

# United States's Aerial Archives: Teaching and Theorizing Transnational American Studies in Japan

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If there was any emblematic cultural event that signaled an “aerial” shift in the humanities and social sciences, it may well have been the 1952 book *Our World from the Air* by Erwin Anton Gutkind. Embellished with four hundred aerial photographs, it privileged the aerial view of Planet Earth—a view that entailed processes of not only aerial seeing but aerial knowing, picturing, thinking, and envisioning. The vertical and oblique photographs, capturing the world in all its diversity, zooming in on details and zooming out to take in the panorama of mosaic patterns, showcased flexible perspectives and flexible switching between scales that aircraft and aerial cameras, when coupled, enabled in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> “The eighteenth century witnessed the harnessing of steam, the nineteenth the building of railways, the twentieth the conquest of the air,” historian G. P. Gooch writes in his foreword to *Our World from the Air*. While conceding that “all three may be described as revolutions,” he argues for the importance of what conquering the air allowed *Homo sapiens* for the first time: to “survey every portion of the Earth’s surface from a new angle of vision.”<sup>2</sup> Lewis Mumford rephrases Gooch’s remarks in his introduction to Gutkind’s book when stating that “not the least service that *Our World from the Air* performs is to deliver us from bondage to the map.”<sup>3</sup> Taking an aerial shift—a shift to aerial seeing, picturing, thinking, or what historian Jason Weems collectively terms “aeriality”<sup>4</sup>—was to leave the gravity of the map, of mapping and remapping in abstractions, to venture into new epistemologies and methodologies.

Against such a backdrop, one is better positioned to ask: how did a turn to aeriality change the landscape of transnational American studies, which encompasses a breadth of scholarship from every discipline and interdisciplinary area, including literary studies? The aerial view helped change archaeology, geology, town planning, and

sociology, fields within which its use was developed significantly. Historians like Jason Weems and Sonja Dümpelmann recently applied the aeriality perspective to the histories of art and landscape architecture, whereas Caren Kaplan traced the cultural history of aerial views that intersect with other histories involving military operations and violence—by examining the art of war and its aftermaths such as aerial photographs, maps, and paintings.<sup>5</sup> One might then ask how a turn to aeriality leads to a shift in literary studies within Transnational American Studies. Or, to put the question slightly differently: How can one theorize about and teach aeriality as a literary critical practice?

One way to address these questions is by examining American-occupied Japan (1945–1952), a country that was curiously and conspicuously missing from *Our World from the Air*. The air space directly above Japan, and aerial views of the archipelago, was shielded by an invisible but effective “iron curtain” (as expressed by Gutkind), marking the occupied Japan that was alien to, and alienated from, “our world.” Gutkind wrote, “It is ... regrettable that the iron curtain around Japan has prevented the inclusion of air views of that country. More time and energy has been spent in trying to induce the occupying authorities to contribute pictures of Japan than in any other case, but, unfortunately, no assistance was forthcoming.”<sup>6</sup> While Japan under United States military occupation was aerially off-limits, the point herein is less *why* and more *how*—how America’s aerial power/knowledge was exercised transnationally, shaping cultural and literary production about Japan’s occupation. This essay revisits American-occupied Japan through the medium of what I have heuristically termed “aerial archives.” The operational definition of this term refers to texts, literary or otherwise, that operate as archiving systems, representing and relating a shift in the aerial imagination, and the corollary shifting ground it caused in the global imagination.

My discussion of aerial archives entails, if only implicitly, an examination of a grounding in the field of literary studies and, in particular, investments in terrestrial divisions of the planet during recent transatlantic (Paul Gilroy), hemispheric (Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine), transpacific (Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease), and archipelagic (Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens) turns in American studies.<sup>7</sup> These are seemingly mutually conflicting shifts; however, they each exemplify the recent turn to geography, or what Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen termed “metageography.”<sup>8</sup> The turn to metageography is driven by an interest in decentering the imperial nation state, the United States or otherwise, within narratives of planet-spanning connections but also in interrogating geographical forms such as continents, oceans, and archipelagoes as being “culturally contingent.”<sup>9</sup> Such interrogations are important, especially given the shift in perspective powered and propelled by aeriality. I take as my premise that air space is culturally contingent, as are all other spatial structures, but that the relation between aeriality and Planet Earth remains a contested terrain that warrants scholarly attention. This essay begins by briefly outlining how Japan entered the United States’ transnational field of aerial vision. Through a discussion of my pedagogically experimental use of photography and documentary

film, I then discuss how the aerial vision inspires and becomes narrative, and as such is implicated in literary practice. I end the essay with a critical examination of how literary texts can be theorized and taught as aerial archives, based on my classroom use of Theodor Seuss Geisel's *Horton Hears a Who!* (1954).

### **Japan in the United States's Field of Aerial Vision**

Japan would seem an unlikely place to start a discussion of aeriality for transnational American studies. However, an aerial turn in American cartography during the 1940s—an emergent response to what Lewis Mumford called “bondage to the map”—was, as historian Alan K. Henrikson observed, prompted by Japan's air raid on Pearl Harbor. Following the Japanese surprise attack, Mercator's equator-based map of the world lost its narrative power. Instead, an innovative cartography adopting an aerial perspective—popularized by Richard Edes Harrison and his “One World, One War” map (1941), drawn in an azimuthal projection centered on the North Pole—represented the United States' fresh world outlook, ushering in an era of “air-age globalism.”<sup>10</sup> In the azimuthal projection, any straight line from or across the center denotes a great circle, indicating the shortest flight path aviators can follow. This was more than a simple change in cartographic perspectives and projections. It denoted something larger: an aerial shift in the spatial imagination.

Harrison's cartographic works—particularly his signature stratospheric perspective maps that resemble aerial or satellite photographs drawn from an imaginary God's-eye view—supply a (missing) transitional link from the map to the aerial view. Harrison's perspective map entitled “Japan from Alaska” shows how the northern air route, via the Aleutian Islands, “cuts into the heart of the Japanese Empire.”<sup>11</sup> Another, entitled “Japan from the Solomons,” reveals the adjacency and proximity of the Pacific Islands to Asia, as seen by the aerial view (which had been depicted in Mercator's map as widely dispersed).<sup>12</sup> From the air, ground landmarks such as towers and spires are poorly visible, whereas archipelagoes and islands are easily recognized as marks on the planet, changing the way one reads the landscape from above. It also evokes the mobility of imagination, which, in wartime, helped shape how war was fought, using an island-hopping campaign, in the Pacific theater of World War II.

Because it allows reading the enemy country from aloft, objectively and clandestinely, aerial photography was crucial to the war efforts to collect geospatial intelligence for planning sustained air raids and damage assessment. Given this, it comes as no surprise that Japan entered America's cultural field of aerial vision as a ubiquitously burned-out ground surface. A Fairchild Camera and Instrument Company advertisement in the March 1945 issue of *American Photography*, for instance, published three photographs: the plane that made the first photograph reconnaissance flight over Tokyo in November 1944; the Fairchild aerial cameras with which the plane was equipped; and the aerial photograph by the United States Army Air Force of an aircraft plant in Taiwan, then a Japanese colony, destroyed by B-29 Superfortress

bombers. The plane that had been equipped with aerial cameras had nose art depicting a woman speaking into a microphone and was named *Tokyo Rose*, after a legendary Japanese radio personality. The three images cumulatively tell the story of an aerial war waged by the United States against Japan in the Pacific theater, in which airpower, airwaves, and aerial cameras (Fairchild) were game changers. However, the exclamatory phrase “So Sorry!”—a callout placed on the aerial photograph of the burned-out ground scantily dotted with destroyed buildings—points to another narrative, about Planet Earth.<sup>13</sup> From the historic Tokyo air raid in March 1945 to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atom bombs in August of that year, America’s copious aerial photography of Japanese cities documented the advent of the air-atomic age as it changed the Earth’s surface.

The aerial views of a defeated Japan published in *Life* magazine made the barren ground surface of the Earth—a fall of the Rising Sun—public domain within the United States. *Life* dispatched a cadre of photographers to Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and other major cities that had been reduced to ashes. An oblique aerial image of a burned-out district along the Sumida River in Tokyo targeted by aerial firebombing, which was taken by *Life* photographer George Silk from a low-flying plane, was spread over two pages in the magazine’s September 10, 1945, issue—an image that carried mass appeal and that I used in my classroom experiment.<sup>14</sup>

Aerial views were unequally treated. Some images were widely reproduced and consumed, while others, such as scenes of post-nuclear Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were hustled off frame, shaping public memory and what Marianne Hirsch calls “post-memory.”<sup>15</sup> The Hiroshima and Nagasaki captured by *Life* did not show the atomic holocausts that had been unleashed by B-29s, a subject suppressed by United States’ military censors (*Life* carried a picture of a refugee train winding through “the waste that was Hiroshima” taken from high altitude and of an “undamaged village” near Nagasaki).<sup>16</sup> Seven years later, *Our World from the Air* published an aerial photograph of Hiroshima released by the United States Army Air Force. It was a rare image taken from a plane flying at low altitude over the city (despite the danger of the harmful effects of radioactive fallout) not long after the dropping of the atom bomb. The caption read, “The city after destruction by a single atom bomb. Only the concrete buildings are left standing: the triumph of Man’s annihilating instinct and power.”<sup>17</sup> Without this caption, it would be impossible to identify the scene. Indeed, the debris landscapes of Hiroshima and Tokyo bear striking similarity or resonance because both were physically created by air raids (nuclear and conventional, respectively) and textually created through aerial photography. So, what do we do with this textual aeriality?



*Fig. 1: An aerial view of Tokyo, 1930, from the author's collection. Published originally as a part of F. M. Trautz, *Japan mit Korea und Formosa* (Berlin: Atlantis-Verlag, 1930), with the caption "Tokyō seen from the air, from S. to N., with Sumida River."*



Fig. 2: An aerial view of Tokyo, 1945. Photograph by George Silk. Mondadori Portfolio/Getty Images. Published originally in “U.S. Occupies Japan,” *Life*, September 10, 1945.

### Reading and Writing with Aeriality

I have conducted pedagogical experiments in my undergraduate courses by using photography and documentary film to understand how students interpret aeriality encoded in texts. I asked students to compare and contrast two aerial photographs of Tokyo along the Sumida River (see Figures 1 and 2), originally published in *Japan mit Korea und Formosa* by F. M. Trautz (Berlin, 1930) and in *Life* magazine (September 10, 1945) respectively, and to write a short essay entitled “Japan’s Past in Aerial Photographs.” Students interpreted these aerial photos, identifying what the photographs captured from the air: a lively city with developing urban infrastructure and a growing population density before World War II; and a dead city with homes and buildings burned out by air raids, showing no traffic on the highways or bridges, and no signs of life or movement after the war. Some students read the aerial views differently from how they would typically read the landscape and its features on the ground and on a map. In the 1930 picture, for instance, architectural structures—factories, warehouses, and residential homes—situated close to one another along the river are often difficult

to distinguish. Hence, one student read roofs, observing that tiny, dark-colored roofs in the middle and background views demarcated residential areas. Other students noted that bridges could serve as air marks because of their different shapes and designs; they identified the first bridge in the foreground as the Eitai Bridge, originally built in 1698 and refurbished in 1926, which still stands today. It would not have surprised these students that in Hiroshima, the Aioi Bridge, with its distinctive T shape distinguishable from the sky, was the aiming point for the atom bomb.

Students reacted in different ways to the aerial view of the bombed-out city taken in 1945, from which there seems little left to read; however, they discovered that the Earth could appear as a flat surface like a relief or a map. The picture was an aerial oblique view, adding a three-dimensional effect to the landscape. Despite this, one student wrote that because houses were burned to the ground and the few standing buildings were sparsely scattered, “roads and land divisions were clearly visible,” which “looked like a two-dimensional design.” The photograph of the burned-out Earth—while not a vertical view that would typically show the landscape as a two-dimensional surface—still resembled a black-and-white map. Tellingly, a widely circulated map from the occupation period entitled “City Map, Central Tokyo” was compiled from aerial photo interpretations, not ground surveys. The source of the map reads: “compiled in 1948 from aerial photography by USAF 1947.”<sup>18</sup> The map shows principal roads, streets, and military routes, which are highlighted in red like “a skein of red veins,” as expressed by cultural geographer Cary Karacas.<sup>19</sup> In reality, the referent was “clogged ... with jeeps, military buses, and new automobiles brought over from the United States,” according to John W. Dower.<sup>20</sup>

The two aerial images inspired narratives. A few students created narratives based on an incorrect sequencing of the two photographs, despite being informed of the years when the images were taken, by creatively mistaking the image of a city in ruins after the war (1945) for a wilderness that would later become a city (1930) through rapid economic growth. It is also revealing that a few other students, imaginatively interpreting the image of Tokyo (1930) as showing a miracle of reconstruction after the Great Kanto Earthquake, which struck the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area in 1923, wrote narratives of the city’s destruction and rebirth. To these students, the aerial view of Tokyo (1930) showed resilience by the city, the nation, and its people, giving “a hope that Tokyo can be reborn again and again,” as expressed by one student. Their narratives are less a linear process (as were those by the previous group) and more a convoluted process of rebirth. The latter narrative also informed the essay by another student, who wrote that Tokyo pictured in 1930 was a city that had emerged from the debris of the earthquake, and that the same city lying in rubble in 1945 was to go through postwar urban renewal. Natural disasters and wars are different forces, yet students found that both changed the Earth’s surface in strikingly similar ways and to similar degrees of destruction. A couple of students wrote narratives charged with traumatic emotional experiences, noting that the image of Tokyo (1945) was reminiscent of an aerial view of a town photographed by helicopter, in which

homes and residents were swept away by the devastating tsunami from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, which had occurred in the neighboring prefecture.

I have also used another set of texts to understand how students react to aeriality-inspired narratives.<sup>21</sup> In this series, the first aerial photograph was taken in 1948 by the United States Army Air Force, of the *kofun* (ancient imperial burial mound) attributed to the sixteenth Emperor Nintoku in a devastated Osaka. The second is from a 2017 documentary by the American television network HISTORY (formerly the History Channel) presenting aerial footage of the same burial mound with its keyhole shape. American aeriality during the period of occupation changed the landscape of modern archaeology of ancient Japan. One Japanese archaeologist recalls the “awe-inspiring” shock he felt the first time he saw an aerial photograph of the (hitherto sacred and inviolable) tomb of Nintoku that had been taken by the United States Army Air Force.<sup>22</sup> Harvard professor Edwin O. Reischauer wrote in 1949, “Now that General MacArthur has raised all taboos in Japan, the archaeologists of that land are at last about to fulfill their great suppressed desire to excavate some of the huge tumuli of central and western Japan,” especially the tumulus (burial mound) of Nintoku “who probably reigned about 400 A.D.” As Reischauer put it, such excavations would contribute to “our present rewriting of Japanese history for the school books.”<sup>23</sup> Prewar Japan’s history was not of the people but of their rulers. It was a myth-history of the imperial lineage of the incumbent 124th Emperor Hirohito, dating back some two thousand six hundred years to the first emperor, who was said to have been a descendant of the sun goddess. The anticipated archaeological efforts did not materialize, however, and the aura of the Chrysanthemum Throne’s inviolability remained intact. Meanwhile, the excavation of the Toro archaeological site in central Japan was successfully carried out, uncovering the remains of a settlement with wet-rice paddy fields dating back two thousand years—Earth’s palimpsest, which tells an alternative story. Walter Edwards observed that these efforts “were in line with a call ... for writing ‘a history of the people ... of the nameless masses born and working in society, of what kind of livelihood they practiced,’ in antithesis to the history of aristocratic institutions which had hitherto dominated historical research.”<sup>24</sup>

The aerial view was not just a call to archaeologists to rewrite the past. It engaged the imaginations of writers and creators of a HISTORY documentary entitled *A Spaceship Made of Stone*, which featured aerial footage of the ancient imperial burial mound amid the modern Osaka metropolis, asking whether “Japan’s origins [could] lie beyond Earth.”<sup>25</sup> In *A Spaceship Made of Stone*, a closeup is shown of the keyhole-shaped tomb, a shape that could only be seen from the sky. Commentator David Childress, the author of *Extraterrestrial Archeology*, speculates that, given the Japanese belief that emperors were direct descendants of the sun goddess, “we have to wonder” whether keyhole-shaped *kofun*, dotting the Japanese archipelago, are “a way for the extraterrestrials to identify the tombs of their ancestors.”<sup>26</sup> HISTORY’s interest is not limited to aerial archaeology but rather it encompasses the field of space archaeology. A male voice-over narrator in *A Spaceship Made of Stone* explains,

“curiously, in 2016, researchers studying high-resolution photos of the surface of Mars spotted an eerily similar keyhole-shaped mound.”<sup>27</sup> Jason Martell, another commentator and author of *Knowledge Apocalypse*, offers one possible interpretation: a structure on Mars similar to the *kofun* in Japan reveals a lost interplanetary “connection,” suggesting that ancient extraterrestrials migrated through interstellar space to Japan.<sup>28</sup>

I asked students to write a response essay. The students were familiar with the represented *kofun* (declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2019) but their essays revealed complex reactions to HISTORY’s documentary. One student was fascinated by the new vision, the “keyhole,” revealed only from the sky, while another resisted such reading, writing that the shape is not a keyhole but an abstract pattern of square and round, representing that “heaven is round and the earth square,” a concept influenced by ancient Chinese cosmology. A keyhole may or may not be a new vision but it does rename the shape; indeed, scholar Gina L. Barnes observed that the current English term “keyhole-shaped tomb” developed from Jonathan Edward Kidder’s 1959 original translation of what has, in Japanese terminology, traditionally been called “front-square rear-round mound.”<sup>29</sup> Some students were critical of the documentary’s mystery-based narration genre, remarking that Japan’s imperial burial mound is presented as mysterious rather than historical due to a Western concept of history, just as the Great Pyramids of Giza remain enigmatic to many, despite the fact that the ancient Egyptians developed mathematics and astronomy. Others were entertained by the futuristic scientific interpretation of the ancient past, though it clearly stretches credibility, and by the following logic that Japan’s incumbent and past emperors are descendants not of the sun goddess but of ancient aliens. Of note, Hirohito denied his sun goddess genealogy during the early American occupation, renouncing his divinity as based on legends and myths in his so-called “Declaration of Humanity” in 1946. Regardless, HISTORY’s narrative was less about prehistoric Japan and more about their style of writing history, and their imaginative theory portraying *Homo sapiens* as an interstellar species that had originated from outer space (exogenesis). Students were nonetheless intrigued by how Japan, from the transnational cultural field of aerial vision, appealed to narrative imagination, and they adeptly analyzed HISTORY’s metanarrative of their country as seen from the air.

### **Horton Hears a Who! as Aerial Archive**

I end this essay by discussing how *Horton Hears a Who!* (1954, hereafter *Horton*)—a classic children’s rhyme book written and illustrated by Theodor Seuss Geisel, under the nom de plume “Dr. Seuss”—can be theorized and taught as an aerial archive. Geisel’s picture book tells a story of a speck of dust floating in the air, *Who*-ville, and its small, unseen residents, the *Whos*, that Horton the elephant saves from destruction by the other animals in the Jungle of Nool. Geisel acknowledged that the story was inspired by his 1953 trip to Japan to research the influence of the United States military

occupation on Japanese children.<sup>30</sup> As Donald E. Pease observed, the trip “permitted Geisel to atone for the racist and xenophobic sentiments in his World War II cartoons.”<sup>31</sup> As such, *Horton* offers a perspective on Japan and its residents, recording a shift in worldview from war to postwar, from a divided world (as suggested by its initially conceived title, *Horton Hears ‘Em!*<sup>32</sup>) to one world, to which the airborne dust-sized *Who*-ville is finally anchored.

Scholars have often understood Geisel’s depiction of the *Whos* as racial encoding. Ruth K. MacDonald, for instance, asserted that the *Whos* in *Horton* are “Dr. Seuss’s characterization of the Japanese after Hiroshima.”<sup>33</sup> Their physical smallness may have reflected American perceptions of racial difference; as Susan L. Carruthers wrote, after World War II, “occupation soldiers constantly noted the ‘midget’ size of Japanese facilities, with homes ‘like neat doll houses,’ ‘so it almost looks like we’re living in a miniature world.’”<sup>34</sup> *Whos’* size may also have reflected that of Japanese children, as Judith Morgan and Neil Morgan observed: “the theme of the book—‘a person’s a person no matter how small’—had grown out of visits to Japanese schools, where the importance of the individual was considered an exciting new concept.”<sup>35</sup> Such association, though, could lead to belittling and lumping together of *Whos*, from the mayor of *Who*-ville to the “very small, very small shirker named Jo-Jo,”<sup>36</sup> a perspective that harks back to General Douglas MacArthur’s occupation-era notion that the Japanese people are like 12-year-old children who need guidance and tutelage.

With these racial and developmental-stage encodings in mind, it is nonetheless important to consider that the *Whos* are atom level and invisible, and that Horton the elephant alone can hear them and can only imagine who they are. In Geisel’s illustrations, the *Whos* are shown as an insect-shaped species on the dust that the air carries. In an earlier draft of the story, Horton hears a voice and thinks, “there must be someone that’s riding that small speck of dust! It must be some bug of a very small size.”<sup>37</sup> Given his initial career as an advertising cartoonist, Geisel’s choice of an insect as the *Whos’* imaginary semblance may not come as a surprise. Geisel got his “first real break” drawing insects for Standard Oil’s insecticide spray gun called Flit, with the catchphrase “Quick, Henry, the Flit!”<sup>38</sup>

If Horton is an elephant, are the *Whos* bugs? While they appear to be anthropomorphized insects, Geisel’s illustrations suggest otherwise. The *Whos* have four limbs like mammals, walk on two legs, and ride an unidentified flying object or planet that Horton later learns is called *Who*-ville. *Who*-ville floats and drifts on air, as the *Whos* cry out for help. Horton identifies the signal source and places the flying object or planet softly on the top of a tiny clover blossom. This gesture cues a shift in Horton’s imagination that is simultaneously microscopic and telescopic. He imagines bug-eyed humanoids—people-like bugs or bug-like people—and Geisel draws them as such.

The story thereafter is about Horton’s close encounter with an alien life. Horton the elephant, whose hearing acuity resembles acoustic radar, hears the “speck-voice.”<sup>39</sup> He is given to understand that an advanced civilization is visiting the Jungle

of Nool, as the Whos have buildings—churches, grocery stores, and houses—that do not exist in the jungle. The residents of Nool, however, find Horton’s story foolish. The dust is lifeless in their eyes and their ears hear no voice. In response to the alleged “speck-voice” of an alien intelligence, they begin something illogical, i.e., to destroy what they believe is nonexistent. “A black-bottomed eagle named Vlad Vlad-i-koff, a mighty strong eagle, of very swift wing” drops Horton’s clover from a high altitude to “a great patch of clovers a hundred miles wide.”<sup>40</sup> The crash is as devastating in its impact as the explosion of the atom bomb at Hiroshima, so that *Who-ville*’s “clocks have all stopped,” just as clocks in Hiroshima did when the bomb fell.<sup>41</sup> Horton manages to recover his clover, but only after he has “picked, searched, and piled up” three million other clovers, thereby destroying them, to find the one.<sup>42</sup> The animals take action to stop this “silly nonsensical game.”<sup>43</sup> They think it best to cage the elephant who seems mentally ill because he hears voices that are not there. They also prepare to boil in oil (“Beezle-Nut oil”<sup>44</sup>) the clover and its delusionary alien beings withal—an action evoking the cruelty of the Mikado, a despotic monarch, in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Japanese-themed operetta *The Mikado; or, The Town of Titipu* (1885), for whom capital punishment, carried out by boiling in oil or some other violent means, is a chief life interest. At the very last moment of the crisis, however, a sound of life is heard from the clover. It is not the distant hum of bugs, but a clear voice, “YOPP!” Horton smiles and says, “Do you see what I mean? ... They’ve proved they ARE persons, no matter how small.”<sup>45</sup>

When I assign *Horton*, I find that this book, while endearing to children, “bugs” my students. One student resisted the book’s (ostensibly) human rights message of “a person’s a person, no matter how small,” expressing that the (seemingly) happy twist of fate occurs due to the Whos’ desperate efforts to make themselves heard, not because of the animals’ willingness to hear or try to hear them. *Horton* simultaneously reveals and conceals that “a person’s a person, no matter how small” is not a self-evident truth; it holds true only insofar as the invisible and helpless can prove that they are persons, that is, prove it to the residents of the Jungle of Nool who would otherwise inexorably annihilate them. Another student commented that America’s nuclear umbrella is drawn into the picture on the last page of *Horton*, a satiric reading that triggered laughter among my students in class. In the final scene, the animals of Nool decide and promise that they will “protect them [the Whos]” with Horton; a young kangaroo in its mother’s pouch holds an umbrella of grass over the clover, declaring, “. . . ME, TOO! From sun in the summer. From rain when it’s fall-ish, I’m going to protect them. No matter how small-ish!”<sup>46</sup> The association (of umbrellas, grass, and nuclear, within and outside the diegesis) was not intentional on Geisel’s part, but such was the effect, given the historical context. The Japan that Geisel visited was a country that had only recently regained independence and entered a bilateral security treaty with the United States, being placed under its nuclear umbrella.

If we approach *Horton* on another level, Geisel’s text can be theorized and taught as an aerial archive. In the final scene, the meaning of the Whos shifts because Horton’s

imagination loses its grip on them. After all, the *Whos* may or may not have been simple mites on a speck of dust that travels through the air, or bug-eyed humanoids of atomic smallness riding a dust-shaped object or planet as Horton imagined. But one thing seems clear. They have fallen within the Earth's gravity field, never to fly again. At the end of the story, the *Whos* gain protection in exchange for their flight capabilities. One implication may be discussed in terms of a wartime political cartoon that Geisel drew of the Japanese in the form of flies. "Slap That Jap. Bug Swatters Cost Money! Buy U.S. War Bonds Stamps" was a blatantly racist caricature in which a Japanese soldier is depicted as a flying insect humanoid, bespectacled, pig-nosed, and bucktoothed, that the United States would and should exterminate.<sup>47</sup> Geisel brings *Horton* to a close by turning the *Whos* into flightless bugs—or bug-like people or people-like bugs—a species that the animals decide deserve life and preservation, instead of extermination. The *Whos* lose aerial flight, settle on a clover in the once hostile jungle, and become earthbound, and the animals, big and small, promise to protect them from sun and rain.

In terms of aeriality, this ending reads as a gesture of reconciliation. It is informed and may be partially explained by the historical and political context of America's reconciliation with Japan. The Japanese surrender ceremony (September 2, 1945) aboard the battleship *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay was capped by a massive display of Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers flying in formation to "ensure that the Japanese never forgot the power brought to their shores to guarantee victory."<sup>48</sup> Prohibitions on Japanese aviation followed in its wake. Japan lost the war, and with it the sky. Yet at a textual level, the reconciliation scene in *Horton* is more puzzling than reassuring. One of my students asked in class: How come the "mighty strong eagle, of very swift wing" that crashed *Who-ville* from the sky is not present? The eagle, possessing and harnessing the most destructive force ever loosed against *Who-ville*, which may break out again any time, is still soaring the sky. The eagle is not in the frame, either because it refuses to sit at the reconciliation table, for some unknown reason, or a combination of the reasons described above. The flip side of the *Whos'* story, then, is less about reassurance based on a guarantee of life and more about acquiescence to peace out of fear.

Both the eagle and the *Whos* become invisible in the final moment. Though they become the vanishing point in *Horton*, this is not a cipher because the relationship between the eagle and the *Whos* remains unresolved, contested, and contestable. Rather, it becomes a question mark and should be read as such. Aerial archives of American-occupied Japan can and must be constructed, theorized, and taught because they help metamorphose such vanishing points (literary and cultural) into fraught questions. Aerial archives invite scholars and teachers to bring the mobility of aeriality to bear on future transnational American studies.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> E. A. Gutkind, *Our World from the Air: An International Survey of Man and His Environment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952).
- <sup>2</sup> G. P. Gooch, "Foreword," in *Our World from the Air: An International Survey of Man and His Environment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952), iii.
- <sup>3</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Introduction," in *Our World from the Air: An International Survey of Man and His Environment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952), iv.
- <sup>4</sup> Jason Weems, *Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xi.
- <sup>5</sup> Weems, *Barnstorming*; Sonja Dümpelmann, *Flights of Imagination: Aviation, Landscape, Design* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014); Caren Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermaths: Wartime from Above* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
- <sup>6</sup> Gutkind, *Our World*, viii.
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, eds., *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, eds., *American Studies as Transnational Practice: Turning toward the Transpacific* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2015); Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, eds., *Archipelagic American Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
- <sup>8</sup> Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen define metageography as "the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history" (Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], ix).
- <sup>9</sup> Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, "Archipelagic American Studies: Decontinentalizing the Study of American Culture," in *Archipelagic American Studies*, ed. Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 6.
- <sup>10</sup> Alan K. Henrikson, "The Map as an 'Idea': The Role of Cartographic Imagery during the Second World War," *American Cartographer* 2, no. 1 (April 1975): 19–20;

<https://doi.org/10.1559/152304075784447243>. The most valuable summary of Harrison's innovative maps in the 1940s is by Susan Schulten, "Richard Edes Harrison and the Challenge to American Cartography," *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 174–88, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1151400>

- 11 Richard Edes Harrison, *Look at the World: The FORTUNE Atlas for World Strategy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), 42–43.
- 12 Harrison, *Look at the World*, 44–45; Schulten, "Richard Edes Harrison," 180.
- 13 "Camera Target: TOKYO," *American Photography*, March 1945, 57.
- 14 "U.S. Occupies Japan," *Life*, September 10, 1945, 34–35.
- 15 Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 103–28. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>
- 16 "U.S. Occupies Japan," *Life*, 38–39.
- 17 "JAPAN Hiroshima," *Our World from the Air*, plate 31.
- 18 United States, Far Eastern Command, "City Map, Central Tokyo ... prepared under the direction of the Engineer, GHQ, FEC by the 64th Engineer Base Topographic Battalion," June 1948, Trove, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233886432/view>
- 19 Cary Karacas, "The Occupied City," in *Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps*, ed. Kären Wigen, Fumiko Sugimoto, and Cary Karacas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 195.
- 20 John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 208.
- 21 Osaka, February 20, 1948, USA M18-1 36, Geospatial Information Authority of Japan; "Ancient Aliens: Keyhole Kofun (Season 12, Episode 14) | History," YouTube video, 2:20, from HISTORY, *A Spaceship Made of Stone*, August 11, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvk6lfd9s\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvk6lfd9s_Q)
- 22 Susumu Miyakawa, "'Ryobo' gentei kokai no seika to mondaiten [Limited access to 'imperial mausoleums,' its outcomes and problems]," in *Nihon no kofun to tenno-ryo [Tumuli and imperial mausoleums in Japan]* (Tokyo: Dohsei Publishing, 2000), 64.
- 23 Edwin O. Reischauer, "Archaeological News: Japanese Tumuli," *Archaeology* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1949): 105.
- 24 Walter Edwards, "Contested Access: The Imperial Tombs in the Postwar Period," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 379. <https://doi.org/10.2307/133273>
- 25 "Ancient Aliens: S 12 E 14 A Spaceship Made of Stone," HISTORY,

<https://www.history.com/shows/ancient-aliens/season-12/episode-14>

- <sup>26</sup> “Ancient Aliens: Keyhole Kofun,” at 1:16–1:23.
- <sup>27</sup> “Ancient Aliens: Keyhole Kofun,” at 1:37–1:47.
- <sup>28</sup> “Ancient Aliens: Keyhole Kofun,” at 1:56–2:06.
- <sup>29</sup> Gina L. Barnes, *State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite* (London: Routledge, 2007), 110–11.
- <sup>30</sup> David Sheff, “Seuss on Wry,” *Parenting Magazine*, February 1987, 55; “Japan’s Young Dreams: Children’s Drawings Show How Occupation Has Changed Their Aspirations,” *Life*, March 29, 1954, 89.
- <sup>31</sup> Donald E. Pease, *Theodor Seuss Geisel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93.
- <sup>32</sup> Theodor Seuss Geisel, “Horton Hears a Who!,” typescript, box 2, folder 187, Dr. Seuss Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University of California, San Diego Library.
- <sup>33</sup> Ruth K. MacDonald, *Dr. Seuss* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 75.
- <sup>34</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 106.
- <sup>35</sup> Judith Morgan and Neil Morgan, *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel: A Biography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 144–45.
- <sup>36</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton Hears a Who!* (New York: Random House, 1954), [54]. The book has no pagination. I supply page numbers in square brackets, starting with the first page of the story.
- <sup>37</sup> Geisel, “Horton Hears a Who!,” typescript.
- <sup>38</sup> Pease, *Theodor Seuss Geisel*, 47–48.
- <sup>39</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton*, [18].
- <sup>40</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton*, [24, 29].
- <sup>41</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton* [34].
- <sup>42</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton* [30].
- <sup>43</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton* [36].
- <sup>44</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton*, [38].
- <sup>45</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton*, [56].
- <sup>46</sup> Dr. Seuss, *Horton*, [60].

- <sup>47</sup> The cartoon is reproduced in Kurt Christopher, “Dr. Seuss Propaganda: 9 Surprising World War II Propaganda Cartoons Drawn by the Famous Artist,” *History Collection*, October 13, 2017, <https://historycollection.com/dr-seuss-propaganda-9-shocking-world-war-ii-propaganda-cartoons-drawn-famous-artist/9/>
- <sup>48</sup> Kit Bonner and Carolyn Bonner, *USS Missouri at War* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2008), 75.

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