

# Bridges of Memory: The Form and Function of Fascist Aesthetics in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*

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On 8th December 1941 soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army began their invasion of the Malayan Peninsula, at the time a British colony, shortly after the Imperial Navy's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii (Moore 88). The four years that followed would see the Japanese fight a brutal war against the Americans in the Pacific and occupy Malaya, marking what is arguably the most traumatic period in Malaysia's history. The fissures created by the experiences of being occupied by an Asian imperialist, who occupied the region by upstaging the reigning European colonialists, continue to echo in Malaysia's collective memory and politics today (Moore 93-95).

Revisiting the complex legacies of Malaysia's past, it is not surprising that both of Tan Twan Eng's historical fiction novels, *The Gift of Rain* (2007) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012), attempt to negotiate this particularly fraught chapter of Malaysian history. Both novels feature Japanese men as cornerstones in the growth and development of native protagonists. *The Gift of Rain* follows the narrative of Philip Arminius Khoo-Hutton, the son of a British father and a Straits Chinese mother born and raised in the multi-ethnic island of Penang. Born as an interracial subject in the highly racialized society of colonial Malaya, Philip occupies a liminal space within the social and racial discourses which attempt to fix or denigrate his identity. Through Philip's budding relationship with his Japanese mentor, Hayato Endo, and the traumatic experiences he undergoes during the brutal Japanese occupation of Malaya during World War II, Tan Twan Eng explores the complex discursive relationships between identity and collective legacies of trauma and arguably offers an aesthetic vision for imploding the ideological structures of fascism that sought to co-opt Philip in his youth.

This paper argues that in doing so Tan Twan Eng employs aesthetic tropes to create an affective register that closely mirrors and clearly borrows from the aesthetics of Japanese Fascism itself. This paper analyses how Hayato Endo is both an accurate depiction of the product of Shōwa era fascism as well as attempts to deconstruct how Endo-san's training fashions Philip's own sensibilities. I shall attempt to analyse the interplay of ideology and aesthetics, and their effects on the subsequent development of Philip. The reason for analysing *The Gift of Rain* is rooted in the fact that the framed narrative of the novel also represents the key paradox of 'the fascist aesthetic moment'; it encodes the elements within itself that can resist the ideological interpellation of the individual. Philip's revisiting his past traumas with Michiko creates a possibility that may allow us to centre narratives of solidarity, compassion, and a shared confronting of the past to intervene in the ideological thrust of the 'fascist moment', even whilst borrowing from the aesthetic sensibility of that same 'fascist aesthetic'. Building on Friedrich Schiller's description of the crisis affecting the experience of modernity as a breakdown of the former myths that held together an organic structure of premodern society, Alan Tansman, in his seminal study of the aesthetics of Japanese Fascism, uses the term 'blankness' (in a reference to Max Weber) to define the existential instability to which fascist aesthetics were a response

in early 20th century Japan (19). By briefly analysing and comparing texts and aesthetic tropes that were in circulation in Shōwa era Imperial Japan I attempt to formulate a wider narrative structure to read the aesthetic tropes deployed by Tan Twan Eng in his text and how the text in turn offers narrative and ideological strategies and insights into understanding the functioning of ideological conscription through textual mediums as well as revisiting and re-evaluating the complex legacies of trauma and loss which need to be engaged when grappling with the post-colonial histories of Asia.

For writers and artists in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, enacting a state of communion, performing a devotion to duty and in the process subsuming their consciousness to larger mythicized constructs which harked back to a glorified feudal past became the antidote to the fragmented and conflicted experience of modernity and the pressures and anxieties which were part of the Japanese state's experience with the West (Tansman 19–20). In this process there was a deliberate attempt by writers to manufacture 'values and attitudes that would be held so deeply that they would appear innate and not imposed (Tansman 23)'. This allowed a mode for Japanese aesthetic culture to engage with the anxieties of the modern industrial age by creating narratives of continuity imbued with spiritualized and transcendental aspirations. In effect it opened the bridge for the aestheticization of Japanese politics in the early 20th century. In this vein, Herbert Bix has noted the passionate visions for rebuilding Japanese society around the deified body of the Emperor from the early 1920s from the Japanese Far-Right (ch. 2).

In using the term 'fascism' to describe the ideological formations that were gaining currency in interwar Japan I am taking recourse to the theories of the post-war political scientist Masao Maruyama. He describes the obfuscation between the private and public domains in Japanese polity, a process begun during the Meiji era, as one of the key contributors of inscribing the Japanese Emperor with his status of divinity and imbuing moral authority within the person of the Emperor. This essentially catapulted politics and the space of state ideology from beyond the 'public' sphere to be located deeply within the private sphere of Japanese citizens' lives (Maruyama 27). This was the cornerstone for creating a state where the ethical system was organically intertwined with structures and institutions of the state. Moral absolutism and a spiritualized aesthetic became the basis for Japanese authoritarianism as the Japanese Emperor, by definition, held sway over the very spirits of his subjects (Maruyama 31). This led to what Maruyama calls an 'exteriorization of morality', where the locus of Japanese morality and sensibilities did not lie in the individual conscience but in the affairs of the nation (32). Japanese atrocities during the War can be understood within this framework where morality was defined by the affairs of state rather than the existence of an individual conscience. This also formed the basis for the vision of the Japanese state (and the Imperial body) being an organic extension of the Japanese family/clan which in turn was consolidated by an underlying theocratic structure of State Shinto ideology (Skya 5). The term fascism is entirely appropriate in the Japanese context given the very real jealousy that many Nazi ideologues felt for the seemingly organic Japanese ideological structures which supposedly reflected the ultimate social vision that the Nazis hoped to build in Germany (Skya 136).

To return to the domain of aesthetics, one has to read the existence of a specific Japanese 'fascist aesthetic' from multiple angles. The creation of a system of aesthetic tropes and cultural signifiers within Japanese literature of the times which might portend a fascist imagination was rooted in the aforementioned fissures produced in Japanese culture by the stresses of modernity. Japanese writers struggled to articulate a new aesthetic system to address the fragmented sense of self, the deracination of an increasingly materialist bourgeoisie, and the complex reactions to Western culture that were hallmarks of Japanese modernity. A return to a Romantic imagination with visions of nature and centring utopic spaces of natural beauty, encoding a transcendental aspiration to reach a state of wholeness from the fractured subjectivity of modernity,

and in trying to do so reaching back to a seemingly organic sensibility stemming from ‘native’ traditions of the past became mainstays of the Japanese fascist imagination. One can clearly discern the complicated relationship with Western philosophies such as German Idealism that is encoded in this aesthetic imagination. Tansman notes that Japanese fascism articulated a very modern resistance to the forces of modernity, by ironically deploying a mythicized Japanese past. This is altogether a familiar trope for the Fascist aesthetic, as Alice Kaplan notes that ‘a social defence against modernization can itself be aesthetically modern’, while discussing the aesthetics of French Fascism (qtd in Tansman 30).

Taking into cognizance the nature of the Imperial ideological structure which was taking shape in Japan in the Shōwa era, it becomes clear as to how Romantic aesthetic imaginations managed to conflate themselves with the ideology of ‘ultra-nationalism’ to create what Tansman calls the ‘fascist moment’, an affective moment of epiphany in which multiple discourses of spiritualized political imaginations and millenarian yearnings intersect, susceptible to be channelled into political action (Tansman 30). Tansman notes that an appeal to a cultural sublime trading in mythic images offering possibilities of repose and an appreciation of the ‘beautiful’ articulated beyond the realm of the positivistic language of utilitarianism which marked modern imaginations were marks of this ‘fascist moment’ (21). Philip Fisher deploys the concept of ‘wonder’ as a moment of pure feeling marked by its sense of visceral experience which ‘demands one’s attention and leaves no room for reflection or abstraction from the immediacy of the moment’ (qtd in Tansman 35). This sense of immediacy is evoked in Endo-san’s directions to Philip to instinctively ‘feel’ his actions in performing aikido (Tan 53). This ideology of epiphany offers solace and a sense of purpose and opens the possibility for achieving ‘wholeness’ to the deracinated self of the modern individual.

Philip Arminius Khoo-Hutton at the outset of the novel exists in the liminal zone of racialized colonial society. He is the picture of an individual subjectivity serrated by the multiple identities he is forced to traverse while being unable to own any of them. He presents the reader a picture of the alienated, fragmented self, unmoored from his own sense of history and given to social maladjustment (Tan 31–45). Philip is bereft from the organic ties of community and family due to his alienation. It is this selfhood in Philip that Endo-san painstakingly stitches back together by reconnecting him with a sense of community, as is evident from Philip’s growing attachment to his English father and siblings and Chinese grandfather through the course of the novel. In instigating his meeting with Mr. Khoo, Endo-san is the thrust behind Philip reclaiming his own history which locates him in a cultural network that circulates from China, Malaya and to affective connections to Japan (in this life and the previous one) (Tan 149). This is precisely the space within which Japanese Fascist imaginations also converged in critiquing and reimagining political and cultural structures.

This urgency to recreate the individual, language and aesthetics itself to address the crises of modernity is exactly what the influential Japanese critic Kobayashi Hideo saw in the very modernist prose of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. Hideo contended that Akutagawa was engaged in the process of transforming language itself to achieve the cadences of incantation, thus imbuing a sense of the ‘lost spirit’ within the realm of the literary (Tansman 55). Akutagawa’s sensational suicide in 1927 further gave credence to a developing Japanese imagination which began to combine elements of this modernist experimentation with form, redefining aesthetics and adding the tropes of melancholy and a stylized death to the currency of symbolism as the basis for a renewed Japanese literature. Similarly, scenes of natural beauty providing utopic possibilities of tranquillity which are yet marked by a strain of melancholy and the awareness of loss came to be part of the same system of cultural signifiers. Tansman takes the example of Satō Haruo’s poetry describing Japanese gardens as a prime example (19). The echoes with the garden designed by Nakamura Aritomo in Tan Twan Eng’s other novel *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) is evident.

Unlike the triumphalist grand narratives of Nazi propaganda, Japanese fascist aesthetes acknowledged a keen sense of loss within their imagery. Tansman takes the example of Itami Mansaku's 1937 film 'The New Earth', set in the backdrop of the Imperial conquest of Manchuria, as case in point (27). The pathos of loss and the experience and acknowledgment of beauty which is dependent on the beautiful being transitory and inherently ephemeral, to be experienced intuitively only in a snatch of feeling, pervade the Japanese fascist imagination as in the closing scene depicting a couple momentarily reunited on the vast Manchurian plain in Mansaku's film. A similar sensibility is communicated by both of Tan's Japanese characters, Endo-san and Aritomo, and the indelible impressions they leave on their respective proteges. The culmination of all these tropes arguably comes about in the essay on Japanese bridges written by the Romantic writer Yasuda Yojūrō. Yasuda, when passing a Japanese bridge while journeying on a train, dives into an essay which trades in the tropes of nostalgic reverie, and elevates the bridge to an eschatological metaphor which becomes a psychic link spanning and connecting modernity with the notion of eternity rooted in a Japanese past (Tansman 77). Yasuda's writing reaches the final culmination of fascist art where he clearly uses the modalities of 'kitsch', to create moments of beauty which become the basis for an intuitive sensibility that can overcome the anxieties of conflicted modern self-hood to forge vaunting aspirations for transcendence, and thus be imbued with a spiritualized vigour for action. It is not for nothing that Yasuda and his writings would become reviled reminders of a traumatic past in post-war Japan (Tansman 81).

All of the sensibilities which were playing out in the field of Japanese aesthetics and ideology in the 1930s are accurately reproduced in the character of Hayato Endo. When explaining his background to Philip, Endo-san reveals his belonging to a traditional Japanese samurai family during their meal at Suzuki's restaurant (Tan 64). Endo-san's service to the Emperor is also framed within the narrative of the family-state as he reveals that he is beholden to an economy of 'honour' with respect to Emperor Hirohito in light of the dishonour brought to his house by his father's 'treason' (Tan 65). Additionally, Endo-san's positioning as a samurai immediately connects real historical threads as the seminal text of samurai culture, Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure*, was the direct inspiration for the *Senjinkun* (Skya 7). Endo-san's loyalty to Hirohito remains unwavering to the end when he commits *seppuku*, except possibly in the case of his beloved pupil Philip. That Endo-san is aware of the powerful interplay between political ideology and the martialling of aesthetics to achieve political actions is made clear when on hearing the words of a choir song at St. George's Church he remarks of it as 'a song powerful enough to drive a nation' (Tan 74). Endo-san being deeply influenced by the semiotics of an authoritarian Shōwa Japan are communicated in more nuanced manners as well. His practice of aikido is framed within images of martial sensibility coupled with keen aesthetic refinement. Arguably in his descriptions of *zazen*, and the Zen philosophy that infuses Endo-san's interactions as mentor to Philip, one could argue that Tan himself deals in kitsch to communicate the mysticism that Endo-san expresses during his personal quest for a sense of unity and self-actualization, which is subsequently transplanted in Philip. This subtle internalization of sensibility is clear in the evocative imagery of the poem by Solomon Bloomgarden that Philip presents to Endo-san (Tan 102).

Zen culture traditionally had deep roots in a martial aesthetic in feudal Japan. Edwin Reischauer squarely located a 'toughness' in the medieval Japanese military aristocracy in their practice of Zen (qtd in Hoover 48). In the Kamakura period, under Shogun Yoritomo Minamoto, Zen philosophy came to be deeply associated with the skill and practice of swordsmanship (traditionally the purview of the samurai). Zen training was also a key component to the practice of archery (Hoover 51), which is the martial form preferred by Tan's other Japanese mentor figure in *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Aritomo (Tan 60). Post the failure of Kublai Khan's invasion of Japan in 1281, mentorship, a marshalling of noble individual impulses to perform sacred 'duty' and the development of skills of swordsmanship and archery became hallmarks of samurai cul-

ture. This in turn effectively also signified a deep allegiance to and acceptance of the divinity of the Japanese Emperor (Hoover 51–52). Endo-san's own background in a samurai family and his association with the martial image of the *Nagamitsu Katana* (a priceless medieval Japanese sword) (Tan 99), all convey his location within an established martial tradition infused with a spiritual sensibility.

Zen culture would become a signifier for the growing political interaction with the realm of spiritualism in modern Japan. Kakuzo Okakura in his book *The Awakening of Japan* describes Zen Buddhism as a cornerstone of the 'School of Oyomei' (76). The Oyomei ideology rooted in the belief of cosmic destruction and recreation in perpetuity arguably reflects one of the well-springs for Fascist imaginations with its stress on creating new spiritual life-worlds from 'amid the tumultuous crash of a myriad of dissolving worlds' (Okakura 77). Zen culture's stress on the cycle of karma are equally reflected in Endo-san's mystical beliefs in the centuries long cycles of repetition which intertwine the fates of Philip and himself in past lives. In a sense one could say that Zen is Endo-san's 'bridge' to creating an organic connection with past life-worlds. Zen's Pan-Asian philosophical history is also reflected in the functioning of Oyomei thought in Japanese expansionist aspirations, as Okakura testifies that 'among those of our generals and admirals who have distinguished themselves in the Chinese and Russian wars, many were brought up as youths in the principles of Oyomei (81).'

While the philosophical registers of a Zen culture drawing on romanticized martial traditions is clear when reading Endo-san's practice of aikido, a more subtle exchange occurs when Endo-san begins inscribing Philip within these cultural networks through training. In his analysis of the text, David Lim reads Endo-san's mentorship of Philip as the working of the feudal Japanese institution of Shudō. This was a key formulation of the 'samurai way' of acculturation with intrinsic implications of personal loyalty, love and devotion between mentor and mentee (Lim 8). Gary Leupp explicitly identified 'dying for one's lover' (qtd in Lim 9) as one of the emotive bases for the *Nanshoku* relationship. The search for an aestheticized code where self-erasure in the form of self-sacrifice for a romanticized ideal or a very tangible, physical loyalty were encoded within samurai culture, are clearly visible in the close relationship of Philip and Endo-san and are clearly marked with signifiers of the Japanese fascist aesthetic. When read together with Tan's use of the trope of karmic repetition, the space-time relation of Endo-san and Philip is destabilized from temporality to seek a continuity with the eternal. This attempts to create a 'bridge' (to use Yasuda's metaphor) which is both indicative of a wider circulation of symbols and continuities in an 'Asian' space while also being squarely located in the language of fascist longings.

Taking Gregory Pflugfelder's description of Shudō as a 'discipline of mind and body, a set of practices and knowledge expected to bring both spiritual and physical rewards to those who choose to follow its path (qtd in Lim 8)', one could argue that Endo-san's training of Philip is a subtle working of ideological interpellation in the guise of philosophy and physical, performative, and aesthetic forms (in terms of aikido). Philip's education under Endo-san leads to his imbibing of Japanese mores and in an affective sense culminates with his transformation into an ideal of the *Nippon-zin* (Lim 10). While at a tangible level it is clear that Endo-san uses Philip to scout out Penang for the coming invasion, the relationship between them is further complicated by their romantic attraction and Philip's refusal to be truly indoctrinated in the official Imperial ideology of the Occupation forces. This signals a more complicated picture of how far Philip has been truly interpellated to the fascist ideology.

Lim takes the examples of Malay youth who were given ideological indoctrination by the Japanese during the Occupation but never developed any affinity for Emperor worship, but rather were made conscious of a native Malayan nationalism in the process, to read Philip's ideological framing (11). Philip Hutton was co-opted by the Occupation forces to collaborate with General Yamashita's brutal regime. Yet it is clear that Philip's intrinsic motivations

to aid the Japanese stem from personal loyalties to his family and friends, a state of affairs that his youthfulness precludes him from perceiving to be a route to tragedy. To comprehend the workings of ideology here Lim employs Žižek's behaviourist theory of ideology to understand Philip's actions. Žižek alters Althusser's formulation of the working of ideological apparatus to signal that individual actions may not be completely beholden to the fact of interpellation by the ideological machine (qtd in Lim 12-13). There may exist a dissonance between individual action and the true scope of aesthetics being deployed to foster ideological leanings. Tansman uses the work of Garrett Stewart to posit that aestheticized interpellation cannot be the final word on the working of individual agency. The text (in this case Endo-san's influence) 'may model and mandate but not monitor the reader's response' in a strategy of what Stewart terms 'textual conscription' (qtd in Tansman 31). Building on this analysis one can clearly see how Philip's agency is not compromised by the internalization of aesthetics but the very real threat of physical force in the final instance. However, I would argue that the subtle working of Endo-san's 'textual conscription' of Philip lies not in his lack of affinity to Japanese Imperialism, but his inscribing himself within the narratives of personal loyalty and duty.

There is a need to historicize this functioning of fascist ideology in this instance lest it seem that the narrative of the fascist aesthetic become a totalizing one. Real Japanese servicemen's loyalties were not as simply directed to the Emperor and the *Kokutai* (national polity) as the Yasukuni Shrine might have us believe. In locating Philip's actions to loyalties which could in their inception be subversive to the overarching state ideology yet lead to actions which are quintessentially in service to fascist regimes, there are striking similarities between the character and motivations of Philip to those of actual Japanese *Tokkotai* (Kamikaze) pilots. In her remarkable study of the diaries of young 'student-soldier' pilots mobilized by General Takijiro Onishi to fly suicide missions against the Americans in 1945, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, gives us a glimpse into characters very similar to Tan's protagonist. Just like Philip these students of prestigious Japanese universities were extremely well-read and had a keenly developed aesthetic and philosophical sensibility, with Goethe, Marx, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche being staple reading material (Ohnuki-Tierney 73). More strikingly, their diaries and testimonies clearly indicate that the night before their fateful flights, young men like Seki Yukio, Umezawa Kazuyo and Machida Dokyo were flying not for their Emperor but out of loyalty and for the safety of their newly wedded wives and mother respectively (Ohnuki-Tierney 173-176). Philip's internalization of Endo-san's education would lead to just such a progression.

Philip's *bildungsroman* being rooted in a radical strain of very modern anti-modernist imaginings allows for the emergence of a spiritualized, aestheticized selfhood that relocates him from a space of liminality to find and experience the sensate moment of beauty and through it find meaning and purpose to salvage his fractured individuality to a state of wholeness. The subtle ideological tug here comes in the form of the language of duty and loyalty which becomes the bedrock of a maturing Philip. Hence, Philip Hutton culminates for the reader from the distant, sullen teenager at the start of the novel to the passionate and devoted young man who risks his life for his forged loyalties to friends (Kon) and in the ultimate internalization of the 'stylized death', is willing to have his own head on the chopping block of execution in a bid to save a father with whom his relationship had started off coldly and ambivalently (Tan 545).

While the Yasuaki episode was a foreshadow to Philip's own conflicts with divided loyalties to the Resistance and to the person of Endo-san, a man who at least at a crucial moment valued his loyalty to Emperor Hirohito above his loyalty to Philip; Philip at the instance of becoming *Kaishakumin* to Endo-san has clearly imbibed the sacralised spirit of duty. In this sense, despite his hesitation to swing the *katana*, it is a call to 'duty' which forces him to give his lover/mentor the idealized death of the samurai way through *seppuku*. It is revealing that Endo-san's last words to him are a harsh command of 'Do your duty!' (Tan 545). The irony of this culmination

of events is an indication of how it is trauma and eventually the burdens of memory that mark and break Philip's subjectivity in the years after the war. It is evident from his silence on his deep personal losses during the War and his keen division of his life as a successful businessman in post-war Malaya, even as he seemingly futilely attempts to preserve the past in the rapidly transforming geography of Penang. The fascistic narratives which underlay the mores of duty, loyalty, unquestioned devotion, and purposive sacralised action which allowed the pre-war Philip Hutton to come to terms with his past were directly implicated in his divided selfhood of the future, unable to confront the past or come to terms with his trauma.

It is with the arrival of Michiko Murakami and in Philip's subsequent act of storytelling that the text allows for an intervention in the ideological thrust of the fascist moment which had left Philip's actions to be rendered in the sacralised space of following through with the performative logic of Imperial ideology in aiding Endo-san's suicide. Cathy Caruth's theories of trauma effectively diagnose Philip as the state of the traumatized 'carrying with them their impossible histories' (qtd in Saxena 181), until he is truly able to create his own bridge to his past memories to gain a sense of closure. What Vandana Saxena describes as Philip accessing 'multi-directional memories' of the past becomes the gateway for Philip and Michiko to both come to terms with and heal from the past (183). In doing so they employ the mode of revisiting their own memories and sharing in their wounds. This opens up a means of facing past trauma that inscribes solidarity and compassion between two people, despite having been on different sides of the war, to find an organic connection to each other steeped in the language of emotions and reconnecting with their past. Instead of creating a sacralised call to aestheticized (violent) performance, it is here that Tan Twan Eng uses the very tropes of the fascist moment to energize an undoing of the effects of the previous inscribing in those imaginations that Philip, the ideological subject, underwent.

In Philip playing the role of *Kaishakunin* to Michiko, the text clearly aims at a wholly different affective register than when he performed the same role for Endo-san. In swinging the *katana* for Michiko, Philip is not moved to action by 'duty', or playing out the performance of the Imperial logic of Endo-san having to commit *seppuku* on account of Japan's losing the war. As Lisa Yoneyama noted about the trauma of the survivors of Hiroshima, the dialectic of memory and time left psychic as well as physical wounds on them (18). Philip in building a bridge to his past memory also builds a metaphoric bridge of compassion and understanding with Michiko over their shared sense of loss and longing for Endo-san, and the complicated legacy that is their inheritance from the war years, which in Michiko's case includes the very real cancer of her body due to radiation poisoning. In aiding Michiko's euthanasia, Philip is in turn released from the cycle of pain as he himself experiences a unity rooted in love and sharing, and intrinsically is able to come to terms with his past and experience the actual gift of rain of his own and Michiko's tears as 'finally they came' (Tan 595). The connection he feels through the same language of emotion, but dislocated from the grand-narratives of duty, allows them both a moment of true transcendental unity with the perceived spirit of Endo-san (Tan 594). It is through this highly emotionally charged moment of writing that Tan Twan Eng seems to make an intervention into the field of fascist aesthetics and in so doing teases out an alternate narrative strategy which yet remains deeply personal in revisiting the 'unfinished business of the war' (to use Ian Buruma's phrase). Tan Twan Eng may deploy the fascist aesthetic but is clearly in no way making the fascist ideological operation inherent to his text, but rather subtly imploding its own narrative and undoing the sacralising effect of ideology with Philip's simple observation of the *Nagamitsu katanas* of 'appearing almost unremarkable under the spotlights' when donating them to the President of the Penang Historical Society (Tan 599). The bridge of memory may offer a narrative opportunity yet to revisit and reappraise the tragedies of the past, and in that instance to then bring into focus all those other young Philips who flew off on

their planes, with cherry-blossoms in their helmets, and never had the opportunity for closure, in an attempt to truly engage with healing these generational traumas that indelibly mark the collective histories of Asia.

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