

Translational Form in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*

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I'm interested in what drops out of history, or what gets
dropped. I'm interested in where the holes are.

— Ruth Ozeki, "A Conversation with Ruth Ozeki"

In the years since the publication of her first novel *My Year of Meats* in 1999, Ruth Ozeki's work has garnered considerable attention from scholars working in Asian American literary studies and the environmental humanities alike. Often drawing inventive connections between Asian American racialization and ecological crisis—*My Year of Meats* through the global meat industry, *All Over Creation* (2003) through the use of GMOs—Ozeki's novels explore these interconnections through their transnational, rather than national or local, articulations. Her recent novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013), however, is a departure of sorts from these earlier works. While still concerned with Asian American environmental entanglements in a transnational frame, the novel features a more expansive temporal and geographic scope, one that spans the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and constellates Japan, Canada, and the United States. The transnational narratives the novel tells are likewise marked by a move away from the investigative, muckraking style of her earlier works towards what Guy Beauregard calls, in his reading of the novel, a logic of "not knowing."¹ In a 2013 interview, Ozeki implicitly attributes this shift to an interest in agnotology, a field of study that examines how doubt and ignorance spread via inaccurate or misleading scientific data. Agnotology, she suggests, is a useful analytic for charting the ways in which history gets codified and transmitted generationally, and how it travels (or does not) across linguistic lines. In approaching the project of history writing, Ozeki says, "it seems important [to me] to leave the gaps and holes, rather than trying to fill them in."²

In this essay, I argue that *A Tale for the Time Being* offers a new paradigm for transnational scholarship, one which places translation and its attendant "gaps and

holes” squarely at the heart of its critique. The framing of the transnational *through* the practice of interlingual translation—what I am calling the novel’s translational form—has important implications for the field of transnational criticism. It encourages, firstly, an expansion of the field beyond its continental US and anglocentric bounds.³ While growing interest in transnationalism⁴—broadly, the movement of people, capital, and ideas across geographic and linguistic borders borne out through the interwoven processes of globalization, decolonization, and civil rights movements—has generated a rich body of work on multilingualism, bilingualism, and language hybridity in American literature, there has been a relative dearth of criticism that discusses interlingual translation in tandem with the monolingual tendencies of the field.⁵ How do we account for this fact? A clue can be found in Eric Hayot’s assertion that, “despite the injunctions of postcolonial theory and its successors, the prestige of English and its transnational power have insulated traditional fields against the need (or responsibility) to learn other places and languages.”⁶ The proliferation of interest in theorizing the global and transnational has been coeval with the enforcement of English as the *lingua franca* of authoritative criticism, a fact that critics who consider their work to be transnational are wont to admit. There is a tendency in transnational criticism to glorify crosslingual exchange while obscuring, at the same time, the reliance of these encounters on the processes of translation and the primacy of English.⁷ The ability to carry out research in other languages is, after all, generally not reflective of one’s ability to engage meaningfully in that language. Gayatri Spivak likens this dynamic to that of entering a house: “The translator must not only make an attempt to grasp the presuppositions of an author but also, and of course, inhabit, even if on loan, the many mansions, and many levels of the host language,” she writes, and “[the ability to read in the host language] is to only have gained entry into the outer room, right by the front gate.”⁸

In drawing attention to the often myopic anglocentrism that pervades the field, I do not wish to denigrate the undeniably important work of crosslingual critique. One of transnationalism’s strengths as a critical approach is, after all, its mandate to put into practice what it preaches by moving across borders, networking, and engaging with scholars and texts in other languages.⁹ My aim, rather, is to emphasize the peculiar invisibility of interlingual translation in these transnational exchanges, and to make a case for reading *for* translation as an important, and as yet underexplored, avenue for transnational criticism. With the rise of “world literature,” easy access to foreign language and “translation technology” resources on the internet, and a rapidly-growing body of translated literature from underrepresented language groups, transnational critics must begin to address the complicated power dynamics that undergird interlingual translation, and particularly translation into English.¹⁰ To do this, we must strive to produce scholarship that is attentive to what translation elides, omits, or misconstrues, and consider the political shape of those absences and distortions.

Recent academic and pop-cultural writing is increasingly marked by what I see as a related, but potentially countervailing development—a (re)turn to questions of empathy, and particularly the role that empathic thinking ought to play in our increasingly globalized and digitally-connected twenty-first century.¹¹ Within literary studies, this turn carries a distinct set of implications: as David Palumbo-Liu notes, “the notion that literature should mobilize (or even instantiate) empathy for others and enhance our ethical capabilities is rooted in the modern period, wherein ‘otherness,’ while certainly increasingly present, was not nearly as immediately, insistently, and intensely pressing itself into the here and now of everyday social, cultural, and political life” as it is in the twenty-first century.¹² There is an incommensurability, in other words, between an earlier twentieth-century Western understanding of empathy as “stepping into someone else’s shoes” and the massive influx of otherness that globalization and late capitalism have seen in North America. This version of empathy relies, covertly and not-so-covertly, on a logic of similarity that requires a flattening of difference in order to work. In order to push literary conversations about empathy beyond this self-centered paradigm, Palumbo-Liu insists that scholars of contemporary literature move away from questions of whether or not they “get” literature written by national, racial, and gendered others and consider, instead, how literature itself “engenders a space for imagining *our relation to others* and thinking through why and how that relation exists, historically, politically, ideologically.”¹³

My reading of translation in *A Tale by the Time Being* is informed by this understanding of empathy as a relational structure with a distinct shape and form. In this way, my critique dovetails with current debates in world literature and translation studies around issues of “translatability,” which revolve around an essentially empathic question: how, in an era of “born translated” literature¹⁴ and borderless accessibility afforded by the internet, does one remain attentive to levels of difference across languages? Emily Apter has suggested that prioritizing untranslatability, mistranslation, and moments of translational failure can help move world literature scholars away from a “reflexive endorsement of cultural equivalence and suitability, or toward the celebration of ‘nationally’ and ‘ethnically’ branded differences that have long been niche-marketed as commercial identities,” and circumvent the “translation assumption” that undergirds most work in this field.¹⁵ While a similar reverence for the untranslatable is at work in *A Tale for the Time Being*—with its focus on what “drops out” of historical translations—the novel also reframes untranslatability in terms of its positive capabilities. By privileging the moments of generative possibility that inhere in the untranslatable, Ozeki joins the ranks of scholars and translators who have been trying to advocate for “translation in the affirmative.”¹⁶ Through an exploration of the dynamic, messy, and always-partial work of translation, *A Tale for the Time Being* empathically reimagines political alliances across national and subjective lines—Japan and America; Asian / American—while still insisting on the importance of these discrete traditions.

Throughout this essay, I use the term “translation” to refer to two distinct yet interrelated processes: the movement from one language system to another—generally referred to as “interlingual translation”—as well as the act of translating history, which is related to, but distinct from, cultural translation. My reading of *A Tale for the Time Being*’s translational form is twofold. I begin by considering the import of this formal intervention to the field of Asian American literary studies and argue that, by framing transpacific encounters and exchanges as translation work, Ozeki undoes assumptions about “natural” Asian American subjectivity while calling attention to forgotten sites of World War Two trauma. I then apply this translational framework to the divergent accounts of history in the novel and suggest that—by emphasizing what is absent from these narratives—Ozeki offers a new model of empathic reading, one that does not attempt to draw parallels between differently situated individuals and histories, but rather emphasizes the importance of respecting the limits of knowability when tracing these historical entanglements.

Translational Form and the Shifting Bounds of Asian American Subjectivity

Because Asian racialization in the United States is so often tied to language and the imperative to speak English, Christopher Lee has suggested that there is a logic of translation always-already at work in Asian American literature—if not explicitly in the form of interlingual translation, through acts of cultural translation that entail “negotiat[ing the] expectations and demands” of multiple cultures.¹⁷ Typically, acts of interlingual translation in Asian American literature take three forms. They can serve as a marker of a character’s cultural and linguistic liminality or malleability (Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*); they also serve as the means through which Asian American characters can gain acceptance in “mainstream” US society (Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter*). They can also be used to emphasize what Viet Nguyen calls the “bad subject” of Asian American literature, where the refusal to translate—or purposeful mistranslation—becomes a radical way of resisting homogenizing narratives about Asian American subjectivity, culture, and history.¹⁸ Suki Kim’s novel *The Interpreter*, as well as Don Mee Choi’s recent poetry collection *Hardly War*, are but two examples of this genre.

Though *A Tale for the Time Being* resembles this last group in its subversive spirit and experimental form, it deviates from it in important ways as well. Rather than refuse to translate outright, the novel—through its multilingual, fragmentary, and achronological structure—asks that the reader do the work of consulting the elaborate footnotes and appendices in the book, which provide crucial historical and cultural context for the narrative. Among other things, the footnotes are used to provide definitions of Japanese terms, often calling attention to the ways in which kanji does (or does not) translate into English. In this way, the text interpellates its reader into the position of a translator, requiring them to be attentive to the gaps and

absences that underpin translations of history and which are typically glossed over in a so-called “authoritative account” of history.

Translation in *A Tale for the Time Being*—in both its structural and thematic iterations—belongs to the “host of marginalized poetic / historiographical practices” that Yunte Huang calls “counterpoetics.” These writerly practices, he writes, reject historical master narratives and “move instead toward the enactment of poetic imagination as a means to alter memory and invoke minority survival in the deadly space between competing national, imperial interests and between authoritative regimes of epistemology serving those interests.”¹⁹ Throughout the novel, translational counterpoetics assume a variety of textual forms, from book fragments and journal articles to text messages, blog posts, and email correspondences. Of these, the diary emerges as particularly important: This confessional mode enables Ozeki to blur the distinction between fiction and reality, while emphasizing the subversive potential that these personal and subjective forms of writing carry. There are two diaries in the novel—one dating from the 1940s, one written in the more recent past—and both work in tandem to show the long hauntings of the Second World War, paying particular attention to the ways in which it has shaped the experiences of subjects geographically and temporally removed from the historical “sites” of this atrocity. They function, in other words, as repositories for as-yet untranslated narratives about the war, and their status as objects requiring work to understand undoes the fantasy of translations as unmediated and objective histories, presenting them rather as texts that are acted on at multiple junctures and by multiple sources.

A Tale for the Time Being begins with the discovery of the more contemporary diary, written by a young Japanese schoolgirl named Naoko (“Nao”) Yasutani. The diary, tucked inside the aforementioned Hello Kitty lunchbox, is discovered on a deserted beach in Whaletown, British Columbia by a woman named “Ruth.” Ruth, who serves as the present-day narrator of the novel, shares many overt similarities with Ozeki, including place of residence, occupation, biracial identity, partner’s name, and occupation. This gesture—a departure for Ozeki—works to reframe translations as the culmination of an individual translator’s intellectual and aesthetic choices, rather than an “objective” transcription of facts from one linguistic and historical context to another. Translation, like the much more transparently personal forms of writing that the novel treats, is here a fraught and subjective process. Writing herself into the novel as reader, writer, and translator of this transpacific text thus allows Ozeki to explicitly frame *A Tale for the Time Being* as a counterpoetic work, one invested in troubling dominant national histories about the United States and Japan.

The discovery of Nao’s diary serves as the catalyst for the narrative itself, which unfolds as the imagined correspondence between Ruth and the young girl. Through shared acts of reading and writing, both characters give expression to a host of subjectivities ordinarily elided in history writings or transnational accounts of the Japanese diaspora. Ozeki does this by refusing to naturalize the communion between these differently situated Japanese / American women and by underscoring their

divergent relationships to both Japan and the Japanese language. As a biracial Japanese American who majored in classical Japanese literature and lived in Japan as a university student, Ruth initially appears the ideal recipient for Nao's diary, the only person in Whaletown who could ostensibly decipher the text. Her experience of reading the diary, however, results not in a kind of instant transpacific kinship with the girl Nao, but in a sense of alienation and estrangement from a culture she thought she had a "decent grasp of."²⁰ Overwhelmed by the girl's childish handwriting and hyper-contemporary language, and admitting that she is "only vaguely familiar with Japanese pop culture," Ruth eventually gives up on trying to read the text organically, and finds herself "logging on to the Internet to investigate and verify the girl's references, and before long, she had dragged out her old kanji dictionary, and was translating and annotating and scribbling notes about Akiba and maid cafes, otaku and hentai" (29). The "older and more ... historically important" letters that arrive with the Hello Kitty lunchbox—from Nao's great-uncle Haruki #1—are likewise too sophisticated and advanced for Ruth to read, despite her background in Japanese classics, and require her to visit a Japanese expatriate in a neighboring town to help with the translation.²¹

Thus, despite a presumptive intimacy and familiarity with Japanese, Ruth is forced to approach Nao's diary as a translator would, consulting dictionaries, collaborating with native informants, and working her way through the narrative in a halting and hesitant way. These interruptions and false starts deflate the idea of the perfect translation—the idea that the text will "carry over" and find an ideal audience who will grasp its full significance. For Ruth, reading this diary is neither an organic nor easy process. It is, rather, a prolonged and laborious project, one that exposes the contradictions in her own self-constitution as Japanese diasporic subject.

Nao is depicted as having a similarly strained relationship to the Japanese language, a fact that renders her decision to write her diary in Japanese all the more strange and pointed. Born in Japan to Japanese parents, Nao spent her childhood years in Sunnyvale, California, where her father, Haruki "Harry" Yasutani worked as a computer programmer in Silicon Valley. The family is forced to move back to Japan when the dot-com bubble bursts and forces her father out of a job. Though this forced repatriation is devastating for the Yasutanis, Nao notes that for her parents, who still "identified as Japanese and ... spoke the language fluently," the change was much less traumatic. She, by contrast, "identifie[s] as American" and speaks rudimentary Japanese, "limited to basic, daily-life stuff like where's my allowance, and pass the jam, and Oh please please please don't make me leave Sunnyvale" (43). Too poor to attend a special school for *kikokushijo* (repatriated children), Nao is forced to repeat half of the eighth grade to compensate for her language skills. Her linguistic deficiencies also make her a target for brutal bullying or *ijime* at her new school; her classmates call her a *gaijin* (foreigner) and a *bimbo* (poor person) and hurl insults at her using idiomatic English gleaned from rap videos. In this way, Ozeki resists the transpacific narrative that figures English fluency as a form of cultural capital by framing Nao's ostracization as a direct result of her facility in English. By writing her diary in Japanese—the

language at the root of her social ostracization—Nao linguistically transmits the stilted feeling of being “out of place,” a feeling that is mirrored in Ruth’s experience of reading the diary with the aid of a dictionary. The transpacific connection between Ruth and Nao, Ozeki suggests, emerges not out of some romanticized and seamlessly transferred sense of a shared Japanese identity, but rather through a shared sense of being estranged from the very language that brings them together.

This shared sense of being “out of place” is not merely linguistic as it reverberates in the realms of culture and geography as well. If Nao struggles with the Japanese language, she nevertheless exhibits a keen understanding of Japanese culture—a cultural fluency—in her diary. She knows, for instance, that in Japan the outcome of your high school entrance examinations affects the trajectory of your entire life and beyond, from the university you attend to whether or not you can afford a proper funeral, and whether or not “you’ll become a hungry vengeful ghost, fated to haunt the living on account of all of your unsatisfied desires”(129). Though she recognizes the terms of belonging within Japanese society and translates them clearly for the reader of her diary, she is unable to square these terms of belonging with her own lived experience, which is indelibly American. Nao describes herself as “already a vengeful ghost, haunting the living, so it didn’t really matter if I lived or died, and anyway, I grew up in Sunnyvale, so I have a different attitude about these kinds of things. In my heart, I’m American, and I believe I have a free will and can take charge of my own destiny” (130). Ozeki suggests that Nao’s refusal to ascribe to these terms of belonging is the catalyst for her own social death, the pretend funeral held for her by her classmates after weeks of ostracization or “zen-in Shikotsu.” She is rendered ghostly not because she does not understand the culture she finds herself in, but rather because there is a gap—a kind of asymptotic (mis)alignment—between these imperatives for belonging and her own value system, which she understands to be an American one.

In this haunted space of not-belonging between the US and Japan that the novel sketches out, Canada occupies a particularly important position. Nao’s father, recognizing his daughter’s sense of alienation in Japan, imagines Canada as an idealized haven, a kind of liminal space where Nao can exercise her Americanized “free will” without having to contend with the social scrutiny she experiences in Japan. Of this, Nao writes: “He wants me to go to Canada. He’s got this thing about Canada. He says it’s like America only with health care and no guns, and you can live up to your potential there and not have to worry about what society thinks or about getting sick or getting shot” (42).²² By staging *A Tale for the Time Being*’s Asian American narrative as a correspondence between subjects in Japan and Canada, Ozeki highlights some important assumptions about Canada in transpacific and Asian American studies discourse, where it is too-often conflated with the United States or else elided altogether.²³

The fantasy of Canada as a kind of liberal utopia, encompassing only the best parts of American culture (and none of the worst) is disrupted by Ruth’s character, a

New York City transplant, who recognizes her rural British Columbia environment as a site of violent transpacific contact. When she learns, for instance, of a house formerly called “Jap ranch” on the outskirts of the island—the home had belonged to a Japanese family who had to sell it during the war—Ruth continues to refer to the home by its original name, despite the great discomfort this causes her Anglo-Canadian neighbors. “Once Ruth heard the nickname,” Ozeki writes, “she stubbornly persisted in using it. As a person of Japanese ancestry, she said, she had the right, and it was important not to let New Age correctness erase the history of the island.”²⁴ Despite the fact that Canada interned a substantial number of Japanese citizens during the Second World War, most accounts of the internment tend to focus on the US context.²⁵ By frequently calling attention to this history while in conversation with people on the island, Ruth refuses to adhere to the rules of polite forgetting that govern the social space she lives in; like Nao, she recognizes and translates the imperatives of cultural belonging, but declines to abide by them. She and Nao are thus aligned in their roles as apt yet unwilling cultural translators, who—by way of inhabiting a spectral space “in between” cultures and languages—are uniquely situated to critique the contradictions undergirding Canadian and Japanese societies.

Ruth and Nao’s respective migrations—between Canada and the US, and from Japan to the US and back again—also complicate a dominant narrative of Asian American immigration in the US academic context, one that privileges a singular, resistant immigrant subject in its account of transnational flows between the United States and Asia. Ozeki’s protagonists are, rather, examples of what Weiqiang Lin and Brenda Yeoh call the “forgotten migrants” of Western anglophone transnationalist discourse: upwardly mobile Asian American subjects who are able to act as cultural translators precisely because of their relative financial and educational privilege.²⁶ These “forgotten migrants” are a variation on an earlier twentieth-century diasporic figure that Elaine Kim famously termed “ambassador[s] of good will”—wealthy and well-educated Asians who attempted to use their cultural and linguistic bilingualism to “bridge the gap between East and West and plead for tolerance by making ... highly euphemistic observations about the West on the one hand while explaining Asia in idealized terms on the other.”²⁷ The central presence of such figures in Ozeki’s novel emphasizes the need to rethink the geographic and temporal scope of “Asian America,” particularly as we round into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Since its inception in the early 1970s, Asian American Studies has struggled to reconcile the unwieldiness of the designation, “Asian American,” with the diversity of its (would-be) constituents. Shirley Geok-lin Lim has observed, in this vein, that Asian American literature—both as critical praxis and textual body—has at times emerged as “a plethora of seemingly disparate threads,” all of which seem to lead to “distinctively different National origins, first languages indecipherable to other Asian Americans, and cultural signs and codes of signification unintelligible to those identified as ‘the same’ by census and academic disciplinary discourses.”²⁸ Ruth and Nao’s transnational correspondences are exemplary of the kind of subjective practices

that come into view when Asian American literature is approached as a “subjectless discourse”²⁹—when one interrogates, in other words, the ethnic and geographical situatedness that the name of this field evokes. The translational form of the novel, in highlighting Ruth and Nao’s divergent linguistic, geographic, and cultural relationships to Asian American identity, deviates from a version of western anglophone transnationalism that makes assumptions about an essential and hypostasized Asian American subject. Rather, *A Tale for the Time Being* emphasizes the ways in which Asian American identity—particularly in the globalized, digitally connected present—is a malleable and frequently changing construct, shifting and transforming as its terms and bounds are negotiated and (re)written across linguistic, geographic, and national borders.

Translating Histories: Japan, America, and World War II

If the transpacific journey of Nao’s diary challenges a present-day narrative about transnational flows and the Japanese diaspora, then the second diary featured in the novel—belonging to her great-uncle, Haruki #1—serves to complicate Japanese and American national narratives around World War Two. It is unsurprising that, in a novel concerned precisely with the long histor(ies) of the transpacific, the Second World War—with its episodes of extraordinary violence and dramas of containment—would be a persistent and haunting presence. While most WWII novels tend, consciously or not, to privilege a single national narrative about this historical conflict, *A Tale for the Time Being* seeks to show the disparate ways in which the Second World War is memorialized along geographic, national, and linguistic lines. Ruth and Nao’s collaborative translations of Haruki #1’s letters and secret diary work to illuminate the great cleavage between Japanese and American accounts of the war, as well as the ways in which acts of translation shaped the archive of public memory around this event.

Haruki #1’s story emerges out of Nao’s attempts to explain her grandmother Jiko’s conversion to Zen Buddhism. Jiko became a nun, Nao notes, after losing her son Haruki, a kamikaze pilot, in the war. Nao quickly stops to clarify, acknowledging that in Japan “the war” only ever means World War Two, and she recognizes how “America is constantly fighting wars all over the place, so you’ve got to be more specific.”³⁰ Her explication of the difference between American and Japanese conceptions of war, though lengthy, is worth quoting in full here:

Americans always call it World War II, but a lot of Japanese call it the Greater East Asian War, and actually the two countries have totally different versions of who started it and what happened. Most Americans think it was all Japan’s fault, because Japan invaded China in order to steal their oil and natural resources, and America had to jump in and stop them. But a lot of Japanese

believe that America started it by making all these unreasonable sanctions against Japan and cutting off oil and food, and like, ooooh, we're just a poor little island country that needs to import stuff in order to survive, etc. This theory says that America forced Japan to go to war in self-defense, and all that stuff they did in China was none of America's business to begin with. So Japan went and attacked Pearl Harbor, which a lot of Americans say was a 9/11 scenario, and then America got pissed off and declared war back. The fighting went on until America got fed up and dropped atom bombs on Japan and totally obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which most people agree was pretty harsh because they were winning by then anyway.³¹

This passage calls attention to two important aspects of historical memory. The first is the agential role of the nation state in manipulating the narrative around historical conflicts (“totally different versions of who started it and what happened”) and in affecting the ways in which historical events are memorialized in different parts of the world. The second aspect is a generational one. The passage suggests that events as seemingly disparate as Pearl Harbor and 9/11—even as they are played out at different moments in time and by different geopolitical powers—can be thought of as recursive articulations of an earlier dynamic. The recursivity of these events, however, is difficult for differently-situated generations to glean. Nao recognizes her own inability to fully appreciate the exigencies of war, for example, during a conversation with Jiko. Jiko suggests that today's youth are *heiwaboke*, a Japanese term that Ozeki translates as “stupefied with peace; lit. ‘peace’ + ‘addled’” (180). Nao confesses that she herself does not know “how to translate [*heiwaboke*], but basically it means that we're spaced out and careless because we don't understand about war. She says we think Japan is a peaceful nation, because we were born after the war ended and peace is all we can remember, and we like it that way, but actually our whole lives are shaped by war and the past and we should understand that” (180). It is not that Nao is unable to imagine the hardships of war, but rather that she does not have the precise language to relate to it as Jiko does.

This lack of exactitude in language recalls Walter Benjamin's suggestion that translation work—in its striving to produce an “echo of the original”—always entails a kind of loss and approximation.³² Nao appears to acknowledge this when she remarks, “even though I can't imagine how awful it was, maybe I can, just a little” (179). While one might be tempted to read this instance as one of translational failure—Nao is unable, after all, to fully comprehend the historical atrocities her grandmother lived through—the approximate “just a little” offers a glimmer of hope. It gestures, firstly, towards the *liveliness* of texts—particularly historical texts—that Benjamin recognized

as being key to a narrative's translatability. The relationship between a translation and its original, Benjamin suggests, should be thought of as "a natural one, or, more specifically, a vital one. Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life, but from its afterlife."³³ Nao's recapitulation of Jiko's war story, replete with her own admissions of partial understanding, thus marks the origin of the "afterlife" of this historical counternarrative.

There is a fated quality to this kind of translational act, one which gets worked out in the imaginative structure of the book. Just as Nao wonders, at various points throughout the novel, whether or not anyone will read her diary, Ruth wonders about the fate of the young girl whose story she has become engrossed in. This suggests that the power of translation inheres not so much in the accuracy of translated material or even whether a source text finds an audience.³⁴ Its power emanates, rather, from the very act of sending a text out into the world. To do this, Ozeki suggests, lays the groundwork for potentially revelatory cross-cultural and cross-lingual connections, albeit ones that sometimes take lifetimes to materialize.

One of the ways that writers have historically been able to ensure the afterlife of their work has been through the strategic deployment of interlingual translation. Writing in different languages has, Ozeki reminds us, frequently enabled authors to elude the watchful eye of the government and shirk the suppression of speech laws of oppressive political regimes. Haruki #1, for his part, leaves two records of his experience as a kamikaze pilot during the war: a series of letters, written in Japanese, that Jiko gifts to Nao; and a secret French diary that appears, in a magical realist twist, at Jiko's funeral towards the end of the novel.³⁵ Both written documents constitute an archive of Haruki's harrowing experience as a soldier in the Japanese imperial army, although they diverge wildly in their descriptions of this experience. The Japanese letters—which later are revealed to have been censored for fear of governmental interception—use almost comically euphemistic language to describe the horrific environment at the army base: The squadron leader "F" is likened to "the brilliant French soldier the Marquis de Sade ... [with] an ingenious mind and artist's introspection that inspires him, driving him toward some kind of unspeakable perfection" (253). The secret French diary, by contrast, provides a more bracing account of the violence we might expect from a Sadeian figure: Haruki recalls an episode in which the Marquis de F—"punched me on both sides of my face and beat me with the heel of his boot" until "the inside of my mouth was like minced meat and even the smallest sip of miso soup brought tears to my eyes, the salt in the wounds was so painful" (318). In other episodes, he is beaten to the point of unconsciousness. These beatings, Haruki #1 notes, are done in the hopes of developing the army's "fighting spirit," which enables them to carry out horrific acts of violence against their enemies (240). He recounts these acts, too, in excruciating detail: The rape and mutilation of grandmothers and skewering of babies, Chinese men "hung upside down like meat over open fires ... their burning flesh peeled from their living bodies ... their

arms danc[ing] like grilled squid legs,” and the traumatized countenance of the boy soldiers forced to carry out these acts (326). These blunt descriptions of the brutality of war are notably absent from the letters, which Haruki (rightly) suspects “might be read or intercepted” (328). His writing in French thus becomes a safeguard against any interference from the army and the state; an “excellent security feature,” as Benoit Lebec, who translates the French diary for Ruth, puts it (226).

Like the imagined correspondences between Ruth and Nao, Haruki’s letters and diary offer a parable of translation practice, only here the emphasis is on the importance of transgenerational (rather than transnational or transcultural) collaboration. While translation across cultures can facilitate unlikely transnational alliances and connections, it is by translating across generational lines that translation’s potential to alter history comes into view. In this final section, I consider how the various forms of translation I have discussed thus far—interlingual, transcultural, transgenerational—cohere in the novel’s dual depictions of September 11th and Fukushima. By highlighting the contradictions in the national media narratives around these two catastrophes, I suggest that Ozeki offers a new approach to transnational textual production, one that stresses respect for the limits of what is knowable within a multilingual and cross-cultural context, while also emphasizing (and often reveling in) the imagined relationality that that unknowability incites. Such an approach, I argue, underscores the translation as a constitutive part of the transnational, and not—as it has sometimes been theorized—one of its subparts.

Toward a Praxis of Empathic Reading: Fukushima and September 11th in a Global Frame

One insight that injury affords is that there are others
out there on whom my life depends, people I do not
know and may never know.

— Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of
Mourning and Violence*

You wonder about me.

I wonder about you.

— Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*

Throughout *A Tale for the Time Being*, Ozeki calls attention to the slippages between authoritative accounts of history—those in service of a grand national narrative—and the kind of translational counterpoetics that Benjamin describes as hovering in the margins of history. This is nowhere more apparent than in the novel’s treatment of September 11th, the twenty-first century disaster that emerges as a kind of pivot point

in the novel—a “sharp knife slicing through time” that “changed everything” for anyone who happened to be alive to witness it (265). Tellingly, Ruth and Nao’s narrative recollections of this “American” tragedy are largely articulated outside the bounds of the continental US. This vantage point—in which “America” is geographically and ideologically decentered—serves a dual function: it reinforces the novel’s project of dismantling narratives of American exceptionalism, while highlighting how America’s global entanglements at the national level act on the individual. In striving to offer a counternarrative to the American nationalist account of 9/11, Ruth and Nao’s recollections bear an uncanny resemblance to Haruki #1’s diaries. Like Haruki #1, Ruth and Nao both attempt to give expression to atrocities that resist comprehensive depiction; despite their best efforts, their accounts can only ever be partial, “echo[es] of the original.”³⁶ Given the translational context in which this critique of historical master narratives emerges, the novel models a way of interpreting written histories that encourages reading for such gaps and absences, and imaginatively “filling in” these spaces to imagine the “you” that exists parallel to “me”—even if that “you” inhabits a different temporality, or national and linguistic sphere.

Nao’s recollection of September 11th is marked by a similar tension between national master narrative and absence. Watching the television coverage in Japan, she and her father become enraptured by the people jumping from the burning towers. These figures—and particularly the image of the Falling Man—would become an important part of the patriotic national narrative of 9/11, a symbol of courage and fortitude in the face of unthinkable evil. The highly romanticized way in which Falling Man’s death was discussed in the media mirrors the kind of language that Japanese used to describe kamikaze missions—that these pilots reflected the imperial army’s “fighting spirit,” for instance, and that there was something poetic in tying “a cloth around my forehead, branded with the rising sun, and tak[ing] to the sky” (217). By offering a glimpse of the inner conflicts of the Japanese imperial soldiers through Haruki #1’s secret diary, Ozeki attempts to counter this national narrative. In so doing, she works to fill in a still-extant gap in the historical and academic literature about the kamikaze, which, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney writes, outside of Japan “is curious in terms of the inverse relationship between public interest in them as an icon of utmost Otherness, and the stark absence of serious scholarly interest in them. It is a case of exile from history, and twice at that—both inside and outside Japan.”³⁷

If *A Tale for the Time Being* tries to humanize the historically exiled figure of the kamikaze pilot through Haruki #1’s diary, it likewise asks its audience to consider how the other absent presence in the novel—the terrorist figure—might also invite an empathic reading. Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai have observed, in this vein, that the terrorist shares a “basic kinship” with a slew of other historical monsters in the American racial imaginary, all of which became “case studies, objects of ethnographies, and interesting psychological cases of degeneracy.”³⁸ While the counterhistory of the kamikaze pilots presented in Haruki #1’s diary would seem to

work against this dehumanizing narrative—providing, as they do, insight into the conflicted and often traumatized inner world of one such “historical monster”—the novel stops short of offering any such reading of the Islamic terrorists. In fact, Ozeki’s text is marked by an almost dogged refusal to discuss the terrorists at all. And yet, the transnational critique of the September 11th attacks that the novel levies turns on this very absence: by positioning the Falling Man at the center of this historical through line between the absent terrorists and their ghostly historical predecessors, Ozeki weaves an empathic link between historical “victims” and “aggressors,” prompting a reconsideration of the relationship between the two.

The unwillingness of critics to acknowledge even the possibility of such a connection, however—either within *A Tale for the Time Being* or within the broader critical conversation around 9/11—is telling.³⁹ In his reading of the novel, Daniel McKay rightly points to the failure of “Anglophone—specifically North American” scholars to challenge the racist depictions of Kamikaze pilots in literature.⁴⁰ But while he names *A Tale for the Time Being* and Kerri Sakamoto’s *One Million Hearts* as two important exceptions to this paradigm, McKay concludes his piece by raising the possibility of a Kamikaze / Islamist terrorist connection in Ozeki’s novel only to foreclose it altogether. Insisting that “parallels” between kamikaze pilots and Islamist terrorists “have yet to occur in Japanese North American fiction writing,” McKay submits that “narratives of and about kamikaze pilots are already provocative enough without reducing them to an appendage of post-9/11 politics.”⁴¹ To invoke such parallelism is to misread, I think, the version of empathy at the heart of *A Tale for the Time Being*’s translational form, which leaves space for acknowledging the possibility of common ground between historical adversaries without condoning or identifying with the perpetrators of historical trauma. This version of empathy requires acknowledging the presence of these suggestive absences—acknowledging what is plainly *there*—even when it is uncomfortable. McKay’s refusal to pursue this line of questioning, by contrast, unwittingly replicates the binary logic that undergirds most of the public discourse on 9/11 (and to which he attends, in relation to national accounts of World War II, in his own piece).

Historical psychologists have, for their part, called attention to the striking “symmetry” between both Osama Bin Laden and George Bush’s respective statements in the wake of the terrorist attacks, both of which revolve around the us / them binary; while the former construed the conflict in terms of religion and duty towards God, the latter saw it as a socio-political, and moral, issue.⁴² What these slippages (and the critical resistance to them) emphasize, then, is the inherently translational makeup of the transnational, as well as the importance of weighing interlingual and transcultural untranslatables within any account of transnational politics. Though she does not use the language of translation per se, a similar logic is at work in Judith Butler’s assessment of the American public’s responses to the attacks in the weeks after September 11th. There was something discordant, Butler notes, in those grandiose displays of mourning and patriotism that belied an unwillingness to

acknowledge how this instance of violence might be a response to a much longer history of American imperialism, expansion, and intervention abroad. If Americans wanted to consider themselves “global actors” in more than name, she writes, they would first and foremost have to “emerge from the narrative perspective of US unilateralism and, as it were, its defensive structures, to consider the ways in which [their] lives are profoundly implicated in the lives of others.”⁴³

I wish to conclude by suggesting that—in taking Fukushima as the signal catastrophe to be read over and against the 9/11 depictions in the novel—*A Tale for the Time Being* models a way of reading that prioritizes precisely the kinds of entanglements Butler alludes to here. The 2011 disaster(s) at Fukushima are the animating force of the novel in more ways than one: Ozeki, who had completed a draft of the novel at the time of the disaster, withdrew the book from her agent on the grounds that she “had written a pre-earthquake, pre-tsunami, pre-Fukushima book. Now we were living in a post world, the book was no longer relevant.”⁴⁴ Despite propelling much of the narrative action, this catastrophe is marked throughout the novel as essentially unknowable. The tsunami, for instance, is the means by which Nao’s diary *might* have been delivered to Ruth across the Pacific, while the nuclear meltdown *might* have brought unspeakable harm to Nao’s family, though neither of these details are ever confirmed. Interestingly, real-life accounts of the Fukushima disaster are marked by a similarly speculative quality: even now, seven years after the fact, scientists are unable to quantify the extent of the ecological and biological damage wrought by this catastrophe. Experts generally agree, however, upon two important points: the first is that Fukushima’s reach extends far beyond the confines of the Japanese peninsula, and comprises a scope that can properly be considered “global.”⁴⁵ The second is that the damage from this disaster—though less immediately visible now several years on—is persistent and ongoing. Unlike 9/11—which became, as Ozeki shows us, a global “event” precisely because of its irruptive and spectacular qualities—Fukushima is an example of what Rob Nixon calls “slow violence”: “a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.”⁴⁶ As such, the transnational flows that it instantiates are more difficult to perceive, and media coverage of the event—particularly within the United States—was found lacking.⁴⁷

In this way, Fukushima is a fitting metaphor for the histories *A Tale for the Time Being* has sought to translate: histories of trauma and violence that unfold across temporal and spatial meridians, connecting disparately situated individuals in powerful (and, often, subtle or imperceptible) ways. In encouraging us to read for moments of uncertainty or ambiguity, Ozeki emphasizes the need to think empathically, rather than in a reactionary way, about our relationship to those whose lives are historically interwoven with our own. To fail to do this, she suggests, is ultimately to participate in the perpetuation of bad translations of history, the kind that dehumanize the most vulnerable in service of a grand national narrative. Should they want to avoid the same

fate, transnational studies scholars might look to translation's interlingual and historical forms, and attend with greater vigor to the ways in which translation practice intervenes in—and complicates—the writing of histories within a transnational frame.

Notes

¹ Guy Beauregard, "On Not Knowing: A Tale for the Time Being and the Politics of Imagining Lives after March 11," *Canadian Literature* 227 (2015): 96–112.

² "A Conversation with Ruth Ozeki." Penguin Books, 2013. <http://www.ruthozeki.com/writing-film/time-being/read/>.

³ Other examples of this geographic and linguistic boundary-shifting in the Asian American literary tradition include Karen Tei Yamashita's Brazil fiction, particularly the translingual (Japanese / Portuguese / English) *Circle K Cycles* (2001), Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* (1982) and Don Mee Choi's *Hardly War* (2016).

⁴ For a more capacious history of the term "transnationalism" and its particular usages and deployments within American (literary) studies, see Paul Jay's book, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2010), as well as *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies* (Pease et. al, Dartmouth: Dartmouth University Press, 2011). In Asian American literary studies, the signal text is Lim et al.'s *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

⁵ I would underscore Brent Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Yunte Huang's work—*Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008)—as important exceptions here. Though the diasporic subjects and periods they engage are widely divergent—Edwards studies black diasporic entanglements with the francophone world during the Harlem Renaissance, while Huang traces a much longer history of Asian / American transpacific contact that stretches from the mid-nineteenth century into the twentieth—both scholars stress the importance of translation practice in shaping the diasporic communities they study.

⁶ Eric Hayot, "The Asian Turns," *PMLA* 124, no. 3 (2009): 908.

⁷ Most internal conferences attended by American academics will be conducted in English, which means that—for the majority of the time, assuming the American academic is a native speaker of English—the international academic is required to speak in their second (third, fourth) language in order to facilitate this "international exchange."

⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translating into English," in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, eds. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 95.

⁹ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies - Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57, no.1 (2005): 41. In her presidential address to the American Studies Association in

2004, Fishkin emphasized the importance of practicing transnationalism, rather than simply paying lip service to it: “All of these efforts will be unnecessarily limited unless we also manage to change the culture of the profession. US-based scholars have to engage with scholarship published outside the United States, and we need to require our students to do the same. We need to encourage them to seek out American studies research in the language in which they have satisfied their language requirement, and we need to reward students who make good use of foreign- language sources in their research. We also need to seek opportunities to interact with scholars outside the United States in person. Exchanges at conferences can be incubators for collaborative research projects, publications, and courses.”

¹⁰ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013): 2. “World literature,” much like “transnationalism,” is a contested term; as a critical approach to literary study, it refers to a kind of “de-provincialization of the canon” (Apter 2) and encourages reading textual pairings across wide geographic, linguistic, temporal divides. I attend to some of the frictions between “world literature” and translation studies elsewhere in this essay.

¹¹ Jeremy Rifkin’s *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009) and Leslie Jamison’s *The Empathy Exams* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014) are the pop-cultural texts perhaps most representative of this “empathic turn.”

¹² David Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012): 2.

¹³ Palumbo-Liu, 14.

¹⁴ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 4. Walkowitz describes “born translated” literature as literature “written for translation, in the hopes of being translated, but ... also often written as translations, pretending to take place in a language other than the one in which they have, in fact, been composed. Sometimes they present themselves as fake or fictional editions: subsequent versions (in English) of an original text (in some other language), which doesn’t really exist. Pointing backward as well as forward, they present translation as a spur to literary invention, including their own.” Though some of the translational dynamics I discuss in relation to Ozeki—particularly around strategic interlingual translation—resonate with Walkowitz’s concept of the born-translated novel, her book focuses more on the ways in which translation shapes the circulation and production of these texts. My primary interest, by contrast, lies in outlining the ways in which the translational as a critical form dilates space for imagining new transnational connections and rethinking historical ones.

¹⁵ Apter, 3.

¹⁶ Susan Gillman, “Translation as History / History as Failure,” *American Literary History* 29, no.3 (2017): 593. In a review article, Susan Gillman calls attention to the “black cloud that some see in the tendency of translation studies today to focus on the *un-* and the *mis-*.” She cites a 2017 MLA panel, “Translation in the Affirmative,” which sought to “provide a counterweight to the recent focus on ‘untranslatability’ [by] highlight[ing] examples of translation scholarship that are grounded in the rhetoric of possibility,” as a sign of a burgeoning movement in the field to

reframe (un)translatability in terms of its positive potential (rather than its restricting qualities).

¹⁷ Christopher Lee, “The Writing of Translation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, eds. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 130.

¹⁸ In *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Viet Nguyen examines how the figure of the “bad (Asian American) subject” developed in contradiction to the “model minority” stereotype and became the privileged figure of critique for Asian American literary scholars.

¹⁹ Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 5.

²⁰ Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013): 29.

²¹ Ozeki, 33. Nao’s father is her great-uncle’s namesake. Throughout the novel, Ozeki refers to these men as Haruki #2 and #1, respectively.

²² Ozeki, 42. There is potential to do a reading of comparative racialization that reads the absent / present black figure here (the racialized target for being shot in the US) against the absent / presence of First Nations in Whaletown. Iyko Day’s book *Alien Capital: Asian Racism and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016) employs such an approach in its comparative theorization of Asian American / Asian Canadian racialization. Guy Beauregard’s essay on *A Tale for the time Being* reads the spectral presence of the Sliammon First Nations in the novel but does not employ such a comparative approach.

²³ For more on the conflation between Canada and the United States within the context of American studies, see Maggie Bowers, “For East, Look North: Cross-Border Comparisons and the Future of North American Asian American Studies (*Transnational, National, and Personal Voices: New Perspectives on Asian American and Asian Diasporic Women Writers*, 2004), as well as Eleanor Ty’s writing, especially her co-edited collection with Christyl Verduyn, *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography* (2008).

²⁴ Ozeki, 32.

²⁵ Iyko Day, “Alien Intimacies,” *Amerasia Journal* 36, no. 2 (2010): 107–24. It is necessary to mention Iyko Day’s scholarship again as an important exception; this time, her essay “Alien Intimacies: The Coloniality of Japanese Internment in Australia, Canada, and the US,” which considers Japanese internment as a global phenomenon using a settler colonial framework. Other exceptions include the abundant scholarship on Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, largely from the late twentieth century.

²⁶ Weiqiang Lin and Brenda Yeoh, “Transpacific Studies: The View From Asia,” in *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emergent Field*, eds. Janet Hoskins and Viet Nguyen (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014). Loc 1107 of 6080, Kindle edition.

²⁷ Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982): 24.

²⁸ Lim et. al, 2.

²⁹ Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: on Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 9. In her seminal 2003 book, *Imagine Otherwise*, Kandice Chuh posited approaching Asian American literature as a “subjectless discourse” as a means of getting around the kind of essentializing problems outlined here. Such an approach, Chuh writes, “points attention to the constraints on the liberatory potential of the achievement of subjectivity, by reminding us that a ‘subject’ only becomes recognizable and can act as such by conforming to certain regulatory matrices.”

³⁰ Ozeki, 178.

³¹ Ozeki, 179.

³² Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996): 258.

³³ Benjamin, 254.

³⁴ Or a translator: Benjamin, for his part, felt that linguistic translatability ought to be considered even in instances where a text proved untranslatable: “the translatability of linguistic creations ought to be considered even if men [*sic*] should prove unable to translate them.” Benjamin, 254.

³⁵ For more on “magical realist moments,” as well as magical realism’s various deployments in Asian American literature, see Lyn Di Iorio Sandin and Begoña Simal’s respective pieces in *Moments of Magical Realism in US Ethnic Literatures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

³⁶ Benjamin, 258.

³⁷ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, “Betrayal by Idealism and Aesthetics: Special Attack force (Kamikaze) Pilots and their Intellectual Trajectories (Part 1),” *Anthropology Today* 20, no. 1 (2004): 221. Ohnuki-Tierney uses the standard Japanese word for kamikaze, *tokkōtai*, throughout her piece. Interestingly, though Ozeki relied heavily on Ohnuki-Tierney’s scholarship in writing *A Tale for the Time Being*, she does not cite the above article—part of a series which attempts to draw together the figure of the kamikaze and the 9/11 terrorist.

³⁸ Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” *Social Text* 20, no.3 (2002): 124.

³⁹ Susan Sontag, “Tuesday, and After,” *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2001. Critics who attempted to see the humanity in the 9/11 terrorists were generally met with a fierce backlash. Sontag, perhaps the most famous critic accused of being unpatriotic, wrote a controversial piece in the *New Yorker* that gives a sense of the kind of empathic “unknowability” I am trying to describe here. She writes: “Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a ‘cowardly’ attack on ‘civilization’ or ‘liberty’ or ‘humanity’ or ‘the free world’ but an attack on the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word ‘cowardly’ is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill

others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards."

⁴⁰ Daniel McKay, "The Right Stuff: The Kamikaze Pilot in One Hundred Million Hearts and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US* 41, no. 1 (2016): 8. Though McKay repeatedly raises this important point about the cleavages between Anglophone / Japanese accounts of World War II and the Kamikaze figure, it is not clear how he understands translation in relation to this schematic.

⁴¹ McKay, "The Right Stuff," 22.

⁴² Leudar et al., "On Membership Categorization: 'Us,' 'Them,' and 'Doing Violence' in Political Discourse," *Discourse and Society* 15, vol. 2-3 (2004): 258.

⁴³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Politics of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006): 7.

⁴⁴ Sarah Jane Rothernfluch and Jon Rosman, "Ruth Ozeki's Long Journey to Write *A Tale For The Time Being*," 2014. <https://www.opb.org/artsandlife/article/ruth-ozekis-long-journey-to-write-a-tale-for-the-time-being/>

⁴⁵ See William A. Barletta et. al, "Five years after Fukushima: Insights from Current Research," March 10, 2016, <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/5-years-after-fukushima-insights-from-current-research>. This article provides a comprehensive bibliography on Fukushima research from 2011-2016, with a focus on this event's environmental and economic impact at both the global and local levels.

⁴⁶ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

⁴⁷ In many ways, the advent of the internet complicates the ways in which we have traditionally "witnessed" such disasters; as Sharon M. Friedman notes (and Ozeki alludes to in *A Tale*), the internet made "an enormous amount of information on Fukushima available" to anyone who wanted to access it. American television coverage of the event, on the other hand, was criticized for its sensationalism (see Friedman, "Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Fukushima," 62) or for downplaying the significance of this event in lieu of localized issues (see Landman, "What Happened to Media Coverage of Fukushima?," 2011).

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