

Completion Report

City University Hong Kong
Jerrine Tan

Subject of Research Project: Toxic Waste and Monsters: Objects, race, and Ecofeminism in Transnational Asian Literature

I intended to make use of archival research and site visits in order to plumb the historical resonances of the novel *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki and *The Last Children of Tokyo* by Yoko Tawada.

Due to existing Covid restrictions during the early part of the grant, I was not able to make my proposed visits to China. Instead, I requested to extend my grant duration and made more visits to different parts of Japan instead, meeting with important Japanese scholars.

I learned about how the 3/11 earthquake was represented differently in different museums along the coastline and how different areas focused on slightly different aspects of the disaster and recovery effort. I also found out that revitalization efforts up and down the east coast of Tohoku varied based on how they were affected. For example, places such as Ishinomaki that were primarily affected by the earthquake and tsunami rebuilt more quickly and experienced a return of residents to the area. In contrast, areas such as Fukushima that were affected by the nuclear disaster did not experience this as the area became uninhabitable for a time, but also because the compensation allowed some residents to leave Fukushima permanently and rebuild new lives in other parts of Japan. I also became more aware of local activism around these issues and the concerns people had around contamination and their own health alongside official reports of the area. This allowed me to develop my research around the concept of “toxic intimacy,” a term I coined to denote the networks and connections made visible via pollution at the level of literal spread of toxic material and at the level of networks of activism that sprouted in response to these crises. I’m currently applying my findings to papers that I have given as conference talks and will continue to develop these talks into essays for submission to peer-reviewed journals. I will need to do more research in order to theorize these findings from site visits and apply them to a historiographic reading of the novels I am interested in. Visiting Minamata allowed me to learn about how has happened to the area since the 50s and 60s when the disease was first discovered. The area with toxic sludge has since been reclaimed and has had a beautiful garden built on top of it. This resonates with my extant research and writing on land reclamation in a different context—Singapore—and I plan to do further research on the Minamata context in order to theorize the practice of land reclamation in violence to social, economic, and ecological violence and submit my findings in a research article. I hope to use and built on what I have learned by continuing to foster collaborative relationships with Japanese writers and scholars who work on similar issues, hopefully organizing workshops and conferences in order to share our findings and learn from each other.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

“Transnational Feminism in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*”. Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS) Conference “Sustainable Publics” March 31, 2023. Longbeach, California

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

“Toxic Intimacies: Decolonizing Japan’s Nuclear and Environmental Historiographies Through Yoko Tawada’s *The Last Children of Tokyo*”. (under review)

“A Communitarian Politics of Pastiche: Transnational Feminism in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being* as Mutual Constitution through Writing and Citation” (accepted and forthcoming at *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Book chapter

“Immigration and Emigration in Kazuo Ishiguro.” *Cambridge Companion to Kazuo Ishiguro*. Editor Andrew Bennett. Cambridge University Press. March 2023. Print.