nanking discussions, education, and cinematic representations:

From its opening minutes, Wakamatsu announces his intention of dismantling militarist propaganda. Newsreel footage of Japanese attacks suddenly turns real, following the pre-mutilated Tadashi into a Chinese home where he brutally rapes a shrieking woman, while triumphant music plays in the background. Tadashi’s later appearance furthers this ironic juxtaposition of celebration and cruelty, as he becomes the de facto face of Japanese strength despite having none himself.\textsuperscript{144}

In this adaptation of Rampo’s tale, the aggressor becomes victim of not only the ravages of war but of sexual violence himself. Weiss examines the ways in which Wakamatsu’s film invert typical narratives of Japanese rape of Chinese women by having the victims stare defiantly at the audience, willing the audience to recognize the reality and extent of Japanese atrocity:

\textsuperscript{143} Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 448.
Caterpillar also reverses the gaze by having female victims look back at the rapists. The film begins with Kurokawa’s rape and murder of a Chinese woman. Her accusing eye looks directly at the camera lens, the film slowly fading to an image of the Japanese flag. The red circle of the hinomaru replaces her eye, indicting the Japanese nation for her murder.\(^{145}\)

Furthermore, by becoming a powerless rape victim himself, Kurokawa must also recognize the Chinese victim’s (and Shigeko’s) perspective and the consequences of his brutality:

Shigeko’s reversal of male violence likewise negates Japanese militant masculinity and avenges the Chinese woman’s death.....Kurokawa suddenly sees himself from the perspective of the Chinese woman he killed in the first scene, surrounded by her screams. Yet it is not simply a reversal, for Shigeko has also been traumatized by rape and is reliving her traumatic past, as well as appropriating Kurokawa’s violence.\(^{146}\)

In a society that primarily denies Japanese rape or the establishment of “comfort women” during the Second Sino-Japanese war, Wakamatsu’s open depiction of Kurokawa’s sexual violence and sexual victimization both asserts the reality of the Nanking Atrocity and the proliferation of Japanese rape of Chinese women while de-masculinizing the mythic image of militaristic heroism, an ideal which Weiss notes is inextricably linked to masculinity in the Japanese mentality:

Caterpillar makes an astute observation: the nationalism of the right is based on male power and female subordination and has been consistently so, form the imperial era to the present, albeit in different ways toward women of different nationalities.....In attacking the right’s masculinity, [the film exposes] a consistent attitude of nationalist ideology and the dangers at the core of this xenophobic misogyny.\(^{147}\)

\(^{145}\) Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 449.

\(^{146}\) Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 449.

\(^{147}\) Weiss, “Contested Images of Rape,” 450.
Thus, while Mizushima’s *The Truth of Nanking* demonstrates the ways in which conservative Japan uses the absence of Japanese sexual violence against Chinese women as evidence against the existence of the Atrocity, *Caterpillar* reveals the ways that left-wing groups similarly politicize the female body in order to assert their Nanking narrative.

**Chinese Literature and Films: Proving the Facts and Assigning Blame**

Since the early years of the post-war era and even during the Japanese occupation of major cities, Chinese authors sought to record the events of the war. As is noted in the early postwar text, *China: After Seven Years of War*, maintaining and even improving the proliferation of Chinese novels, short stories, poems, and plays was a key goal of literary groups and individual writers alike during this time. The text lauds the literary movement as a nationalistic effort that democratized literature and made the experiences of lower classes more accessible to the separate community of writers:

> Chinese writers have been endeavoring to produce a new literature out of the turmoil of tears and blood. They have used literature as a weapon of education and propaganda to mobilize the people for war. They have composed plays and stories portraying soldiers, farmers, and the rest of the common people. They have come out of their attics and ivory towers to see the people and to see what is happening. Before the war most writers lived in large cities, such as Peiping and Shanghai, and knew little about the people; for the Chinese are a people of the farms, the villages, and the market towns. In occupying the coastal cities the Japanese compelled the writers to move to the interior, where they have met the people.\(^{148}\)

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Truly, as the authors of *China: After Seven Years of War* assert, the Japanese invasion provided writers with an almost ideal opportunity to revitalize the literary culture of China and to unify under the shared banner of national pride and resistance:

Chinese writers do war work under the banner of the National Writers Antiaggression Association, organized in Hankow in 1938, of which Lao Sheh has been the most enthusiastic supporter. Before the war, they were divided into two major groups, King Pai and Hai Pai (literally, Peking School and Shanghai School). The groups looked down upon each other and never cooperated. The war has swept away such differences, and writers now have only one thing in mind—to help the nation to defeat Japan.149

The authors admit the shortcomings of Eastern literature, noting that the style of Chinese writers may not have caught up to that of western writers. However, they maintain that Chinese literature serves an important social purpose during the war and that Chinese writers can become ennobled through their efforts to unite the public:

In an article entitled ‘The Literary Policy We Need,’ Chang Tao-fan, chairman of the Central Cultural Movement Committee of the Kuomintang Party, writes that literature should no longer be directed to the leisure class but should help to win the war by mobilizing the people. It should reflect the Chinese way of life and the Chinese philosophy of love, equality, sacrifice, and patriotism.150

As a text published in 1945, *China: After Seven Years of War* demonstrates the earliest interpretations of wartime literature. These works served the key purpose of building and maintaining national pride and resistance, just as journalistic coverage in this era sought to frame news in the most optimistic and patriotic lens. By encouraging Chinese resistance and uniting different groups across the country, the writers of *China: After Seven Years of War* recognized that literary efforts were essential to the war, even

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149 Cheng et al., *China: After Seven Years of War*, 132.
150 Cheng et al., *China: After Seven Years of War*, 131-2.
calling these works “weapons.” This call for nationalistic works influenced the tone of wartime literature and the ways in which events like Nanking factored into the national memory.

However, despite the efforts of writers during the wartime and early post-war years, there were few texts that specifically discussed the Nanking Atrocity—likely because the initial interpretation of the event was that it was not uniquely distinct from the other atrocities committed by Japan during the war. So, the majority of Nanking texts were not created until the 1980s, when changes in geopolitics drew public attention to the historical context of Chinese-Japanese relations.

The first major work detailing the Atrocity was Ah Long’s *Nanjing*. Writer Chen Shoumei, pen name Ah Long, served in the army and fought in Shanghai, where he was seriously wounded. As he recovered, he drafted not only the first compilation of journalistic reports about the war, but “the first Chinese literary work to attempt to narrate the atrocities of the Nanjing Massacre.”

Although, as Berry notes in a footnote, Tatsuzo Ishikawa’s collection of interview material with Japanese soldiers, *Living Soldiers* was actually released in 1938, a year earlier. The work was quickly suppressed by censors, although Berry notes that Long was familiar with the text and referenced it in his own writing.

As the earliest work detailing Japanese atrocities in Nanking, Ah Long’s interpretation of the events are invaluable; the national importance of the text led to its recognition by the Chinese National Arts and Literature Anti-Japanese Committee, a

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group that conferred on Long the award of best novel. However, the delayed publishing of the text (released only after Long’s death in 1987) suggests a conflicting national interpretation of Long’s work. While publication was delayed in part due to the challenges posed by the Japanese invasion, concerns about the unfavorable depictions of Chinese militarism also impacted the work’s dissemination. Furthermore, as Berry notes, Long was a political target during the Communist regime for his theoretical works and supposed membership in the counterrevolutionary group, the “Hu Feng Clique.” Finally, two decades after Long’s death, his novel *Nanjing* underwent “some ‘necessary’ revisions and [was] refitted with the new title *Nanjing Bloody Sacrifice (Nanjing xueji)*” and was finally published in 1987. Sharing a common trait with many future Nanking Atrocity works, Ah Long’s work sometimes blurs distinctions between fiction and nonfiction, as his writing freely mixes the true experiences of survivors with fictional stories. Furthermore, as Berry notes, “the long, detailed descriptions of war strategy and historical facts, combined with a general lack of heroes or even main characters, point away from traditional conceptions of narrative fiction.” The immediacy of the historical events are evidenced, therefore, through the generic considerations of the novel. By implementing Nanking tales that would have been circulating as he began writing, Long’s novel compiles and repurposes Nanking memories.

*Nanjing* is distinct as a Nanking text not only for its immediacy but also for its overall message: while later film and novels in the 1980s would condemn the Japanese

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atrocities committed, Long’s writing selects Chinese compatriots as the target of criticism instead. As Berry explains, Long’s lack of any singular protagonist to guide interpretation amidst the chaos of so many supporting characters serves to enhance this criticism of the Chinese: “These unfavorable descriptions are gradually developed with the introduction of more characters, and *Nanjing* is transformed into a forum for introspective and often scathing criticism of the Chinese national character.”\(^{156}\) Long’s concerns of Chinese military actions and hypernationalism were responsive to the Nationalist’s Scorched-Earth Policy:

> Although often overlooked by contemporary historians (especially in China), the Scorched-Earth Policy had a widespread impact. In fact, one reporter from The New York Times estimated the damage by these incidents of “Chinese military incendiary” at $20 to $30 million. Ah Long is perhaps the only Chinese author to highlight the detrimental effects of this policy and its implications in a larger cultural context.\(^{157}\)

The notion of national character was not revolutionary; as Chapter 4’s examination of wartime reporting demonstrates, the U.S., China, and Japan all used “national character” arguments in order to unify national sentiments and encourage resistance. However, Long significantly uses these same arguments to condemn his former comrades, or, at least, his fellow nationals. Berry conceptualizes this inversion of “national character” arguments as Long asserting the “unthinkable” consideration that internal ethics and behavior poses a greater threat to Chinese society than external enemies.\(^{158}\)

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\(^{158}\) Berry, *A History of Pain*, 149.
Criticisms of the Chinese “national character” were constructed through both military and civilian figures. Long presents a clear illustration of Chinese deficiencies through characters that fear war and bloodshed and who are unempathetic of their fellow civilians to the point of exerting violence. As Berry notes, the cacophonous image of Nanking is displayed through the myriad of characters, linguistic techniques such as onomatopoeia, and evocations of literary tradition via references to cannibalism à la Lu Xun’s “The Diary of a Madman”: “Cannibalism and madness, the two dark tenants of Lu Xun’s canonical treatise “Diary of a Madman,” are here articulated in the most certain terms, even in a disturbingly literal way.”

Ah Long’s critique of the Chinese “national character” therefore employs both new and borrowed imagery to assert the unavoidable chaos of the war and the disharmonious and unified nature of Chinese war efforts.

It is easy to recognize, then, why Long’s work received backlash. By creating a narrative for the Nanking Atrocity that problematized the Chinese “national character,” Long not only condemned those present during the war but indicted the whole of Chinese society. Furthermore, Long’s criticism is problematic not only in the early post-war era of national disunity but even during the modern era as well, as Berry argues in *A History of Pain*:

This revision of traditional views of the massacre opens up a new set of problems seldom explored, not simply because *Nanjing* is alternately both patriotic and highly critical of the Chinese but also because Ah Long’s depiction of the military battle, although patriotic in spirit, runs the risk of lessening the perceived severity of the massacre and adding fuel to Japanese revisionist arguments.

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159 Berry, *A History of Pain*, 150.
However, despite the issues posed by Long’s interpretation of the Nanking Atrocity, it is not impossible to glean a hint of optimism in his writing. Some readers point to the novel’s epilogue as a potential source of this reading, often criticizing what seems, from a modern view, like a forced positivity: “From our perspective, Ah Long’s conclusion, not with the brutal displays of rapes and murders in the Nanjing Massacre but with the Nationalist victory at Wuhu feels tacked on, even though at the time of writing the events at Wuhu may have signaled a genuine optimism.”\textsuperscript{161} Rather than this “obligatory optimism of ‘national defense literature,’ or guofang wenxue,” Berry suggests a more appropriate ending found in the final chapter before the epilogue, in a fleeting moment of human empathy shared by a Japanese soldier and his Chinese opponent:

> Only at the conclusion of the novel proper, just before Ah Long’s epilogue, is there a somewhat enigmatic portrait of a Japanese that presents a fleeting glimmer of hope. Or does it? The confusing and contradictory symbols and emotions mark the complex and contradictory sentiments throughout the novel—and in war itself.”\textsuperscript{162}

This inconclusive moment of uncertainty and fear demonstrates the very human depiction of war that Long’s novel presents—the writing even prevents a clear reading of Long’s personal interpretations. Unfortunately, Long’s vision was rejected in the generalization of Nanking Atrocity memories during the 1980s and he suffered immensely under the persecution of the Communist regime, a persecution that actualized Long’s fears of “the cannibalistic enemy within.”\textsuperscript{163}

Long’s Nanjing serves as a useful landmark to gauge other Atrocity works.

\textsuperscript{161} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 152.
\textsuperscript{162} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 142.
\textsuperscript{163} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 153.
Whether by intention or accidentally, Long’s critical examination of Chinese “national character” as a method of interpreting the Atrocity established a genre of sorts. While modern Nanking memorializations in literature and film would suggest that Long’s view was comparatively independent in its critiques, there are other writers that share this same lens of analysis.

Although written several decades after Long’s recorded conceptions of Nanking, Ye Zhaoyan’s *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* is another important text that falls under the category of unfavorable depictions of the Chinese “national character.” Like Long’s Nanjing, Zhaoyan’s works is a cacophony of human interactions that demonstrate the inexplicable nature of the Nanking Atrocity. As Berry notes, the complex and contradictory nature of the story is apparent in the novel’s title:

First published in 1996, Nanjing 1937: A Love Story is perhaps Ye Zhaoyan’s most ambitious project to date….Starting with its title, the novel is a literal contradiction in terms. On the eve of the 1937 Rape of Nanjing, one of the most horrid moments in modern Chinese history, how could there be such a thing as love or romance? In this contemporary take on the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly novel, traditional dichotomies of love and war are juxtaposed (and sometimes blurred), creating a unique literary vision where history is romanticized and love is militarized.\(^{164}\)\(^{155}\)

The Mandarin Duck and Butterfly genre is amorphous, defying easy definition. An oversimplified definition of the genre would suggest a similarity with romance novels in which characters are happily coupled, as pairs of ducks or butterflies, by the end of the work.\(^{165}\) By locating the action of the narrative within the chaos of the Nanking Atrocity, Zhaoyan’s work seems to challenge such an easy, complete conclusion. Zhaoyan uses

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parallel narratives of love and war to demonstrate the disruptive forces of war, as his “romantic vision of the thriving capital city is matched with passages in which militaristic terminology is appropriated to describe romantic episodes.” Within this confused context of love and war, Zhaoyan initiates his critique of Chinese society. He inverts accepted hero or victim narratives of the war, and presents the human inadequacy and fallibility of both soldiers and civilians:

Ye’s Nanjing is a world where notions of popular culture are (re)inscribed onto—and sometimes in place of—more traditional historical narratives….Chinese fighter pilots are remembered not for their heroic deeds in the air but rather for their superstitious bedside manners. Likewise, with the exception of two minor Japanese characters who express typically nationalist sentiments in support of the war effort, even the traditional ‘villains’ of the Nanjing Massacre—the Japanese people themselves—are portrayed in a very unorthodox manner.

Despite the proliferation of Chinese journalistic reports and fictional texts that assert a monolithic Japanese “national character,” Zhaoyan’s depictions of Japanese soldiers show them to be more sympathetic civilians who display none of the typical backwards features of the supposed Japanese monolith. Rather than emphasize the brutality of Japanese aggressors, Zhaoyan, like Long, demonstrates the horrible manifestations of Chinese violence: “Although he shies away from graphic illustrations of the Rape of Nanjing, he does not exercise the same restraint when depicting acts of violence committed by Chinese characters upon their compatriots.” As Berry notes, one of the most violent images in A Love Story is Monk’s acts of murder and necrophilia. Monk, a somewhat humorous Chinese character, obsessively pursues a young female,
Little Moon. With detailed description, Zhaoyan illustrates Monk’s murder and rape of Little Moon, thereby demonstrating the extent of Chinese-on-Chinese violence.

However, while Berry notes that these depictions of Chinese aggression and sexual violence echo the sentiments of Lu Xun and Ah Long, he ultimately asserts that Zhaoyan’s work avoids the didacticism of works like Nanjing:

….unlike Ah Long, Ye Zhaoyan is not one for moralizing, and Nanjing 1937’s complex combination of satire and sentimentality leads many readers onto a tightrope between loving and loathing his characters. And while Ah Long’s 1939 references to symbolic cannibalism and indigenous violence turned out to be tragically prophetic, Ye Zhaoyan’s 1996 literary injection of Chinese-Chinese violence can be read as a mere footnote to a century of violent political movements, state insurrections, purges, and atrocities at the hands of their own people.¹⁶⁹

The separate historical contexts in which the works were written, according to Berry, reveal the separate motivations behind these negative depictions of a Chinese “national character.” Berry therefore takes up a generally-held scholarly view that Chinese literary and cinematic interpretations of Nanking created after the major Communist era events (including civil war, famine, and the Cultural Revolution) cannot be extracted from the political dissent and dissatisfaction of the writers. Regardless of Zhaoyan’s political sentiments, his work serves as a companion piece to Ah Long’s under the general thematic similarity of internally-directed criticism.

In contrast to these works, the surge of cinematic depictions of the Nanking Atrocity throughout the 1980s and 90s generally abandoned this critique of Chinese society or “national character” in lieu of a more unifying interpretation of the event.

¹⁶⁹ Berry, *A History of Pain*, 166.
Explanation for the proliferation of Chinese victimization narratives in recent decades can be attributed to changes in geopolitics, as many scholars, including Ning An, Chen Liu, and Hong Zhu in their article, “Popular Geopolitics of Chinese Nanjing Massacre Films: A Feminist Approach,” argue; the many films created in the 80s, 90s, and 00s, such as Do Not Cry, Nanking (1995), Black Sun (1995), The Christ of Nanking (1995), and In the Name of the Emperor (1998), Nanjing (2007), The Rape of Nanking (2007), Purple Mountain (2008), Christmas in Nanjing: 1937 (2008), John Rabe (2009), City of Life and Death (2009), and The Flowers of War (2011), were created in “direct response to territorial conflicts that arose between China and Japan in these years.”

An et al. assert that, in response to conflicts arising between China and Japan in more recent years, Nanking Atrocity films are “used as cultural representations to form Chinese identities, build the national honour of China and the Chinese people, and produce images of an enemy of China (Japan).” Through a study of Nanking films, An et al. examine the ways that gendered narratives are used to construct these interpretations of the Atrocity. As in Japanese left-wing films, many Chinese Nanking representations use sexual violence against women as a key appeal to both pathos and logos, encouraging viewer empathy and serving to prove to existence of the Atrocity.

The authors explain the ways in which individual emotive reactions to the Nanking films lead to the formation of more collective interpretations through social media. As reviewers discuss their reactions to the film and the political nature of the

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depictions, a collective sense of feeling is built through the approval and perpetuation of these comments by fellow social media users:

Affected by the gendered narrative of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the individual emotions of hatred, anger, mercy, and love are evoked; at the same time, such emotions are employed to establish the binary identity of the Chinese ‘us’ and the Japanese ‘other’ in both ‘reel-life’ and real-life through the cross-scale processing. In so doing, a Chinese national identity and an anti-Japanese attitude are disseminated and legitimated among the public.\(^{172}\)

The research of An et al. can therefore be used to examine the ways that the female body is used throughout Chinese Nanking narratives and the ways that the pathological appeals of these narratives encourages perpetuation. However, in order to more fully comprehend the nuances of these narratives, it is necessary to examine the various thematic devices employed throughout the genre. Thus, like its Japanese counterparts, Chinese literary and cinematic representations of the Atrocity can be categorized thematically. One category, “Proving the Atrocity and Assigning Blame,” has already been exemplified through the works of Long and Zhaoyan. Both authors not only verified the Atrocity through depictions but also delineated blame—perhaps not for the event in its entirety, but at least for the surrounding chaos of nationalist fervor. This category of proving the Atrocity is disproportionately represented in Nanking films in comparison to a secondary, although still employed, theme: depicting humanity through Sino-Japanese romance.

As Ah Long’s \textit{Nanjing} demonstrates, many works that discuss the Atrocity tend to blur the distinctions between history and fiction. However, while Long’s novel only

incidentally “proves” the event (given its temporal proximity to the actual events), the more modern surge in Nanking cinema makes a more overt, conscious effort to provide support for the actuality of the event. As Berry notes, many Atrocity films are indeed documentaries, though dramas and more obviously fictionalized works are becoming increasingly popular:

Although much of the body of film on the Nanjing Massacre has been produced in the documentary mode, such as Peter Wang’s Magee’s Testament, the PRC produced The Massacre of Nanjing—The Surviving Witnesses (Nanjing datusha—Xingcunzhe de jianzheng), and Christine Choy and Nancy Tong’s In the Name of the Emperor, there were also three full-length dramas representing the Nanjing Massacre produced between 1987 and 1995.¹⁷³

There exist a few key reasons why these dramatic Nanking films will be examined in this chapter and documentaries (such as The Rape of Nanking, despite potential factual inaccuracies) will, for the most part, be overlooked. In his own scholarship, Berry presents one reason why examining fictionalized texts is crucial:

Although the painfully tragic black and white images of brutalized Chinese children taken by John Magee during the massacre and other footage filmed by the Japanese themselves, obtained after the allied victory, have become virtually ingrained on the Chinese collective unconscious through their continual reuse in a series of pedagogical documentaries, it is arguably the trio of dramatic features produced between 1987 and 1995 that have reached the widest Chinese audience in recent years. These three films serve not only as cinematic depictions of the Rape of Nanjing, but also as a means of recreating that tragic historical moment in the context of popular culture.¹⁷⁴

Breadth of influence is therefore an important consideration in examining fictionalized representations of the Atrocity. However, there are other important factors

as well. Documentaries give the weighty perception of officiality (regardless of whether this perception is valid), while openly dramatized depictions reveal more unofficial, personal, or idealized visions of the Atrocity. Furthermore, this thesis does not to prove or disprove elements or the entirety of the Atrocity—for that reason, secondary sources, which more effectively demonstrate the general evolution of Nanking memory and scholarship than primary sources, have been disproportionately referenced. These sources provide insight as to the ways that the Atrocity is remembered and the ways that those memories are subjected to criticism, political influences, and cultural trends. Thus, unofficial, fictionalized texts will be prioritized in this section.

Generally, these unofficial interpretations of the Atrocity tend to adhere to fairly standard molds. As Berry notes in *A History of Pain*, scholarship on Nanking films has ascertained and analyzed many of these various interpretive templates, such as the film’s focus:

PRC film critic Zhang Xuan has noted three distinct ways in which filmmakers have approached (or proposed to approach) the Rape of Nanjing: 1) to deal with the incident from the perspective of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, 2) to look at the Massacre from the perspective of the foreigners at the International Safety Zone, and 3) to present the perspective of an average Nanjing family. 175

The rhetorical efficacy of these three frames is clear—the Tokyo Tribunals frame emphasizes the drama of the trials, a platform through which the Atrocity and Japanese aggression was seemingly legitimized; similarly, the “objective foreigner” also provides a verification and outside judgement of the events; the average civilian perspective frame, employing the greatest appeals to pathos, humanizes and makes relevant the tragedies of

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175 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 86.
Nanking. The first popular cinematic depiction of the Atrocity, *Massacre in Nanjing*, exemplifies not only the “Proving the Atrocity” thematic category but Xuan’s framing categories as well:

Luo Guanqun’s film, *Massacre in Nanjing*, the first major motion picture to depict the event, falls somewhere between Zhang Xuan’s second and third categories….the film was awarded the 1987-88 Ministry of Film & Broadcasting award for Outstanding Picture and the 1991 Tokyo World Peace Film Festival award for best drama, which was a surprising recognition, in light of the sensitivity of the subject matter in Japan.\(^{176}\)

Like Zhaoyan and Long’s literary representations, *Massacre in Nanjing* employs the same technique of perspectival diversity; however, in complete contrast to these earlier texts, the film ultimately presents a more favorable depiction of Chinese characters:

Although the ensemble cast of characters [in *Massacre in Nanjing*] all come from different social and economic classes, during the ensuing chaos of the massacre, the lives of these very different individuals cross paths in a tragic, yet markedly patriotic, way.\(^{177}\)

The plot that unites the various characters is the collective effort to protect photographic evidence of Japanese atrocities in Nanking. The theme of “proof” is therefore central to the plot of *Massacre in Nanjing*. This patriotic pursuit of evidence unifies the characters, producing an overtly political message of not only the importance and reality of the Atrocity but the social value in collectively recognizing and commemorating the event. In his writing, Berry perceives this need for evidence and recognition tragic:

\(^{176}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 86-7.

\(^{177}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 87.
The true tragedy of the film is that just as the characters portrayed in the film struggle to prove that the massacre actually happened (through group photos), so Massacre in Nanjing, which was made on the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy, is still struggling with the same issues—only this time, the film itself replaces the photographs as the chosen medium.\(^{178}\)

The theme of proof is further evidenced by the title and cinematographic style of the film. As Berry notes, the original Chinese title suggests the film’s goal of proving the Atrocity:

Even the film’s Chinese title, Tucheng zuezheng, a literal translation of which would read as something like ‘The City of Massacre—Evidence in Blood,’ hints at the underlying intent behind, or rather, transparent in, the film’s narrative. They key word here is the final character in the title, zheng, ‘authentication, proof, or evidence,’ which points to the series of black and white photos, but also to the film itself as a vehicle for proof against the Japanese denial of the event.\(^{179}\)

Furthermore, the black and white style enhances the documentary-like feel of the film, giving the fictional plot a more realistic quality. Luo heightens this sense of reality in key scenes during the film for the greatest pathological impact. Certain techniques, such as “slow-motion, removal of all sound and background music to highlight the images, periodic stills, and random insertions of ghostly black and white negative snapshots”\(^{180}\) are used to underscore the veracity of the events. In his writing, Berry analyzes arguably the most apparent instance of these directorial efforts to maximize viewer response, a scene that depicts the brutal massacre at the Chaotian Palace and exemplifies the “assigning blame” element of this thematic category:

The director goes all out in his attempt to pull the viewers’ heartstrings in this scene by making all of the capture Chinese soldiers wounded—virtually every one of them is wrapped in bloodied bandages. This feeling of victimization is heightened by the

\(^{178}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 88.
\(^{179}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 89.
\(^{180}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 89-90.
inclusion of the crying child, the ultimate symbol of innocence. Luo, however, goes one step further by juxtaposing this scene with the sinister laughter of gloating Japanese soldiers…. Although a powerful tool when used sparingly, Luo Guanqun’s overuse of these juxtapositions in the end brings a staged, contrived quality to the film.  

The victims and aggressors of the scene (and therefore, of the Atrocity generally) are unequivocally clear. Cinematographic devices such those employed by Luo help Nanking films reiterate, without relying on dialogue, the villains of the narrative. However, Berry’s critique of these devices is also valid. Through overuse, these tools become ineffective and even draw attention to the rhetorical nature of the text. The viewer no longer feels that they are forming individual interpretations and conclusions based on materials provided by the text, but instead feel constricted within the interpretive framework obviously imposed.

The political nature of the film is apparent not only in its general plot, cinematographic style, and title, but in the narratives of individual characters as well. One character arc explores the Sino-Japanese romance between a female Chinese prisoner (Liu Jingjing) and her former, pre-war Japanese lover, now oppressor and prison-keeper (Li Yuan). In a patriotic display of sacrifice, Jingjing forsakes her former love and the photographic evidence of their previous union (a couple’s photo). The treasured photo of lost love is, as Berry argues, “not only the direct antithesis of the atrocity photos, around which the plot revolves, but by never actually showing the photo (the proof), the relationship is negated, thus metaphorically functioning as the negation of Sino-Japanese love/friendship.” Consequently, Massacre in Nanjing’s Sino-Japanese romance does

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181 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 90.
182 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 89.
not fulfill the secondary thematic category of depicting humanity but serves to further the patriotic message of the film à la “Jiang Qing’s Cultural Revolution-era (1966-1976) model operas.”

Another interesting character arc in Luo’s film revolves around the objective bystander role of Katy, who is ultimately entrusted with the photographic evidence. From works such as Massacre in Nanjing, the evocation of “the detached ‘witness’ of the West” narrative has become an increasingly popularized reading. Although this interpretation of Western involvement does not originate in the 1980s Nanking revival, as demonstrated by previous chapters, works such as Massacre in Nanjing served to validate and reinforce this existing perception of Westerns objectivity and support. Berry speculates that this plot element potentially “serves as an attempt to rationalize China’s own historical amnesia regarding the Nanjing Massacre,” although the fact that the objective Westerner narrative predates Luo’s film by several decades seems to undermine this reading. However, Berry’s conclusion about the efficacy of this plot device is valid, as he claims that “in placing such emphasis upon the legitimizing power of the West (through an invented character), the filmmaker simultaneously undercuts his own attempt at providing ‘cinematic testimony’ to the massacre.”

Two other 1990s Nanking films that fall under the thematic category of “proving the events” and “assigning blame” are Black Sun: The Nanjing Massacre and Don’t Cry, Nanking. Both films verify the Atrocity by virtue of their subject-matter; however, Black

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183 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 88.
184 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 91.
185 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 91.
Sun and Don’t Cry, Nanking employ strikingly different methods to construct this narrative of proof. Even the 1995 release of the films was rhetorical in nature, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Allied victory and the conclusion of the Second Sino-Japanese war. Furthermore, as Berry notes, the films were “openly marketed as a visual commemoration of the event.”

T.F. Mou’s Black Sun “proves” the Atrocity through several key cinematographic elements. As with Massacre in Nanjing, Mou employs a documentary-esque style to indicate the reality of the atrocity and to emphasize the plot of the film. However, Mou’s film does more than simply emulate the thematic qualities of Massacre in Nanjing—he all but copies the film’s introductory scenes:

Basically, the structure is: black and white documentary footage of plans, cut to fire imagery, cut to dramatic footage of film proper. The fire imagery is manifested as burning flames in Massacre in Nanjing and a candle close up in Black Sun. The stunning structural similarities between the formal techniques utilized in the films’ respective opening sequences is so striking that one could conjecture that it is more than a mere coincidence.

The black and white, documentary-style opening emphasizes the reality of the events, while fire imagery symbolizes the destruction that occurred in Nanking and potentially even the efforts to destroy or subvert Nanking memories. Although this strategy is effective in Massacre in Nanjing, the questionable rendition in Mou’s film undermines its significance. Furthermore, Mou’s Black Sun is plagued by other efforts to give credibility to the events by using shocking, hyper-realistic imagery. Berry notes that

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186 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 91.
188 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 93.
the fictional and dramatized elements of the film detract from this effort gain recognition for the event:

The film re-creates a carnival-like spectacle of ‘grisly topics’ such as dismemberment, torture, and rape, freely mixing documentary newsreel footage with dramatic re-enactments in a style almost identical to [Eric] Schaefer’s description of early American atrocity films such as *Hitler’s Reign of Terror* (1934) and *The Love Life of Adolph Hitler* (1948). It is here that the depictions of blood and gore in *Black Sun* become a double-edged sword—turning away a more serious audience, while attracting a new one by nature of its inherent sensationalism.\(^{189}\)

Truly, gore and violence, rather than plot or symbolism, are the primary ingredients in *Black Sun*, a factor that resulted in the film receiving significant criticism, censorship, and backlash. Mou chose to underemphasize plot and character in favor of these shock-value scenes, attempting “to serve as a detached witness to the massacre as it chronologically unfolds the events from December 11, 1937 to Christmas Eve.”\(^{190}\) The extreme violence depicted in the film prevented it from passing PRC censors, potentially due to the recent memories of insurrection at Tiananmen.\(^ {191}\) While a balance of gore and brutality could have benefitted the film’s efficacy and believability, *Black Sun* suffers from the same fate as *Massacre in Nanking*’s use of pathos appeals, as overemphasis undermines these elements. Ultimately, as Berry notes, the film has gained a cult-following not for its accurate or historically-significant memorializations of Nanking but for its grotesque horror-like qualities.

The film is further problematized by another attempt to attribute veracity to the events and assign blame to Japanese aggressors by giving real, historical names to the

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\(^{189}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 93.

\(^{190}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 93.

\(^{191}\) Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 92.
soldier characters. The fictional elements of Black Sun are thereby intermingled throughout with hints of historical reality, ultimately confusing the boundaries between history and fiction. While this tactic succeeds in clearly delineating responsibility and criminality, it also assigns disproportionate importance to the perpetrators of the Atrocity rather than the victims:

….by naming the perpetrators and focusing most of his attention on them (the vast majority of dialogue in the film occurs amongst Japanese officials), Mou runs the risk of silencing the voices, identities, and ultimately, the humanity of the victims—the very groups he purports to be dedicating his film to.192

Ultimately, then, Mou’s efforts to actualize the Atrocity through gory reenactments or historical references fail to successfully “prove” the event by virtue of their overemphasis. In stark contrast to the style of Black Sun, Wu Ziniu’s Don’t Cry, Nanking presents a more optimistic examination of the legacy of the Atrocity, humanizing Japanese characters to the point that the character “actually shares the same fate as the Chinese”193 and depicting war itself as the true villain in the Nanking narrative. Despite the fact that Black Sun, Don’t Cry, Nanking, and Massacre in Nanjing all close with captions imparting the (modern Chinese) accepted death toll, only Mou and Luo’s films fail to overcome the limitations that proving the Atrocity poses. Berry names this theme the “defining strategy” of Nanking films, stating,

Proof or testimony, jianzheng, is a weighty theme in the artistic discourse of the Nanjing Massacre. From documentary films like The Massacre of Nanjing—The Surviving Witnesses and Eyewitness to History to feature films like Massacre in Nanjing and Black Sun, the seemingly irrepressible urge to return to the scene of the

192 Berry, “Cinematic Representations of the Rape of Nanking,” 93.
atrocity to ‘witness’ and ‘testify’ to the horrors has become not only a recurring trope but, arguably the defining strategy.\textsuperscript{194}

The prevalence of the theme is apparent in its durability throughout the years. More recent films such as Gao Qushu’s 2005 film, The Tokyo Trial, also employs this theme of proof. Two additional films released during the 2000s, May & August (2002) and Qixia Temple (2005) also “…extended the emphasis on evidence in new directions, partly through appropriation of narrative tropes from Holocaust literature and film in an attempt to reach a wider audience.”\textsuperscript{195} However, while May & August reflects the positive developments in Nanking cinematic representations, close analysis of Qixia Temple reveals a clear repackaging of long-overused tropes.

The plot of Qixia Temple directly mimics that of Massacre in Nanjing, as the main theme of the film revolves around the attempt to smuggle filmic or photographic evidence of the events: “Both films trace the complex journey of photographic or filmic evidence from person to person and the human sacrifice and martyrdom that facilitates it.”\textsuperscript{196} However, Qixia Temple goes further than Massacre in Nanjing in projecting a nationalistic narrative “with more overt patriotic rhetoric than any previous Nanjing Massacre film creates a vulgarization that, once again, attempts to commemorate this human tragedy within a network of national agendas and a tradition of already flawed cinematic tributes.”\textsuperscript{197} In addition to this overemphasis of photographic proof, the film also aims to emulate the emotional impact of Holocaust films:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{194} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 167.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 170.
\item \textsuperscript{196} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Berry, \textit{A History of Pain}, 174.
\end{itemize}
Because of the thematic similarities with Spielberg’s 1993 Holocaust film *Schindler’s List*—one man working against all odds to preserve the lives of thousands amid unthinkable violence—*Qixia Temple 1937* was widely marketed as the ‘Chinese Schindler’s List that will sweep the Oscars.’

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, comparisons between the Nanking Atrocity and the Holocaust were drawn in Chinese education, literature, and scholarship. So, *Qixia Temple*’s evocation of Holocaust cinema is not altogether novel. However, just as within any other Nanking representation, the rhetoric and motivations of such comparisons are all too apparent and the significance of the Atrocity as a unique, individual tragedy is undermined. David MacDonald notes this issue of representation through comparison in “Forgetting and Denying: Iris Chang, the Holocaust, and the Challenge of Nanking,” asserting that,

> Generally, it is assumed that other groups who invoke a ‘holocaust’ benefit from it, that it is a useful means of promoting and packaging one’s own history….However, it is by no means certain that adopting the vocabulary and imagery of another group’s dissimilar tragedy is the best means of articulating and representing one’s own history.\(^{199}\)

Ultimately, one cannot expect a tragedy to gain recognition and significance by being framed or repackaged through the same rhetorical frameworks. Thus, *Qixia Temple* further perpetuates the proving and assigning thematic popularity of Nanking films.

In contrast, *May & August* is a strikingly different type of Atrocity film, one that is not overtly preoccupied with the goal of “proving” the massacre or locating its perpetrators. This difference is apparent in several subtle stylistic differences, such as the

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\(^{(199)}\) David MacDonald, “Forgetting and Denying: Iris Chang, the Holocaust, and the Challenge of Nanking,” *International Politics* 42.1 (2005): 405.
film’s opening, which inverts the typical black and white documentary footage introduction of most other Atrocity films:

Instead of opening with documentary footage of the war, *May & August* begins with impressionistic pencil sketches of Nanjing. This marks a shift from an urge to ‘prove’ history through actual photos and evidence to a desire to ‘portray’ the scars of the past through a more symbolic vision. The purpose of *May & August* is not historical censure but psychological catharsis.\(^{200}\)

By abandoning the typical introductory style of Nanking films, *May & August* is able to overcome some of the major limitations of the “proof” category representations. Unlike *Black Sun*, gore and violence are not prominent features of the film; unlike *Massacre in Nanjing*, there are fewer attempts to demonstrate patriotic sacrifice or nationalistic sentiment. Rather, by focusing on the experiences of two sisters, May and August, the film tells a more personal narrative of Nanking experience.

Ultimately, though, the film was intensely criticized by PRC Nanjing Massacre historian (and the founder of the museum where the film was set to be premiered), Zhu Chengshan.\(^{201}\) Zhu protested historical inaccuracies, such as the film’s inaccurate death tolls or issues of continuity within various scenes. As Berry points out, Zhu’s criticisms are problematic given the fictional nature of the film:

The ultimate irony is that *May & August*, a mass-market story about perseverance and the will to survive, the first film that clearly was not trying to be a historical docudrama about the Rape of Nanjing—let alone ‘prove’ that the massacre happened—could not escape the burden of proof and the weight of history. The critics seemed unable to see the film as anything but ‘history.’ Zhu Chengshan even went so far as to declare that its release would provide ‘evidence’ that the Japanese extremists could use to deny the very existence of the Nanjing Massacre! In the cases of *Massacre in Nanjing* and *Black Sun*, feature dramas took on the qualities of documentary—or even evidence—but here, an innocent ‘entertainment film’ never

\(^{200}\) Berry, *A History of Pain*, 175.

\(^{201}\) Berry, *A History of Pain*, 175.
intended to be ‘read’ as history was not only forced to shoulder that burden but also actually granted the power (by one of China’s foremost historians) to rewrite history. 202

Berry’s critique of the May & August controversy demonstrates the root issue with Nanking “evidence” films—fictional representations cannot and should not be interpreted as factual, historically-accurate investigations of the “truth,” even if works such as Massacre in Nanjing seem to confuse, perhaps intentionally, the distinctions between reality and fiction. By condemning films like May & August, Chinese critics are essentially advocating for a standard of Nanking cinema that precariously balances between these two extremes for maximum benefit; Nanking literary and cinematic representations can thus be both entertainment and education, without requiring either creative originality or complete historical accuracy.

Another 21st century development, the Nanking Atrocity’s first video game representation, also demonstrates the blurring of education and entertainment in modern Nanking adaptations:

Presented as ‘edutainment,’ the video game brings visual representations of the Nanjing atrocities in the twenty-first century through interactive means unavailable to previous literary or even cinematic representations. The title of the game is most telling: Eyewitness—Nanjing Massacre. The player does not assume the role of a victim or a perpetrator; instead, he or she becomes a cameraman whose objective is to ‘shoot’ the atrocities playing out before his or her eyes. 203

Over the years, it is mediums of representation that have developed and adapted to the theme of proving and witnessing or attributing blame rather than vice versa. The lasting impact of Luo’s Massacre in Nanjing on the modern standard of Nanking

202 Berry, A History of Pain, 176.  
203 Berry, A History of Pain, 168.
narratives is highly relevant to the nature of contemporary debates, and even scholarship, surrounding the Atrocity. The proliferation of works that fall under the same categories of proving truths and assigning blame has arguably done more to undermine the importance and recognition of the Atrocity, as over-dramatizations have turned the tragedies of the event into grotesque or melodramatic parodies. Given their national and international impact, it is important to critically analyze the ways in which these cinematic and literary representations make sense out of and derive meaning from the Atrocity.

**American Literature and Films: Emphasizing American Involvement and War Efforts and Depicting Humanity through Sino-Japanese Romance**

When American literary and cinematic depictions of Nanking are called to mind, the primary text that symbolizes efforts to memorialize the Atrocity is undoubtedly Iris Chang’s 1991 *The Rape of Nanking*. Chang’s legacy is perhaps best summarized in Mitchel’s article for the *Japan Times*:

> For better or worse then, Chang has helped push the issue out of academia and into popular culture, where its impact will be far less predictable or manageable. At the very least, anti-Japanese sentiment is likely to be inflamed in China, where nationalist passions are already high. A tsunami of bad publicity is also certain to come from Europe and America, as Tokyo is fully aware.\(^{204}\)

> Despite its potential historical inaccuracies, Chang’s text revolutionized Nanking debates and popularized the topic internationally. Perhaps more significantly than any other scholar in the 20\(^{th}\) century, Chang made such a neglected topic in WWII history widely accessible and widely relevant, thereby breaking both literary and historical ground. As Masahiro Yamamoto notes in “A Tale of Two Atrocities: Critical Appraisal

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of American Historiography,” the Nanking revival instigated in part due to Chang’s seminal text is a topic that deserves greater investigation:

Given that the Atrocity has been known in the United States since 1937, thanks to media coverage by journalists such as F. Tillman Durdin and Archibald T. Steele, followed by extensive discussions in histories of modern China and Japan, the extreme sensation caused by Chang deserves close attention, especially because Americans were neither victims nor victimizers in the incident.205

As noted in the Wartime Reporting section of this thesis, the U.S. played a major role in early Nanking reportage, and even framed justifications for its own wartime involvement around a barbaric Japanese “national character” as displayed in Nanking. MacDonald provides potential explanation for the revival of Atrocity memory:

The rise of memory and commemoration of Nanking and other instances of Chinese victimization has its root in Chinese Diaspora communities, particularly in the United States. These groups generally have more money, more coercive power, and better access to the Internet than their counterparts in the People’s Republic. Indeed, the New York Times recently identified a ‘cottage industry’ of remembrance, with ‘dozens of groups working the Internet to publicize it, as well as recent documentaries, novels, and exhibits.'206

As wealthier Chinese immigrants have settled in the U.S. and accessibility of Nanking scholarship has increased (worldwide and not simply within the U.S.), the opportunities for Chinese diaspora has flourished. While MacDonald’s assessment of greater economic and political freedom in the U.S. may have impacted the growth of Chinese diaspora and interest in the Nanking Atrocity, there is little evidence to support these factors as the primary or even significant reasons behind Chang’s success. Even

before Chang’s The Rape of Nanking gained international attention, geopolitical changes throughout China, the U.S., and Japan in the postwar years gradually led to the modern status of Nanking scholarship and debate. Furthermore, even scholars within the niche field of Nanking Atrocity memory have debated the factors that initiated international interest in the event. Yamamoto, for example, cites not comparative socioeconomic factors or political freedom as essential reasons for Nanking memory revival but attributes renewed interest to “ethnic prejudice and the wide gap in interpretations of the Atrocity between professional historians and the general public. The professional historians’ lack of fact-finding solidified the ordinary people’s image of the Atrocity, already created by amateur historians, and reinforced popular ethnic prejudice.”

Thus, there is no clear, singular reason for renewed interest in Nanking. Furthermore, Chang’s text was not even the first modern American work concerning the Atrocity:

In the mid-1990s (several years before the publication of Iris Chang’s landmark book), the Nanjing Massacre began to simultaneously capture the literary imagination of two American-based writers, R.C. Binstock and Paul West, who produced full-length novels inspired by the massacre, both published to critical acclaim in 1995.

Significantly, these two works popularized a common theme in American depictions of the Atrocity: the plots of Binstock’s The Tree of Heaven and West’s The Tent of Orange Mist both revolve around the development of a Sino-Japanese romance (with the term “romance” being used loosely). In The Tree of Heaven, a Chinese woman,

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208 Berry, A History of Pain, 139.
Li, falls in love with a Japanese soldier, Kuroda, after he rescues her from attempted gang-rape by his subordinates.209 As Berry asserts, the love story depicted in *The Tree of Heaven* is highly unusual, given the Chinese female’s abandonment by her Chinese before her rescue by a heroic Japanese soldier, who is later killed by Chinese soldiers. This narrative departs from the standard Chinese aggressor-victim interpretations by constructing a Sino-Japanese romance that the reader hopes will succeed, unlike the Chinese-Japanese love conflict of *Massacre in Nanjing*. West’s novel presents an even more unique tale of Sino-Japanese love between Scald Ibis, a girl forced into prostitution, and Colonel Hayashi, her Japanese pimp. While the “romance” genre that Berry categorizes the novel under seems unfitting for a story of sexual slavery, Ibis’ eventual acceptance of Hayashi’s guidance could serve as a possible explanation. Regardless, West’s novel demonstrates the significant difference between American and Chinese depictions of Nanking, as many scholars and educators in China have historically condemned women who appeared to “accept” their forced prostitution by Japanese oppressors.

While the theme of Sino-Japanese romance is apparent in early modern American depictions of Nanking, works such as *The Tent of Orange Mist* and *The Tree of Heaven* gradually became overshadowed by works that adhered to a separate literary theme: emphasizing the glories and heroism of American involvement. While it is unrealistic to pin the 1980s-90s Nanking revival in the U.S. (and worldwide) to Chang, her work certainly inspired the proliferation of the Western-perspective in Atrocity literature and

films. As one of the first texts to examine the roles of figures such as Minnie Vautrin and John Rabe in the Atrocity, Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking* gave filmmakers and writers a highly-marketable narrative for Nanking. Souhua Qi’s novel, *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, and Mo Hayder’s work, *The Devil of Nanking*, both examine the Atrocity from the perspective of Western figures. Qi’s work, which examines the perspective of historical figures from the NSZ,

owes a debt to epic Chinese novels about the massacre published two decades earlier, for its narrative focus upon actual historical figures. It was, however, more visibly inspired by the recent string of English-language historical monographs such as *American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking: The Courage of Minnie Vautrin* and *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*; the novel takes Vautrin, Rabe, and other key Western figures such as Dr. Robert Wilson as its chief subjects.210

The popularity and marketability of these Western-centric plots is evidenced by the volume of post-Chang texts that adopt such a lens. In 2000, Hua-ling Hu, a Chinese language and literature professor at the University of Colorado, wrote *American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking*, lauding the missionary’s heroic efforts to give sanctuary to the Chinese women and soldiers. In 2010, Hua-ling Hu and Zhang Lian-hong co-edited and compiled *The Undaunted Women of Nanking: The Wartime Diaries of Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-fang*.

John Rabe was given similar treatment. In 1997, *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe* was first published, making widely-accessible for the first time English translations of his personal diaries; in 2009, Rabe’s legacy resulted in a major

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motion picture dedicated to his experiences at Nanking, *City of War: The Story of John Rabe*.

In contrast to the historical lens of *When the Purple Mountain Burns*, Hayder’s thriller examines the unfolding mystery of a Nanking secret from the perspective of a modern Englishwoman. Like *Massacre in Nanjing*, the plot of Hayder’s novel is centered around the preservation of filmic Nanking evidence:

> The importance of the preserved black-and-white moving images also places this unique novel within the same tradition as *Massacre in Nanjing*, which also featured a Western woman’s quest for ‘proof’ of the massacre in order to testify to the world about what really happened….Nearly twenty years after Katie smuggled photos out of China in *Massacre in Nanjing*, the urge to prove what happened is just as powerful, and the West is still the mediator.\(^2\)

Examining these works within the larger context of Nanking Atrocity representations, the effects of early interpretations of the event become clear. The Nanking narratives of Western objectivity or heroic intervention, established during the war and solidified during the Tokyo Tribunals, have become repurposed and repackaged in modern cinema. While the reasons for employing this narrative likely separate along national boundaries (American implementation for marketability, Chinese implementation for objective accountability), the theme of the Western safekeeper of evidence or testimony has become a major component of Chinese and American representations. Thus, by employing the themes of the Western presence at Nanking (literally or figuratively), through historical fiction or through more modern plotlines of evidence preservation, Hayder’s *The Devil of Nanking* and Qi’s *When the Purple Berry*, *A History of Pain*, 141-2.

Mountain Burns serve as exemplars of American literary representations of the Nanking Atrocity.

This theme of Western observation and intervention, popularized by literary works like Chang’s, are the most notable features of American Nanking films. Scholar Damien Kinney examines the proliferation of these post-Chang, Western-centric Nanking narratives, arguing that Chang-influenced interpretations of the Atrocity have a strong marketability in American film industries. In discussing the 2007 dramatized documentary, Nanking, Kinney references an interview of the director Ted Leonsis, who claimed that he first conceived of the idea for his film after reading Chang’s obituary in the New York Times:

This indicates how ‘marketable’ the massacre story had become as a result of Chang’s impact: through her writing, North Americans became acquainted with the massacre, and this interest in Chinese history was noted in China and has aided its ‘rediscovery.’

Directed by businessman Ted Leoniss, Nanking is an amalgamation of both Chinese and Western Nanking cinema styles. Following in the “proving the event” theme of Chinese representations, Nanking “couples archival footage of the August 1937 bombing of Shanghai, the bombing of Nanjing from September and the subsequent massacre with both survivors’ and participants’ testimonies.” Just as the Chinese Massacre in Nanjing and Black Sun merge real documentary footage with fictionalized depictions, Nanking similarly employs this tactic of enhancing believability through existing Nanking materials. However, the film examines the unfolding tragedies of the

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event through the perspective of the Safety Zone figures—Vautrin, Rabe, and Bob Wilson, a devoted surgeon left to treat hundreds and thousands of Nanking’s wounded civilians and soldiers after the city’s fall. Thus, *Nanking* serves as an exemplar of American and Chinese Nanking narrativity. Since the film is one of the most recent cinematic representations of the Atrocity, it is possible that it also serves to demonstrate the international exchange and adaptation of Nanking narratives—Leoniss’ work could signal the gradual integration of Chinese and American interpretations of the event as considerations of marketability determine the most profitable versions of collective memory.

The Atrocity narratives constructed, revised, and perpetuated through Chinese, American, and Japanese literary and cinematic representations of the event demonstrate the ways that public memory of a tragedy is shaped through not only “official” texts and sources but through the “unofficial” mediums of popular culture as well. An examination of Nanking narratives reveals the evolution Atrocity memory over the decades. For China and Japan, there is a clear crystallization of accepted Nanking narratives; for the U.S., there is a clear shift toward the most marketable, Western-centric representations.
Conclusion

The evolution of Nanking narratives, constructed, revised, and perpetuated through “official” sources and through popular culture demonstrates the subjectivity of memory. In the prominent narrative of the Atrocity, popularized and propagated since the 1980s, Japan has become a villain of two atrocities—that of the 1937 invasion of the city and a larger inadherence to the ethics of repentance and commemoration; China has become both a mythic hero and a tragic victim; generally, the U.S. has been depicted as an objective witness to and secure protector of the “truth.” These narratives are easy to problematize, as evidenced by the volumes of scholarship produced not only about the event and its factual realities but its historiography and remembrance.

Although this thesis has dealt primarily with secondary source material, no other work has examined the evolution of Atrocity memory through a linked analysis of journalistic, educational, literary, and cinematic materials. These texts are not separate exemplars of the amassing of collective memory. Rather, these sources, together, demonstrate a historical shift in not only the nature of Nanking memories but in the mediums by which these narratives become socially reinforced. The implications and motivations of the collectivization of memory are worthy of examination, as this process of amalgamation is inextricably linked to the formation of national identity. As demonstrated by the previous chapters, changes in domestic economic, political, and social status coincide with evolution of historical narratives of the Atrocity. In the pursuit of national unification and identification, China, Japan, and the U.S. have revised wartime perceptions in order to promote the most effective narratives of involvement.
Yamamoto asserts the negative impact of these monolithic narratives on real Nanking scholarship and reconciliation:

A possible explanation for the scarcity of empirical research is that American and Western historians have already solidified an image of the Atrocity and are reluctant to reconsider it critically. Any challenge to the consensus is likely to be seen as ‘revisionism’ worthy of the condemnation show to Holocaust deniers.\textsuperscript{214}

Thus, as Yamamoto argues, these cemented Nanking memories are not often open to revision, unless this interpretative process is led by official figures. Appropriate narratives have been established by these nations in order to suit the changing social, political, and economic status of each.

However, this collectivization and politicization of memory has only exacerbated tensions between the countries, revealing the ways in which the act of national remembering is often more detrimental for its people—those who live through, are impacted by, and must reconcile such events—than beneficial. For China and Japan, debates over appropriate treatment of the Atrocity has led to unnecessary tension between the countries, affecting all spheres of society from diplomatic interactions to online forums. The consequences public memory manipulation and exploitation is exemplified in the Nanking Atrocity, which, decades separated from the actual event, has become the ultimate symbol of Sino-Japanese tension.

However, the implications of public memory formation expand beyond the scope of the Nanking Atrocity. The question of political interference in the remembering or forgetting of important shared moments has become increasingly relevant. In the U.S.,

\textsuperscript{214} Yamamoto, “A Tale of Two Atrocities,” 293.
the removal of Confederate statues has gained international attention as groups dispute the role and relative value of these monuments in preserving history. Similarly, the Japanese protection of the Yasukuni shrine, which commemorates figures including A-list war criminals, has garnered increasing international criticism, particularly from Atrocity historians and scholars who feel that commemoration and glorification are inextricably linked. In China, physical and figurative monuments to Communist history complicate the open discussion of decades of public suffering caused by political strife. The manifestations of politicized public memory are apparent worldwide, and thus the importance of investigating the topic of ethical commemoration is undeniable.
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