



Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
早稲田大学 アジア太平洋研究センター

WIAPS Discussion Paper
Series No.2019-E-1

**Emerging Narratives in the 2020 Crisis:
From “United By Emotion” to the Global Politics of
COVID-19**

David Leheny
Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies
Waseda University

03/2019

WIAPS Discussion Paper は、アジア太平洋研究センターで現在行われている研究をとりまとめたもので、これを公開することにより促進される活発な議論を発展させ、今後、学術雑誌や書籍刊行などの最終成果物に結びつけていくことを目的としています。論文に述べられている内容はすべて執筆者の個人的見解であり、早稲田大学としての見解を示すものではありません。

The WIAPS Discussion Paper series is a collection of research-in-progress that are currently being conducted at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. The aim of making these open access (i.e. making them freely accessible to the public) is to promote the development of active discussion, which will facilitate the publication of these research in academic journals and books as final products. Dissemination of this discussion paper does not imply endorsement by Waseda University of any of the views expressed within.

Emerging Narratives in the 2020 Crisis: From “United By Emotion” to the Global Politics of COVID-19

David Leheny
Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies
Waseda University
dleheny@waseda.jp

Abstract:

The study of emotion in politics has largely followed two tracks: a behavioral approach that relies in part on neuroscientific advances that embed rationality in emotional responses, and “affect studies” that have emerged from literary and anthropological analysis. This paper takes a third and increasingly popular position, that emotion should be understood within narrative frames, and therefore that narrative representation ought to be at the center of our research. Building from the whiplash transition from Japan’s preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the paper undertakes an initial – and necessarily embryonic, even inchoate – examination of the national stories that will likely shape emotional claims about the pandemic, juxtaposing those with the national stories that had been prepared, conventionally if also a bit controversially, for the Games. In doing so, it calls attention to the ways in which larger stories shape emotional representations of global spectacles, even as though paper over necessarily the complex human experience of overwhelming events. This is very much a discussion paper – written and placed here to start a discussion – and not a definitive claim, argument, or theory. But it aims to chronicle, largely in real time, what it means to move so rapidly from a national celebration on the global stage to national anxiety in the midst of a global pandemic.

By February 17, 2020, when actress Kusakari Tamiyo and author Hayashi Mariko announced that their naming committee had decided upon “United By Emotion” as the official slogan of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (Tahara 2020), emotion itself had been central to the discussion of Japan’s role as host. Accompanying Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and the Tokyo 2020 bid committee to the final International Olympic Committee meeting before their decision to award the games to Tokyo over Istanbul and several other candidates, French-Japanese television announcer Takigawa Christel famously described the Japanese spirit of *omotenashi* (welcoming, hospitality) as a central component of the metropolis’s appeal. Indeed, as Takigawa’s speech became remembered as one of the emblematic

moments of the entire Heisei Era (1989-2019), Japanese writers were themselves debating what *omotenashi* meant emotionally. For many, the speech proudly reflected Japanese traditions of warm humanism and good manners, providing not only the social glue that could see the country through its myriad disasters of the past century but also a model to the larger world (O 2014). For others, *omotenashi* reflected a kind of unpaid “affective labor” (*kanjō rōdō*) that demanded people, particularly those in service industries, to do the work necessary to make others feel good (Enomoto 2017). These debates reflected the visibility of that moment, which was chosen as tenth on a list of “Top Things 10,000 People Remember About Heisei” (NHK 2019)¹ on an NHK special about the thirty years of the Heisei Era (coming in immediately between the discovery of Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells by Nobel Laureate Yamanaka Shinya and Kin-san and Gin-san, the women who made regular television appearances as the only 100-year-old twins in the world). That is to say, even in the years leading up to the Olympics, *omotenashi* became a highly visible placeholder of widely recognized emotional expression about life in Japan, from the enthusiasm about hosting the Olympics, to anxiety about aspects of fundamental unfairness in Japan’s gender relations and employment relations, to pride in the country’s putative cultural values.

That was, of course, before the coronavirus. In only three months, Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) has emerged as a leading transnational public health threat that has produced significant medical and economic disruptions, with the near-certainty of further complications and political ramifications. It is far too soon to write anything conclusive about the virus’s social and cultural consequences, though a number of outcomes are already apparent. As have other governments, Japan’s has been forced to

¹ I am indebted to Nick Kapur for having circulated this on Twitter.

respond to the challenge of keeping its citizens and residents safe and healthy while also providing enough political reassurance to limit the potential damage associated with mass panic. Indeed, while the illness itself – currently estimated to have mortality rates of perhaps 3-4%, though perhaps far lower because of the high incidence of asymptomatic victims who might never be tested – will strain healthcare systems, it is possible that substantial damage will be done as well by public fears that lead nonvictims to seek medical care, thus limiting or delaying access to those with genuinely life-threatening conditions, or by panic consumption that creates shortages of crucial hygiene supplies that might be necessary for health care providers and first responders. That is, the social and cultural consequences of the illness matter, not just for academic questions about the construction of risk and public order, but for the actual physical health of the public at large.

Indeed, just over a month after the “United by Emotion” announcement, Prime Minister Abe’s quiet, low-key joint statement with International Olympic Committee chair Thomas Bach, that the Games would be postponed until 2021 would present a dramatic, deflated alternative to the enthusiasm of that earlier unveiling of the slogan. The statement included reference to the putative emotional benefits the Olympics might confer on a reeling world, limiting any sort of celebratory statement about Tokyo’s work in hosting the games, concluding:

In the present circumstances and based on the information provided by the WHO today, the IOC President and the Prime Minister of Japan have concluded that the Games of the XXXII Olympiad in Tokyo must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community. The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could stand as a beacon of hope to the world during these troubled times and that the Olympic flame could become the light at the end of the tunnel in which the world finds itself at present. Therefore, it was agreed that the Olympic flame will stay in Japan. It was also agreed that the Games will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 (International Olympic Committee 2020).

This discussion paper is a brief first cut at examining COVID-19 in the context of Tokyo 2020, a moment that was supposed to cement an image of Japan as a global leader because of its contributions to international development and peace, but in which anxiety and apprehension have in many ways supplanted any other emotions that were expected to unite the world through the Olympics. But even “brief first cut” overstates what this paper can accomplish, as it is being written in March, 2020, through the postponement of the Olympics and the announcement that Tokyo residents were expected to follow a voluntary “stay inside” request from Governor Koike Yuriko. My goal is not to craft a definitive or even partly defining statement about the coronavirus, as we have only the barest understanding thus far of its likely global consequences: the lives lost, the national economies wrecked, the political tensions created (or, more hopefully, alleviated), the transnational flows of people and goods interrupted by travel restrictions and quarantines. Instead, my goal here is to work through, in real time, some of the themes central to my recent writing and that of participants in my research group, and to point at least to the emerging shapes of political and cultural narratives that may emerge from the pandemic, as well as to the emotions that they will likely engender. By assembling the COVID-19 outbreak with the Olympics, I do not mean to create any sort of equation between them and their global importance – but simply to note how the emotions and stories explicitly created by the latter might provide a useful starting point for thinking about how they will emerge for the former.

Spectacles

Analytical pieces examining the spectacle of the Olympics are by now far more common than are those that take the stated ideals of the Olympics — “to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play” (Olympic.org, ND) — at face value. After all, whatever joy the Games themselves might bring the competitors and their most devoted fans, as well as those engaged in the purity of competition, the Games are marked by obsessive medal counts by national media organizations, anxiety about a given country’s overall performance, occasional flare-ups of actual hostility between athletes or fans, scheduling that respects the demands of broadcasters rather than the needs of the athletes, cheating and doping scandals, rampant corruption in the bidding process, and myriad gripes about officiating, facilities, weather, and the like. When particularly unruly US swimmers participate, there may even be criminal charges (Meeks 2017). That is, the nearly comical levels of graft, national chauvinism, and loutishness at the Olympics make it difficult to sustain rhetoric about the lofty ideals of the Games without provoking immediate questions about how often those ideals are fully met and how much has to be suppressed in order for them to appear legitimate.

But as a mediated spectacle, the Olympics are perhaps without peer. The FIFA World Cup in some ways exceeds the Olympics in the intensity of athletic competition and perhaps even in the towering stories of corruption behind the scenes, but nothing matches the Olympics as a routinized, heavily scripted cultural phenomenon. After all, quite aside from the actual competition, the Olympics produce nearly round-the-clock television experiences around the world, with telecasts offering not only the portraits of leading participants (especially from one’s own nation) but also a kind of sustained introduction to

the host country by announcers provided with press kits about the characteristics of this year's Games. Indeed, each iteration of the Games is typified in part by the Opening Ceremony, which is conventionally designed to offer a flashy and memorable overview of the host country's history and culture while also showcasing its musical and artistic talents. In terms of viewership and interest, the Opening Ceremony is far from ornamental, achieving massive television audiences worldwide and commanding the exceptionally high advertising revenues that fuel lucrative bids for television rights (de Moragas Spa, Rivenburgh, and Larson 1995: 193). The Closing Ceremony is usually far less commonly viewed, in part because of the absence of the complete national teams entering the stadium, but they do offer the crucial moment of the handover, when the scheduled host of the next Games injects an initial performance to whet viewers' appetites for what is to come four years later. The dazzling Japanese contribution in the Rio 2016 closing ceremony, for example, had the unenviable task of following Brazilian musical and dance performances, but memorably included Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's shocking appearance in a Super Mario costume along with impeccably designed visual and sonic flourishes that promised a technologically savvy and entertaining event four years later.

That event seems to have been planned with several purposes in mind, largely burnishing the country's global visibility. Abe's effort to woo the International Olympic Committee traded in part on Japan's enthusiasm for the Olympics as well the pledge that, if Tokyo's bid were successful the country's citizens would be its most important assets:

Under our new plan, "Sport for Tomorrow," young Japanese will go out into the world in even larger numbers. They will help build schools, bring in equipment, and create sports education programs. And by the time the Olympic torch reaches Tokyo in 2020, they will bring the joy of sports directly to ten million people in over one hundred countries (Prime Minister's Office, 2013).

Speaking to a reporter from the *Nikkan Sports* newspaper, the head of Japan's Olympic Committee, former prime minister and noted sports fan Mori Yoshirō, reflected on two meanings of the Olympics for Japanese:

One meaning would be the "enhancement of our national prestige" by reminding the world about Japan's place as a peaceful nation. The other is "recovery." We suffered a lot from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and got criticized over and over. So we need to stand up after that, and show the world how we've stood up.

When the reporter prompted Mori on the theme of "recovery" in Tokyo's famed 1964 Olympics, Mori went further:

1964 was postwar reconstruction. We'd had two atomic bombs dropped on us, and our land had been blasted from Okinawa all the way up to Hokkaido. The whole country was overwhelmed. And so this theme played a major role, showing how the country had come back in just nineteen years. The phantom 1940 Olympics had been meant to show our recovery from the 1923 Great Tokyo Earthquake. So yes, "recovery" reflects the power of our citizens working together. So this isn't about Tokyo as one city, but about the need to bring together the power of everyone in Japan (*Nikkan Supōtsu* 2020).

For Abe, Mori, and many others, then, the Tokyo Games were meant to be national, not local or metropolitan. This is of course unsurprising, given the tight connections between hosting the Olympics and the articulation of popular nationalism (Tomlinson and Young 2006). But it has been a vaguely controversial in Japan, in large part because of the government's depiction of the Games as the "Reconstruction Olympics" (See Fukkōchō ND). While some from the disaster-affected regions in Tōhoku have been evidently cheered by the attention in the run-up to the Olympics and that promised by exposure during the Games themselves, others have suggested that the Games are drawing resources largely to Tokyo rather than on further support for those displaced and otherwise harmed by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and partial nuclear meltdown (Ganseforth 2020).

The spectacle, then, of the Tokyo Olympics was always going to be, as the Games typically are, fraught with questions about the nation. The Olympics itself invites such

tension, with the stated ideals of internationalism confronted by the nationalism of “medal counts” and other ways of measuring the performance of each country against its counterparts (Tomlinson 2012). But in Tokyo’s case, the very “aboutness” of the Games raised representational questions about the spectacle at hand. Were the Games meant to showcase the victimization of the northeastern coast of Japan, an area long considered to be a laggard in the country’s miracle economic development (Takahashi 2013) and the benighted, vulnerable source of nuclear-power-generated electricity for Tokyo’s residents and businesses (e.g. Takahashi 2014). Or was it an opportunity to show the world, as Prime Minister Abe himself has announced globally, that “Japan is Back,” with prosperous, hyper-modern, and technologically advanced Tokyo as its key symbol?

With the eyes of the world focused every four years on the Opening Ceremonies, the artists primarily tasked with threading this particular needle have been kyogen actor Nomura Mansai and popular film director Yamazaki Takahashi. As overall creative director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, Nomura himself has discussed the theme of “requiem and rebirth” (e.g., *Eiga Nathalie* 2018), though much of the narrative drive and flourish had been expected to be driven by Yamazaki. As easily Japan’s most popular live-action film director over the past two decades, Yamazaki is known both for winsome, nostalgic comedies (particularly the *Always: Sanchōme no Yuhi* trilogy) and for his flashy historical dramas, often with controversial themes about military and national service (such as *Eien no Zero* and *Kaizoku to Yobareta Otoko*, both based on novels by writer and right-wing provocateur Hyakuta Naoki). Yamazaki’s films, however, fit easily within a sentimental, conservative mainstream of Japanese popular culture, with the nationalism driven less by flag-waving chauvinism and more by the exhortation of a national community on whose behalf the heroes are (sometimes unconsciously) working.

And while it was clear from the released footage of Opening Ceremony rehearsals that they had planned to spotlight regions outside of Tokyo (e.g., the inclusion of Ainu dance, as per Hirayama 2019) the recovery from the 2011 disaster, the overall emphasis of the event was going to be, as Mori himself had indicated, squarely on the collective effort and sacrifice of the Japanese people that had made this reconstruction, as with so many before it, possible. Indeed, it has long seemed likely that the Games would present on a global stage the kind of sentimental retelling of a story of Japan's "long postwar" that is largely unquestioned and highly pervasive in much of the country's recent popular culture (Leheny 2020). The spectacle of the Games was likely to showcase Japan, not simply Tokyo, and to present a story of national pride based on technological and scientific prowess, on support for others' development, and, most centrally, on peace.

Spectacle and Emotion

We know that spectacle is central to politics and vice-versa, from the rituals associated with a new government taking office to the prominent display of national flags and other symbols and sports matches, from the deployment of mass games by political leaders to flyovers by military jets at commemorative and other events. Indeed, while politicians might be praised for their touch with voters or their accessible speaking style, many of the most successful political leaders of recent years – like Narendra Modi or Donald Trump – have demonstrated a canny understanding of how spectacular events, like mass rallies, can be used to buttress an image of personal authority and power. But spectacles themselves say little, and discussing them as spectacles typically means paying attention at least as much to their form as to their content, and to the recognition that when they work – compelling public interest in and support of the leader and his or her

policies – they do so in large part because they operate on the emotions of participants and viewers.

The relationships between politics and emotion have become a central theme in political science over the past two decades, partly driven by the relevance of spectacular events (like the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent US responses to them) as well as by advances in other fields, ranging from neuroscience to continental philosophy. Political philosophers — notably Martha Nussbaum (2001) but also the authors in Kingston & Ferry (2008) — had already been active voices in these debates, sometimes calling attention to classical interest in the “passions” that animated human behavior and sometimes emphasizing how emotions are central to our experience of the world around us, including political matters. These insights, however, did not in and of themselves fundamentally reshape how empirically-minded political scientists have asked researchable questions about emotions and their connections to the political world.

Instead, findings from neuroscience that fundamentally link emotions to decision-making (and thereby obliterating the frequent and false distinction between emotion and rationality) have seemed to offer promise for our ability to explain political choices. After all, as a leading contribution notes, the ability of political leaders to mobilize and exploit central emotions among their potential supporters (notably, fear) can help to build legislative coalitions in support of action against global warming or, alternatively, for looser regulations on firearms and more ferocious punishment of crimes. This work, largely done with the use of the quasi-experimental methods that mark many advances in recent political psychology, privileges the behavior responses of voters and other political actors to crucial emotional stimuli, in a manner similar to the neuroscientific research that

examines how the brain reacts to similar stimuli. This research shows a great deal of promise, with important connections to issues of political communication and persuasion.

But it also, in its goal of precision and analytical rigor (as understood largely through the replicability of results), has the peculiar consequence of flattening or at least narrowing emotional experience. To be analytically useful, emotions have to be distinguishable, delimited, and specific. I am happy. Or I am sad. Or I am angry. Or I am afraid. And indeed, much of the political science work on emotions treats, in particular, anger and fear (or anxiety) as the fundamental cornerstones of analysis. After all, we might presume, people are most likely to be willing to commit to struggles over “who gets what, when, how” – to quote Harold Lasswell’s well-known summary of the contentious nature of political battles – if they are motivated by fear of not getting what they believe is at stake, or by anger that others might take it first. And when we think of many of the most pressing or visible forms of political behavior – participation in ethnic conflict, or mobilization against environmental catastrophe, or voting for anti-immigration platforms – we can often and fairly readily identify the anxieties and anger that seemingly motivates, and is deployed in political communication, such activity.

And yet this analytical rigor comes inevitably, as many efforts at scientific precision frequently do, at the cost of accuracy in the social world. After all, our own experiences with emotion typically range far beyond the single-word adjectives that tend to be necessary for this kind of research; indeed, even Apple, Twitter, and Facebook continually upgrade their “emoticons” because the expressions cannot quite capture the, say, defiant chagrin, bemused indignation, wistful cheer, or barely suppressed rage that any of us might feel during a family conversation, a concert, a trip to the shopping mall, or even a sports mega-event like the Olympics. Scholars operating in the “affective turn” in the humanities have

started in part with this premise in mind, recognizing the complex forms of subjectivity that shape people's experiences with the social or political world, and showing the complicated, inchoate ways in which "affect" works (e.g. Ruddick 2010). Immediate affective responses to stimuli are typically turned into political work through their social production as emotions – the ways in which we communicate to ourselves and others not necessarily what we feel but what we are expected to feel (e.g. Ahmed 2004).

The political work of emotions thus rests in part on their reproduction socially, the ways in which we talk to one another, or expect to be spoken to, about how people are supposed to feel. After all, the sensations produced by attending a political rally, witnessing two jets crashing into the World Trade Center, or hearing our national anthem while one of our athletes stands with a gold medal around her neck become political in part because of the ways we reaffirm them with others around us, as well as the kinds of messages we receive from political authorities. If a political leader is expected to help us "make sense" of the world, it is in part through the assembly of a common emotional frame out of the unarticulated flotsam and jetsam of affective experience among members of a putative political community. Indeed, the highly scripted world of political emotions expects governments to express pride, sadness, regret, or guilt over their actions or those taken upon them, with these claims so ubiquitous that it would be downright offensive if, for example, the United States government were not to express sadness or concern over a massive earthquake in a geopolitical rival like Iran, even as most would likely assume that any such expression by a bureaucratic diplomatic organization would be strategic rather than genuinely felt (see Hall 2015).

This suggests then that rather than assuming the primacy of discrete emotional reactions and responses, as is typically the case in political science, or sidelining them often

in favor of reflexive epistemologies that highlight the subjectivity of the analyst himself or herself, one possibility would be to rely not on a logic of emotions but rather on a logic of representation. One of the most promising routes for doing so is through focusing on the political role of narrative, the construction of stories that makes sense of events. (Bleiker & Hutchison 2008; Nussbaum 2001). This is in part because storytelling seems to be as “native” to the human experience as are emotions themselves. Indeed, our readings of the emotional world are profoundly shaped by the ways in which we expect stories to work, concluding with punishment for villains and deliverance and reward for heroes, or at least with the moral lessons that emerge from well-told tragedies. Indeed, stories make us feel things not simply because of what is happening at the moment we are hearing them but in part because of the anticipation of what is *supposed* to happen.

Discussions of politics are seldom free of questions about who is “shaping the narrative” (Albright 2017) of current events. But focusing on the agency of the storyteller also tends to draw attention toward the instrumental goals associated with grouping certain events into identifiable sequences with implicit or explicit causal links that explain how “we” ended up in our current situation: our power or weakness relative to others, our wealth or our poverty, our place in an ethnic conflict in which we are expected to be willing to die on behalf of an “imagined community” whose members we will mostly never meet, against another community doing harm to us. This makes sense, but it has the peculiar consequence – one that ought to be of concern to any scholar who aims to problematize the easy dichotomy between emotion and rationality – of implying that the political leaders or voices who craft or shape narratives are operating rationally, to control the emotional responses of the audience. If we believe that emotion matters in politics, and that emotions

are largely generated within and by narratives, we must assume that storytellers themselves are embedded in stories they are attempting to tell themselves (Leheny 2018).

Coronavirus Stories

As world-shaping events go, the 2019-2020 coronavirus crisis has been difficult to fit into conventional narrative structures, even as numerous officials and governments have sought to do exactly this. Efforts by Donald Trump's administration and its allies to rechristen the COVID-19 as the "Chinese Virus" or, even more offensively, the "Kung Flu" seem to reflect the goal of locating blame for the epidemic and its human, social, and economic consequences outside of the United States – and as far from Trump himself as possible (Serwer 2020). Whatever legal or diplomatic costs the Chinese government will ultimately pay for its actions in the early stages of its initially local epidemic, the "Chinese virus" campaign seems doomed to fail, in part because of the global trend away from connecting identity with illness (Satel 2020), in part because the Chinese government has made conspicuous and important efforts to help other countries with their own outbreaks, and in part because of the nakedly political motives shaping the Trump administration's strategy.

But politics will be part of the stories that are ultimately told about the virus, whether in Japan or elsewhere. Indeed, because of their proximity and their deep ties through economic and human exchange, Japan has been concerned and aware of new illnesses that appear in China as well as of their consequences for Japan and other Asia-Pacific countries. Whether in terms of attention to the consequences of the regional economy of an outbreak like 2003's SARS (Kimura 2004) or the necessary shifts in Japan's own measures for responding to pandemics (Oshitani 2009), Japanese scholars and policy

voices have been intent on understanding widespread medical events in the region and their consequences for Japan. Indeed, the awareness of Japan's vulnerability has even prompted examination of the ways in which Japanese newspapers might amplify messaging and propaganda coming out of Beijing (Sugino 2004). And while Japan during the 2020 pandemic has been mercifully free of the kind of anti-China narratives that have emerged in the United States and elsewhere, there is no guarantee that this remain the case, particularly if the number of deaths rises sharply and other losses go beyond the severity of, say, postponing the Tokyo Olympics.

Indeed, disease itself provides fertile ground for the construction of morality plays regarding who gets sick, who dies, who is credited with a victory, and who is blamed for failures. Epidemiologically, the narrative of a new illness is relatively simple. When a new virus for which there is no widespread immunity emerges, people fall victim to it and some likely die, with the virus reproducing itself as long as it has access to new hosts without immunity. Typically an extremely virulent strain, such as Ebola, will burn itself out, because it kills hosts more quickly than they can readily transmit it to others. And as viruses evolve, they often do so by becoming less dangerous, all the better for reproducing in victims who remain alive. Transmission can be slowed through limits on physical contact or through the development of vaccines, and can be by and large halted when a community achieves what is broadly (and somewhat imprecisely) known as "herd immunity," with enough members immune to the virus that it does not have a ready pool of new victims for transmission (see Fine, Eames, and Heymann 2011).

But the politics around illnesses are complex and their social and human consequences profound. Perhaps no disease has symbolized this as much as HIV, the blood-borne virus that can lead to AIDS. In part because communities disproportionately

affected in the 1980s were people of color, the LGBT community, and intravenous drug users, much of the politics of AIDS in the early years focused less on getting help to the victims as to policing their boundaries, to ensure that they would not infect the idealized national body: heterosexual, non-drug-using, and white, or Japanese, or Korean, and so forth (e.g. Kim 2015; Cohen 1999). And so the stories told around that virus are sometimes about the teams of medical researchers who worked to develop the drug cocktails that have been essential to keeping HIV victims healthy, and sometimes about the public figures who helped to give the disease a known face, like NBA star Magic Johnson, and thereby destigmatize it (Cole & Denny 1994). Quite commonly, however, the story is of a community – in particular, the LGBT community – that had to become publicly contentious because closeted silence was seen as leading to an unmourned and even mocked death sentence for many.

But when viruses are imagined, the heroes tend to be the scientists, and the story is of trying to understand the virus well enough to control or to respond to it. Michael Crichton's classic science fiction novel (and subsequent film) *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) follows a team of biologists, each of whom is rendered more lifeless by Crichton's wooden prose and dialogue than by the pathogen itself, as they seek to understand an extraterrestrial and rapidly mutating virus that seems to have the ability to end all life on earth. More recently, and clearly inspired by the SARS epidemic, Steven Soderbergh's film *Contagion* uses the kind of "network narrative" that has increasingly been deployed to make sense of global events (Narine 2010) to explore the myriad ways in which the world reacts to an unusually contagious, highly lethal viral infection. And while the networked structure prevents a Crichton-like focus on the arcs of a small number of tightly connected characters, Soderbergh and his screenwriter Scott Z. Burns place the actions of scientists in

the US Center for Disease Control at the core of the film: diagnosing the illness, aiming to stop its transmission, and finally developing (and recklessly self-testing) a vaccine.

The scientists during the current COVID-19 are largely nameless as far as the public goes, though public health officials — like Dr. Anthony Fauci in the United States — have gotten exposure from their efforts to update the public and promote social distancing. The stories being told on a day-to-day basis about coronavirus are increasingly about public figures affected with the virus, whether actors Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson and Idris Elba with their apparently minor cases, to the hospitalization of American legal writer David Lat and Japanese comedian Shimura Ken, to the induced coma of the mother of NBA star Karl-Anthony Towns, to the death of playwright Terrence McNally. The snippets that therefore appear on the news and in social media feeds thus give both a known human dimension to the numbers as well as worrisome detail about the path the illness can take. None of this amounts yet even to the kind of networked narrative that filmmakers have developed surrounding global issues in recent years, but it stands in stark contrast to the ease with which one might talk about winners and losers in a war, villains and victims in an economic raid, or the like.

Instead, as with the Olympics, one available narrative has become that of national performance in a global (or at least limitedly international) context. To be sure, some leaders and governments have seem nearly obsessed with trumpeting their success in handling the epidemic, most obviously and perhaps unsurprisingly in Donald Trump's initial White House address on the coronavirus, in which he pointedly lionized the US's questionable success in handling the virus and explicitly compared it to the European Union:

And taking early intense action, we have seen dramatically fewer cases of the virus in the United States than are now present in Europe.

The European Union failed to take the same precautions and restrict travel from China and other hot spots. As a result, a large number of new clusters in the United States were seeded by travelers from Europe (Trump 2020).

But other governments have seemed to be nearly as focused on announcing success against the virus, from the Chinese emphasis on its own success to the trumpeting of South Korea's aggressive and seemingly successful measures against the virus. The editor-in-chief of *Global Times*, published by the *People's Daily*, wrote in mid-March that "Except for China, the vast majority of countries failed to keep steps with the virus and responded negatively to the pending crisis." And this piece was titled "Hindsight Shows China Took Appropriate Measures" (Hu 2020). Media outlets in South Korea have similarly pointed to the success of their government's efforts and touted them as a democratic alternative to the heavy-handed quarantine and isolation policies of authoritarian China (Park 2020). While this is unsurprising at a time that policymakers are seeking to learn lessons from the experiences and logics of other countries, it puts on display one of the key ways that the story of the coronavirus will ultimately emerge: a story of nations, and perhaps only secondarily that of leaders or other individuals.

A Few Thoughts

And it will perhaps be this story – of national triumph or failure – that will emerge as a dominant theme in post-epidemic narratives and emotional formations about the virus. Its immediate effects – dread, annoyance, outrage, loneliness, anxiety, anger, determination, and fear, among others – run a gamut of human emotion. In the aftermath, these will likely be disciplined into emotional frames that are simultaneously less inchoate

and less genuine, at least in terms of expressing what people “really” felt as the crisis went on. Instead, the stories will be of admiration for health care workers (those on the front lines) who will likely emerge as the kind of largely interchangeable figures of self-doubt and ultimately quiet, self-sacrificing strength one might associate with the trend of war films that celebrate commitment to comrades rather than to a political cause (see Wetta and Novelli 2003). But a broader story that will likely organize those more intimate portrayals will be of national performance: that of the countries whose leaders made early or wise decisions, those who had appropriate systems in place to save lives, and those that failed their citizens and/or the larger world.

Because of my superstitious nature and my desire neither to tempt fate during the pandemic, rather than “Conclusion” or “Final Thoughts,” I offer only a few suggestions regarding the emotional context of the COVID-19 crisis. Given the depth and breadth of research on emotion and affect across a range of disciplines over the past two decades, it seems inconceivable that scholars will not investigate the pandemic through this lens. And the social media accounts, the speeches, the testimonials, the videos produced by exhausted, panicked health care workers will offer myriad sources for tracing the human consequences of this ghastly period. Indeed, the circulation of these affects – as people isolated in their homes or hotel rooms or apartments or jail cells or dormitories or hospital beds pass them to one another, commenting and leaving digital traces of the momentary sensations of experience – will of course become appropriate topics for investigation. This is in many ways a globally shared crisis, even many of its effects – particularly in terms of illness and death – are deeply personal.

In examining politics, we can do more than to wave away the complexity of human experience or to simplify it to behavioral triggers that get people to sign online petitions,

donate to favored candidates or parties, or vote. We might consider as well the ways in which more comprehensive stories – of communities and perhaps most obviously of nations – become a standard frame for organizing and disciplining that which we are supposed to say about what the pandemic meant and how it was handled. It will be a great number of things, but among those will be a spectacle, one that is inhabited by and that likely reinforces larger stories about the nations to which victims and survivors belong. If we turn out, in the end, to be united by emotion, this too will have been a political project, one that organizes *post facto* the age's terrors and grief into recognizable moral logics.

Sources

Ahmed, Sara (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2nd Edition). London: Routledge.

Albertson, Bethany and Gadarian, Shana Kushner (2015). *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Albright, Jonathan (2017). "Welcome to the Era of Fake News," *Media and Communication* 5:2, pp. 87-89.

Asaba Michiaki (2008). *Shōwa 30-nendai shugi: Mō seichō shinai nihon* ("1950s/1960s-ism": The Japan That Can't Develop Further). Tokyo: Gentōsha.

Bleiker, Roland and Emma Hutchison (2008). "Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 34, pp. 115-35.

Cohen, Cathy J. (1999). *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cole, Cheryl L. and Denny, Harry III (1994). "Visualizing Deviance in Post-Reagan America: Magic Johnson, AIDS, and the Promiscuous World of Professional Sport," *Critical Sociology* 20:3, pp. 123-147.

Collins, Sandra (2007). *The 1940 Tokyo Games: The Missing Olympics: Japan, the Asian Olympics and the Olympic Movement*. Oxon: Routledge.

Crichton, Michael (1969). *The Andromeda Strain*. New York: Knopf.

de Moragas Spa, Miquel; Rivenburgh, Nancy K.; and Larson, and James F. (1995). *Television in the Olympics* London: John Libbey & Company.

Eiga Nathalie (2018). "Nomura Mansai to Yamazaki Takashi, Tokyo gorin no shikiten konseputo kataru 'chinkon to saisei to seishin o ikasu,'" (Nomura Mansai and Yamazaki Takashi Discuss the Ceremonies' Concept: Requiem, Rebirth, and Bringing the Spirit to Life," July 31, 2018. Available at: <https://natalie.mu/eiga/news/293476>. Accessed 10 January 2019.

Enomoto Hiroaki (2017). *'Omotenashi' to iu zankoku shakai* (The Cruel Society of "Omotenashi"). Tokyo: Heibonsha.

Fine, Paul; Eames, Ken; and Heymann, David L. (2011). "'Herd Immunity': A Rough Guide," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 52:7 (April 1), pp. 911-916.

Fukkōchō (N.D.). "'Fukkō gorin' ni muketa torigumi" (The Bout for a 'Reconstruction Olympics'). Available at: <https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/2020portal/reconstruction-olympic/index.html>.

Ganseforth, Sonja (2020). "Anti-Olympic Rallying Points, Public Alienation, and Transnational Alliances," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 18:5 (March 1). Available at: <https://apjff.org/2020/5/Ganseforth.html>

Gluck, Carol (1991). "The 'Long Postwar': Japan and Germany in Common and in Contrast." In *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, edited by Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer, 63-78. Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Hall, Todd H. (2015). *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Hirayama, Ari (2019). "Gorin kaikaishiki de Ainu no odori o 'Oripa no seishin ni kanau'" ('Fulfilling the Spirit of the Olympics and Paralympics' through Ainu Dance in the Opening Ceremony), *Asahi Shimbun*, March 3. Available at: <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASM323S9ZM32UHB1010.html>. Accessed January 30, 2020.

Hu Xijin (2020). "Hindsight Shows China Took Appropriate Measures," *Global Times*, March 17. Available at: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1182924.shtml>.

Hyakuta Naoki (2009). *Eien no zero* (The Eternal Zero). Tokyo: Kōdansha

_____ (2012). *Kaizoku to yobareta Otoko Jōge* (A Man Called Pirate, Vols 1 and 2). Tokyo: Kōdansha.

- International Olympic Committee (2020). "Joint Statement from the International Olympic Committee and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee," March 24. Available at: <https://www.olympic.org/news/joint-statement-from-the-international-olympic-committee-and-the-tokyo-2020-organising-committee>
- Kim, Young Soo (2015). "Japan Addresses the Global HIV/AIDS Crisis: The Roles of Media and Civil Society in Shaping Perceptions and Aid," *Asian Perspective* 39:3 (July-September), pp. 483-511.
- Kimura Michio (2004). "SARS o osaete keizai wa kaifuku, seiji kadai wa sanseki: 2003-nen no ajia" (The Political Issues Piling Up as Economies Rebound from Stamping out SARS: Asia in 2003). *Ajia dōkō nenpō* 2003, pp. 2-10.
- Kingston, Rebecca and Ferry, Leonard, eds. (2008). *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions in Political Philosophy*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Lee, Jongsoo, and Yoon, Hyunsun (2017). "Narratives of the Nation in the Olympic Opening Ceremonies: Comparative Analysis of Beijing 2008 and London 2012," *Nations and Nationalism* 23(4): 952–969.
- Leheny, David (2018). *Empire of Hope: The Sentimental Politics of Japanese Decline*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- _____ (2020). "Opening a Storyline in the 2020 Olympics," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 18:4 (February 15). Available at: <https://apjff.org/2020/4/Leheny.html>
- Meeks, David (2017). "Ryan Lochte Cleared of Criminal Charge Stemming from Rio Olympics Incident," *USA Today*, July 14. Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2017/07/14/ryan-lochte-cleared-criminal-charges-stemming-rio-olympics-incident/481222001/>
- Narine, Neil (2010). "Global Trauma and the Cinematic Network Society," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27:3, pp. 209-234.
- NHK (2019). "Yuku jidai, kuru jidai" (Old Era, New Era). Broadcast on April 30. Summary announcement available at: <https://www.nhk.or.jp/pr/keiei/shiryou/soukyoku/2019/04/007.pdf>
- Nikkan Supōtsu* (2020). "Mori Yoshirō kaichō ni kiita 'Tokyo gorin kaisai no imi' rensai 1" (Speaking with Committee Chair Mori Yoshirō about 'The Meaning of Tokyo as Olympic Host,' Part 1). January 7. Available at: <https://www.nikkansports.com/sports/news/202001060000656.html>.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press.

- Olympic.org. (N.D). "Promote Olympism in Society," available at: <https://www.olympic.org/the-ioc/promote-olympism>. Accessed March 12, 2020.
- Oshitani Hitoshi (2009). "Infurensa pandemikku (H1N1) 2009 o kangaeru" (Considering the 2009 H1N1 Flu Pandemic)," *Uirasu* 59:2, pp. 139-144.
- Park, Min-hee (2020). "S. Korea's Story from Coronavirus Nightmare to Exemplar for Countermeasures and Prevention," *Hankyoreh*, March 23. Available at: http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/933773.html
- Prime Minister's Office (2013). "Presentation by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 125th Session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)," Buenos Aires, Saturday, September 7. Available at: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/g6_abe/statement/201309/07ioc_presentation_e.html.
- Rossol, Nadine (2010). "Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles, and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926-1936," *Central European History* 43(4): 616-638.
- Ruddick, Susan (2010). "The Politics of Affect: Spinoza in the Work of Negri and Deleuze," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27:4, pp. 21-45.
- Satel, Sally (2020). "Inside the Controversy over 'the Chinese Virus,'" *National Review*, March 23. Available at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/03/inside-the-controversy-over-the-chinese-virus/>
- Serwer, Adam (2020). "Trump is Igniting a Coronavirus Culture War to Save Himself," *The Atlantic*, March 24. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/trump-is-the-chinese-governments-most-useful-idiot/608638/>
- Soderbergh, Steven (2011). *Contagion*. Los Angeles: Participant, Warner Bros.
- Sugino Sadayoshi (2004). "Nihon no shimbun ni okeru SARS hōdō ni tsuite: chūgoku hōdō no sendenteki sokumen ni kan suru suryōteki bunseki" (Japanese Newspaper Reports about SARS: A Quantitative Analysis of the Propagandistic Side of Reports on China). *Masu komyunikēshon* 65, pp. 96-115.
- Tahara Kazuhiro (2020). "Tokyo gorin no motto wa 'United By Emotion' – kandō de, watashitachi ha hitotsuni" (The Tokyo Olympic Motto is "United by Emotion)," *Mainichi Shimbun*, February 17.
- Takahashi, Satsuki (2013). "Endless Modernization: Fisheries Policy and Development in Postwar Japan," in Christopher Gerteis and Timothy S. George (eds.), *Japan Since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble* (London: Bloomsbury), pp. 189-206.
- Takahashi Tetsuya (2014). "What March 11 Means to Me: Nuclear Power and the Sacrificial System" (trans. by Norma Field, Yuki Miyamoto, and Tomomi Yamaguchi). *The*

Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus 12:19 (May 11). Available at: <https://apjpf.org/Takahashi-Tetsuya/4114/article.pdf>.

Tomlinson, Alan (2012). "Lording IT: London and the Getting of the Games," in John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson (eds.), *Watching the Olympics: Politics, Power, and Representation* (Oxon, UK: Routledge), pp. 1-17.

Trump, Donald J. (2020). "Remarks by President Trump in Address to the Nation," March 11. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-address-nation/>.

Wetta, Frank Joseph and Novelli, Martin A. (2003). "'Now a Major Motion Picture': War Films and Hollywood's New Patriotism," *Journal of Military History* 67:3 (July), pp. 861-882.