

Roxanne Lignier

Professor Shin

English 277

17 April 2015

Time of Eve (2010) and Japanese Cultural Americanization:

A Look at Japanese Exclusion and Domination in America through an Anime Lens

Japanese cultural exclusion and domination by American sociocultural standards and prejudices throughout the 20th century resulted from fear that the Japanese were “unassimilable” to American sociocultural norms (Solomon 1). Anime – a form of animation geo-culturally centered in Japan with its own particular style and connotations – faced censorship and Americanization when brought to America for public view in the 1970s, one example being *Tetsuwan Atom* becoming the famous show *Astro Boy* (“Anime” para 1; Chambers 95; “Japanese” para 1). American censorship groups saw Japanese anime as too “unassimilable” in its original form due to its exploration of topics such as death and homosexuality, its gender ambiguous style, and its portrayal of main characters with vices, which lead to an overhaul of the originals to fit the middle-class social desire for “100% good-guy material” (96). Anime as a Japanese cultural product symbolizes the dominance relationship between American and Japanese culture in America where American culture seeks to silence and censor Japanese culture to get rid of the dangerous and alien from the face of American culture. Anime in the 21st century is mostly accepted, but themes of dominance and othering continue to play a large role in the plots of anime today. Within the specific example of the anime film *Time of Eve* (2010), the utilization of the master-servant relationship between humans and androids and the artistic

choices of the anime artist parallels the issues of exclusion and domination faced by Japanese immigrants, their descendants, and Japanese culture for two centuries in America.

Japanese-American Relations in the 20th Century

As Japan became a global international player in the 20th century, fear of Japan's growing imperialist power in light of the post-war treaty negotiations of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 created a fervent yellow-peril mentality and drew a strong exclusionist voice out of Americans ("The Treaty" para 1, 7). Xenophobic Americans' fear that Japan would invade America led them to alienate Japanese immigrants, claiming that they were "more interested in colonizing than assimilating" into American cultural and social standards (Solomon 4). This fear spawned the Johnson-Leeds Act of 1924 or the "Immigration Act" that justified cutting off all Japanese immigration to the U.S. and denied Japanese immigrants citizenship ("The Immigration" para 1, 6). The Act was based on the grounds of "racial incompatibility" and the portrayal of Japanese immigrants as unable to assimilate to American culture (Solomon 4). This ban on immigration highlighted the American yellow-peril fear that Japan was using immigration as a conquest tactic in the United States. If the Japanese immigrants were not seen as assimilating into the dominant culture, then they would be banned from the U.S. This point of view was promoted by American laborers and their leaders, specifically Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, who said "the white race cannot assimilate races of other colors" (3).

Domination through alienation continued to be the status quo in the treatment of Japanese immigrants in America with internment during WWII. A yellow-peril reaction occurred again with the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and President Roosevelt to enact Executive Order 9066 which ordered the evacuation and internment of 120,000 Japanese American residents

(“Japanese” para 1). Within the ten internment camps, Japanese social customs and beliefs were ignored by the American guards as complete control of the facilities was in the hands of the internment residents’ military keepers (para 1). Yellow-peril feelings were consistent within the American public as the belief was upheld that Japanese peoples were “unassimilable” culturally, socially, and physically to American culture (Solomon 1). When Japan rose as a global power at the beginning of the century, the United States’ fear that Japan would threaten America’s sociocultural structure, its control over global politics, and economic power led American society to subjugate the Japanese immigrants and their descendants during the early 20th century and WWII to enforce American cultural dominance over the ‘other’ of Japan and Japanese culture.

Anime and its Americanization in the 1970s-1990s

Anime is Japanese animation and began as a sub-genre of film in Japan and America until the late 20th century when American production companies began to import Japanese anime and “Americanize” it for network audiences (“Anime” para 1). The first anime series to be brought to American televisions was Osamu Tezuka’s *Tetsuwan Atomu*, *Astro Boy* in America, adopted from his 1951 manga series, in 1963 (O’Connell para 5, 8, 13; “Astro’s” para 5; “Astro” para 8). NBC Enterprises believed that *Tetsuwan Atomu* would be popular among American audiences, but the show had to be altered to omit certain images that were acceptable to be shown on Japanese television networks that were highly censored out of television programming in the U.S. (para 2). The significant changes made to *Astro Boy* for its American broadcast are just one of many examples of Japanese anime becoming “Americanized” to fit American sociocultural standards.

The popularity of series like *Astro Boy* with American audiences came into contention in the 1970s due to the content of the anime that was coming from Japan and the increase in American censorship of television and film content. Several cultural differences between Japan and America in regards to violence, sexuality, gender, and death on television became the source of contention over the American anime production studios were programming. America's cultural view of animation has been that it is meant for children, while Japan's cultural view of anime is that it is a form of art that includes a wide variety of genres, subjects, and audiences, including anime made just for adults (Belton para 1). Overall, the main difference between the two cultures is that Japanese cultural beliefs view many sensitive topics as a part of life and therefore are normal to see portrayed on television while American culture dictates conservatism when it comes to such topics (Terry para 4, 6, 7, 8). American conservatism was championed by censorship groups such as Action for Children's Television (ACT) group and the American Family Association (AFA) (Chambers 96; Worringham para 7). These groups propagated the idea that the middle class family values of American society that had been present in the 1950s and 1960s needed to remain in television shows, leaving out room for Japanese cultural expression (Worringham para 4, 7). These cultural differences and activism by the censorship groups led to the censorship of all cartoon violence, homoeroticism, and gender ambiguity out of anime.

Anime also underwent censorship and alteration in the form of rescripting, reanimating, and alteration of plot lines to fit American ideals of names, backgrounds, and values (Chambers 96). For example, all of the characters and Pokémon from the hit series *Pokémon* were renamed from original Japanese names and all Japanese caricatures was taken out (Terry para 12). The censorship of anime in America throughout the 1970s until the end of the 20th century showcased

America's sociocultural subjugation and domination over Japanese culture and values. Once anime crossed the Pacific Ocean, it became "almost always Americanized beyond recognition" (Chambers 96). America wanted to assimilate anime into the standards of American society and culture but could not maintain the art in its original form. The only way that assimilation was possible was through Americanization and the loss of Japanese cultural significance. This inability to assimilate anime, Japanese culture, and Japanese peoples into American sociocultural standards was not blamed on America but on the unethical and dangerous Japanese cultural beliefs that were brought over from Japan with the anime or lingered in America from the Japanese Americans and their descendants. Eradication of these dangerous Japanese cultural expressions was the key to the maintenance of the American dominance relationship over Japanese cultural expression and peoples within America.

Time of Eve (2010), Androids, and the Othering of Japanese Culture and Peoples in America

Yasuhiro Yoshiura's six-part OVA anime series *Eve no Jikan* which became a full anime film in 2010 as *Time of Eve* explores the dominance relationship between humans and androids which is analogous to the relationship between American and Japanese culture. In *Time of Eve*, the human characters own and are masters of androids. An android is "an artificial being that resembles a human in form," a humanoid or a non-human being that resembles a human ("Android" 6). Android appearance and behavior is particularly important according to Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro, a leading android maker in Japan, since the goal of making an android is to make the android to be like humans and serve them so humans aren't afraid of them (Whitehouse para 13; Ishiguro 1). This goal that underlies the creation of androids creates an inherent subservience position for the androids since they are made to make humans comfortable, centering on human needs and not those of the android. The need to make the creation of an

android center on the needs and feelings of a human highlights the dominant position of the human in the relationship of android and human. Similarly, the image of a Japanese person is crafted around the stereotypes and beliefs of American society about Japanese culture and peoples. Instead of attempting to understand Japanese culture and peoples through interaction and learning, stereotypes are created based on the skewed beliefs of Americans who orient Japanese peoples around themselves, placing American sociocultural views over the realities of Japanese peoples and culture.

As android technology continues to progress, the issues of how to control androids, distinguish between humans and androids, and maintain the power relationship of master-servant between humans and androids become the focus of creators and future users. The need to ‘other’ androids and maintain a distinction is similar to how Americans have historically ‘othered’ Japanese peoples and culture in America through subjugation, alienation, and Americanization. The maintenance of dominance over androids and Japanese populations in America also persists in the form of censorship, with humans about to censor the actions and words of their androids and American cultural beliefs able to censor forms of Japanese culture such as anime through Americanization. The Japanese populations in America are like androids in how they are viewed by Western culture: subordinate, alien, possibly dangerous, and, above all, unable to be assimilated into the dominant sociocultural structure and be accepted as one of the group, the same in identification. The Japanese, like androids, remain “other,” the reflection which the dominant group looks into to learn about itself.

In *Time of Eve* (2010), the societal issue of the relationship between human and android thematically represents issues of othering, dominance v. subservience, and how to define what makes a human (*Time* 2010). Within the world of *Time of Eve* (2010), androids “have...been put

into practical use” by human beings like tools to do housework, childcare, shopping, and most likely manufacture goods and provide labor in various industries. Androids and humans look identical except for projected data rings that float over androids’ heads that distinguish them from humans. This data ring is required by robotic law to maintain the ability for humans to differentiate between humans and androids. This law ‘others’ the androids within the society by denying them societal acceptance, placing them as subordinates, and crafting their social position and meaning for existence as tools to meet the needs of their human masters, meaning they are without agency. The Ethics Committee creates through propaganda and fear mongering the idea that ‘human’ is synonymous with ‘good’ and ‘android’ with ‘alien’ and ‘dangerous.’ The Committee’s agenda further isolates the androids from society by stereotyping androids as unfeeling and unable to have emotion-based relationships with humans. The existence of the Committee and robotic laws ‘others’ the androids through their dissemination of media and propaganda to incite fear in humans about androids as unable to be controlled if treated like humans.

The human-like appearance of the androids confuses many of the humans within the society into treating an android like a human, breaking the barrier between humans and androids and subverting the master-servant relationship created by the requirement of the data ring. Rikou, a teenager within this society, finds himself having trouble not treating his female android, Sammy, like a human being. Instead of using the command “status: family” to ask Sammy about the locations of his family members, he says, “Where is everybody?” When he does this, he unintentionally breaks down the master-servant relationship that has been established between humans and androids within his society. He catches himself and commands her to give him the status of his family, reestablishing the barrier between himself and Sammy and restoring their

master-servant relationship. The dominant being, a human, must maintain its authority over the subservient being, an android, if it wishes to continue to alienate the android as a tool and the 'other' for the human to compare itself to. This dilemma of whether treat androids like humans is seen when, within Rikou's mind, an image of a human next to an android with an arrow in between them that flips back and forth to demonstrate which resembles which. In this changing image, he first pictures humans resembling androids which he promptly switches around. Within this thought, Rikou expresses that androids try to define themselves by humans, placing humans as the 'other' that androids compare themselves to in an attempt to learn about themselves. By placing the human as the 'other' in which to learn more about the self, the image in Rikou's mind reverses the dominance-subservience role between humans and androids where humans are the subject and androids are the 'other' that the subject alienates to understand itself.

Human qualities and what is definitively a 'human' comes into question in *Time of Eve* when Rikou and Masaki encounter androids in the Time of Eve café who think, feel, and interact like human beings. When Rikou and his sister are watching television, a commercial produced by the Ethics Committee shows a tomato that, when picked up, splits and shows metal nuts and bolts accompanied by the words, "Would you eat a tomato created by a machine? Warmth, especially for our era," then accompanied by an image of a normal tomato held in human hands. This commercial signifies that androids, while similar to humans on the outside, are cold, metallic machines without feeling or emotion and therefore are not to be trusted since they are different from warm, emotional human beings. Within a society that is permeated with this thought exists the Time of Eve café, a business whose rule is, "humans and robots have no distinction," meaning patrons of the café cannot verbally acknowledge whether another patron is a human or android. This creates what Masaki calls a "grey zone" where the café rule is too

ambiguous to be in direct violation of robotic law and also forces androids to stop projecting their data rings to follow the rule. In the café, Rikou and Masaki meet an android named Akiko who they think is human. During their conversation, Masaki asks Akiko why she comes to the café, and she says that she wants to know the other since humans and androids are “family” and “look alike but inside [are] different.” When they learn that she is an android, they realize that androids are not unfeeling machines but possess similar emotional capacities to humans. This conflict between the perceived or created stereotype of androids as incapable of feeling and ‘assimilating’ to humankind and the reality that androids feel very strongly and similarly to humans injures the societal and relational structure of humans as masters over subservient androids. Akiko teaches Rikou and Masaki that emotions don’t only apply to humans and cannot be used in an argument about the differences between humans and androids. The “grey zone” of the café allows for the definition of what a ‘human’ is to expand and what the society deems as only ‘human’ qualities such as emotions to be attributed to androids, the ‘other,’ as well.

The dominant relationship between American society and culture and Japanese peoples and culture, including anime, parallel that of the humans and androids within *Time of Eve*. For over a century, Japanese peoples have been targeted as the ‘other’ that American society has chosen to alienate in order to better know itself much like the androids within the human society that commands them. While the immigrants in the early decades of the 20th century attempted to participate in society similarly, many white Americans perceived them as dangerous due to their differing looks that indicated their Japanese ancestry and culture which at the time symbolized imperial power. They believed that the Japanese were too different and threatening to ‘assimilate’ to American culture and were therefore alienated socially, culturally, and physically. The perception of the Japanese was that of a devious race covering up their true nature and

attempting to colonize when they were truly attempting to assimilate. Like the human society within *Time of Eve*, white Americans couldn't conceive of Japanese peoples being an integral part of the society since they remain within the position of the 'other,' something to be feared contrasted to in hopes of better understanding the self. The theme in *Time of Eve* of the possibility of uncontrollable androids parallels the fear that Americans held throughout the 20th century of Japanese immigrants and their descendants since they represented the encroaching 'Orient' that threatened to take over. Katoran, a defunct houseroid that comes to the Time of Eve café, does not look like a human and is unpredictable in action, making Rikou and Masaki fear him as an 'unknown.' The fear that Katoran incites in Rikou and Masaki is similar to the Yellow Peril fear associated with the Japanese in the early 20th century as well as during WWII. When Katoran says, "I am unable to verify my status as a human," he is really saying, "I am unable to assimilate into your society and culture." The inability for Japanese immigrants and their descendants to cast off the false perceptions afforded them by American society and become a part of the sociocultural structure reflects Katoran's statement of being unable to pass as human.

The café Time of Eve represents the opportunities that both androids and human beings have to learn about each other within a "grey zone" where the definitions of 'human' and 'android' are able to be explored and questioned. Patrons are able to explore the existence of the other being since they are operating within a micro-society without the human-android distinction. This ability to explore leads to many changed perspectives, especially for Rikou and Masaki who learn from androids and humans alike about the lack of truth behind the inflated stereotypes the Ethics Committee perpetuates as well as the possibilities that await their society in a future where androids and humans live in an equal society. This idea and structure of the "grey zone" of Time of Eve occurs between American and Japanese culture when the two

cultures converge in cultural expression. One example of this would be anime. While it originates from Japan, many American artists have adopted the anime style, and anime is a rising form of film and television show in American mainstream media while it maintains a strong fringe following. Anime creates a space in which both cultures can be explored, examined, and questioned without the context of social stigmas and stereotypes that would otherwise damage the cultural expression of anime. Anime's censorship before its widespread popularity in America highlights American culture's desire for dominance when it faces a strong cultural expression such as anime. With the demonstration of the "grey space" within *Time of Eve*, ties to the cultural exchanges between American and Japanese cultures suggests a future that may have improved relations between the two cultures where stereotypes are seen as what they are and the dominance-subservience relationship between Americans and the Japanese peoples within America is dismantled.

Works Cited

- “Android.” *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*. Ed. Jeff Prucher. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2007. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- “Anime.” *Animenewsnetwork.com*. Anime News Network, n.d. Web. 6 Apr. 2015.
- “Astro Boy [AKA Mighty Atom] (Anime).” *Tezukainenglish.com*. Tezuka In English, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- “Astro’s History.” *Astroboy-online.com*. AstroBoy Online, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- Belton, Natalie. “How TV Nearly Killed Cartoons (Animation of the 1970s-80s).” *animatorium.blogspot.com*. The Animatorium, 18 Mar. 2013. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- Chambers, Samantha Nicole Inöz. “Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon.” *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications* Volume 3, No. 2. Fall 2012: 94-101. Web. 8 Mar. 2015.
- “The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act).” *History.state.gov*. Office of the Historian, United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 8 Apr. 2015.
- Ishiguro, Hiroshi. “Android Science: Toward a new cross-interdisciplinary framework.” *Robots.stanford.edu*. Hiroshi Ishiguro, 2005. Web. 9 Apr. 2015. PDF Article. Pp. 1-6.
- “Japanese-American Relations at the Turn of the Century, 1900-1922.” *History.state.gov*. Office of the Historian United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 8 Mar. 2015.
- O’Connell, Michael. “A Brief History of Anime.” *Corneredangel.com*. Otakon 1999, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.

Solomon, Lesley. "Japanese Exclusion and the American Labor Movement: 1900 to 1924."

Education About Asia Vol. 17, No. 3. 2012: 1-6. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.

Terry, Ian. "The American Perception of Anime: Blood, Legs, and Language." *the-artifice.com*.

The Artifice, 22 July 2013. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.

Time of Eve. Dir. Yasuhiro Yoshiura. Perf. Jun Fukuyama, Yuri Lowenthal, Kenji Nojima,

Michael Sinterniklaas, Rie Tanaka, and Elizabeth Boyle. Studio Rikka, DIRECTIONS

Inc., 2010.

"The Treaty of Portsmouth and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905." *History.state.gov*. Office

of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 7

Apr. 2015.

Whitehouse, David. "Japanese develop 'female' android." *News.bbc.co.uk*. British Broadcasting

Company, 27 July 2005. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.

Worringham, Richard and Rodney Buxton. "Censorship." *Museum.tv*. The Museum of Broadcast

Communications, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.