

A Conversation about Two Occupations

Susan Carruthers / Mire Koikari / Heike Paul

This conversation of two of the most renowned scholars of Cold War historiography and occupation studies, Susan Carruthers (University of Warwick) and Mire Koikari (University of Hawai'i) with Heike Paul (FAU Erlangen-Nuernberg and guest editor of this issue), took place virtually on 29 January 2021 across multiple time zones. It has been transcribed, edited, and abridged for this volume. The exchange sheds light on important topics in the larger field of post-war studies on Japan and Germany, contextualizes historical debates, and discusses pertinent issues for future scholarship.

1. What's in a Name? – Questions of Terminology

Heike Paul: Thank you, Professor Carruthers and Professor Koikari, for agreeing to a group conversation. In the study of geopolitical configurations following the end of World War II, various organizing categories have been prominently used and problematized: “post-war”, “cold war”, “occupation”, “democratization”, “modernization”, “re-education”, etc. Could you speak to your own senses of what these terminologies imply, and what kind of critical work they do? In what way do you consider them to be aptly descriptive, analytical, or even normative, as the basis of scholarly projects? Which do you find helpful for comparative analyses?

Susan Carruthers: Questions of terminology are really of foundational importance, and where I would want to start with that question is to think about language as it was employed by historical actors in the period that we're talking about, from the middle or early 1940s into the 1950s. And certainly, in my sort of study, particularly of US occupations, the historical actors were very strategic about which names they gave to

which practices in particular locations. “Military government” was the name given to the structure imposed on the Axis powers proper; while “civil affairs” was the name applied to governance arrangements in liberated territory, because it didn’t sound as draconian as “military government”. Obviously, one must be very careful about using the language of historical actors, unpacking what they thought about the strategic connotations of particular terms and names, as opposed to analytic categories I find helpful for my own work. Thus, I would prefer the looser category of “post-war” rather than “cold war”. With “cold war” I want to be careful about what is being mobilized and what is being obscured by that term. I also use the term “occupation”, because I think that is indeed an accurate description of what is going on in all sorts of places. You listed some other categories we might think about – for me, “re-education” and “democratization” are also terms which I would want to handle with great care. They clearly have normative connotations as they were applied both in the moment and in some cases afterwards. I would want to apply caution, because “re-education”, which is maybe a *leitmotiv* of this conversation, has punitive as well as pedagogical aspects. And it is quite hard to tease those apart, although in the argot of Americans at the time, “re-education” was intended to connote something uplifting, elevating, morally edifying. Similarly, one cannot use the term “democratization” without being attuned to the many ways in which fundamentally un- or anti-democratic things were very much a part of it. The other thing I would want to put on the table, from the start, is where “decolonization” fits in this mix. And this is another reason why, when talking about the cold war, I want to draw attention to a north/south axis of power: whereas, very often, or at least in older historiography around the cold war, we are constantly drawn to rather think in terms of east/west.

Heike Paul: “Decolonization” (along with aspects of “neo-colonialism”) is certainly a very important concept for the constellations that you, Professor Koikari, are looking at in your work as you are shedding light on power structures, both open and hidden. What kind of work do concepts such as “post-war” or “cold war” do for the questions you investigate in your work?

Mire Koikari: You ask the most difficult question at the very beginning! As I think through those terms, especially “re-education,” I recall what we talked about at the Berkeley conference in February 2020. That is, those of us who study Japanese occupation do not see this term, “re-education”, used in the Japanese context. In the US occupation of Japan, the terms that were used include “democratization” – which, of course, for reasons that Susan just talked about, is very problematic – and also “democratization and de-militarization”. “Demilitarization” is no less problematic because Okinawa actually got re-militarized during the occupation. Two areas (mainland Japan and the island of Okinawa) came to take on very different roles. Other terms that often came up in the US occupation of Japan were “re-orientation” and “rehabilitation”. To me, it is very interesting that in Japan, “democratization” and “demilitarization” were used, but in Germany it was “re-education”. So, what are the implications? What sort of etymology in each case?

Many scholars talk about “racial difference” between Japan and Germany in the context of post-war occupations. So did race play a role? Or was it something else? In the case of Okinawa, nobody talked about re-education or democratization; and they really couldn’t talk about demilitarization, either. As the occupation of Okinawa lasted until 1972, the Cold War provided an important context. As a result, the discourse of “people-to-people”, or what Christina Klein in *Cold War Orientalism* (2003) defines as “integrationist dynamics”, became salient.

Your question has made me think about what happened in the course of US “manifest destiny” across the Pacific. In the Western frontier, what fuelled expansionism were “assimilation”, “civilization”, and in the case of education of indigenous women, “domestication”. In the case of US colonization of Hawai‘i, “civilization” and “Christianization” were salient. As the Philippines were colonized by the US at about the same time, the key terminology there was “self-governance”, as the lack of Filipino self-governing ability was used as a reason and justification for US interventions. And then in the case of post-WWII Japan, “democratization” or “demilitarization”, in the case of Okinawa, “people to people” and also “mutual affinity and affiliation”. To make matters more complex, the US occupiers also emphasized restoring “Ryūkyūan identity” (pre-Japanese colonial Okinawan identity). But the intent, of course, was to make Okinawans feel less affiliated with Japan and more allied with the US. So it was a case of de-colonization discourse used to establish American hegemony in the occupied islands. How these various terminologies were used in order to facilitate US imperialism in North America, the Pacific, and Asia is fascinating.

In my own work, the notion of “cold war” was actually very helpful when I shifted the locus of study from Japan to Okinawa. Cold War cultural studies offer useful insights for Okinawa. Elaine Tyler May talks about women and domesticity. Laura McEnaney talks about how “civil defence begins at home” (which is also the title of her book). Christina Klein talks about “Cold War orientalism”, examining how US understandings of “self” and “other” were reconfigured in Asia and the Pacific. The notion of “cold war” really allowed me to focus on, especially in the case of Okinawa, shifting gender, racial, and imperial discourses transpiring between the US and Okinawa, with Japan also espousing its own version of multiculturalism and Orientalism. And, finally, “cold war” also helped me think about the Asian-Pacific region as a whole. Once I did that, it became easier to link the Okinawan case to other instances of imperialism and imperial feminism in Asia and the Pacific.

Now about “post-war”. In Japan, this term has been used in a very specific way. There is a famous phrase: “post-war was over” (*Mohaya sengo dewa nai*). This was a pronouncement made in the 1956 Economic White Paper. To this day many think it meant that the hard years of post-war survival and struggle were over and that with the start of high economic growth in 1955, Japan would begin to enjoy a better era. That was the predominant understanding of this phrase. However, what it actually meant was that the recovery from defeat, which had been aided by an economic boom triggered by the Korean war, was over. Now Japan must face the real struggle: modernizing its economy and getting into

a new phase (without a war boom). So, it was intended as a cautionary statement, but it got misinterpreted almost from the beginning. The phrase travelled to an Okinawa still under American occupation, and then Okinawans were perturbed, thinking that “mainland Japan is recovering but we are left behind. Why do we have to continue to be disadvantaged in this way?” Thus, the term “post-war” generated all sorts of complicated dynamics during and after the occupation.

2. Shifting Positionalities

Heike Paul: With your changing positionalities – you both have lived and researched in different parts of the world, and now are located in Hawai‘i and Britain, respectively – have there been any changes in perspective regarding your objects of study? Is there something pertaining to your own shifting locations and academic training that has prompted you to engage with the subject matter of your books?

Susan Carruthers: Yes. I’m a British citizen and also an Irish citizen. But I lived for 15 years in the US. And also, in terms of my academic career, my PhD thesis, which was my first book, was actually on British colonial counterinsurgencies. And it’s really from that route that I arrived at an interest in post-war re-education and occupation in the first place, because I was very intrigued by the oftentimes horrific things that were going on in camps in Kenya in the 1950s, but also in Cyprus and Malaya, in which the British colonial state was purporting to “re-educate” so-called terrorist suspects, using “terrorist” as a category to stigmatize those who were waging anti-imperial war against British rule. And I set out in that project to try to get a handle on where the discourse of re-education came from. That took me to post-war Germany; it took me to camps in the Korean war, and so, my third book, *Cold War Captives*, thinks about where America’s early Cold War fascination with captivity (with the whole discourse of “slave” and “free”, with the furious competition over POWs in the Korean War) came from, and what gave those languages so much traction. So, I bring a British colonial perspective to bear on thinking about these questions. I only became an Americanist at a slightly later point in my career and, having decided that I was increasingly interested in figuring out things about the United States, I decided I would go and live there. So, I moved to the US in 2002 – I had been teaching in Wales for nine years before that, living in a tiny Welsh-speaking village, so this was a very intriguing place from which to start thinking about the United States. But living in the US definitely helped inspire me to take on my occupation book. One of your questions was about the “good occupation” of that book’s title, which was a way of thinking about the mobilisation of a very particular account of the post-war occupations of Germany and Japan to try to legitimate the occupation and invasion of Iraq. And that – in my horror at the moving catastrophe that was playing out in front of my very eyes, in the first months when I lived in the US, teaching US foreign relations to US students on the most ethnically diverse campus in the country – was where I arrived at the idea

for that book. I really wanted to take apart the trope of “the good occupation” which had been mobilized for what I regarded as particularly injurious purposes.

Heike Paul: Professor Koikari, you live on the Hawaiian Islands and have been living and teaching there for quite some time. Your positionality in Hawai‘i seems to be a special and unique one, and a particularly interesting vantage point from which to look in two directions: both to Japan and to the US mainland. Before you became a resident of Hawai‘i and a professor at the University of Hawai‘i, you lived in the US Midwest and did research at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, also a unique location in the Midwest. How have these two places affected or even shaped your work?

Mire Koikari: Very much. The book on the US occupation of Japan came out of my work at the University of Wisconsin, where I got my PhD in Sociology. In the nineties, when I was pursuing my degree, the discussions about empire, gender, and feminism were finally making their way into the field of Social Sciences. That’s part of the reason I decided to focus on gender, feminism, and empire in the US occupation of Japan. But I must go further back to find the moment where I really got into critically thinking about the US-Japan relation. When I was living in Wisconsin, I sometimes visited places outside of Madison. Madison and the rest of Wisconsin were really two different worlds. On one such occasion, an old war veteran came up to me. He took off his hat, greeted me, and said: “You know, I really had a great time in my youth in Korea.” He was obviously referring to his experience in the Korean war. This was surprising to me in two ways. I had just left Japan and landed in Wisconsin. In my context of growing up as a middle-class woman in the Tokyo area, it was unimaginable to mix Japanese and Koreans, due to racial or national dynamics in East Asia. The difference between the two was “obvious” in Japanese culture. The episode also made me realize that it was through World War II experiences that those in the Midwest had first come to understand Asia. This encounter showed me the significance of war and the role of the military as a “bridge” between the American Midwest and Japan.

With my second book, which is about the US occupation of Okinawa, my living in Hawai‘i was crucial. Hawai‘i was, of course, a steppingstone for US expansion across the Pacific. So, if you live here, it is really hard not to think about other communities in Asia and the Pacific in connection to Hawai‘i. If you think about Hawai‘i, you think about Guam; and if you think about Guam, you then think about Okinawa and the Philippines. Hawai‘i makes you think about the ways in which the US military moved across the vast region over a period of time. So that made me, of course, become very interested in Okinawa.

Also in Hawai‘i, there is a significant number of Japanese American World War II veterans who also served either in the occupation of mainland Japan or the occupation of Okinawa. Their stories are extraordinarily complicated. And they also had connection to Germany as well since Japanese American soldiers were involved in liberating the interned population from Dachau. All these stories are circulating in the Pacific. In addition, in Hawai‘i there is almost complete silence about the cold war. Nobody talks about

it as a historical event or as a term of significance; nobody talks about how Japanese and Okinawan immigrant population in the islands got involved in the cold war reconstruction of Asia. This silence was too “loud” for me. So that is the way I ended up looking at the cold war and its impacts on Okinawa. Whether in Wisconsin or Hawai‘i, I seem to be haunted by the history of military and empire. Though I never thought I would focus on the history of militarization, I have been following the footsteps of the military. With my research on post-2011 disaster mobilization in Japan, which became my third book, *Gender, Culture, and Disaster in Post-3.11 Japan* (2020), the military (of the US and Japan) was at the centre of my analysis.

3. The Role of Institutions in the Post-War Period, Both Military and Civilian

Heike Paul: Both of you have extensively studied the role of the military as an institution alongside other institutions that are part of civil society Professor Koikari, you show us how the concept of “manifest domesticity” (originally coined by Amy Kaplan to describe the aspect of gender and women’s roles in imperial schemes of westward expansion) also matters for the imperial agenda that you are looking at in the cold war. In your book *Pedagogy of Democracy*, you point to the power of military institutions, but also to groups in civil society that seemed to be instrumentalized for purposes of re-education in post-war Japan and Okinawa, which also came with their own agendas and critical interventions. Can you speak to those of the women’s groups, in particular? What was their “pedagogical agenda”, and how was it realized or thwarted?

Mire Koikari: To me, what is fascinating is how civil society (and women, in particular) constantly intermingled with the military. I first noticed this while researching the mainland occupation of Japan, but with my research on the US occupation of Okinawa, it became really clear how the boundary between civil society and the military is so blurry. Women and domesticity were at the very centre of this dynamic. In US-Occupied Okinawa, a new community comprised of US military wives and Okinawan elite wives emerged, organizing tea and coffee parties, luncheons and dinner parties, and other types of gatherings, constantly using the language of, as I said earlier, “mutual affinity and affiliation”. Both sides were keen on portraying their relationship as egalitarian. They were building friendship at grassroots level, they argued. These US military wives were actually given an order to befriend Okinawans but do it “unofficially”. They were earnest about their “unofficial” activities. At the NARA (National Archives and Record Administration) in the US, I found a box full of historical artifacts illuminating these women’s commitment to this informal diplomacy. Among them was the album of the military wives’ clubs, documenting their grassroots activities. Many of the photos actually became part of the publicity efforts by the US civil administration in Okinawa. One of the clubs, USCAR Women’s Club, ended up writing their own history, which was also in this box. That was fascinating.

Heike Paul: A serious case of “archive fever” that got you!

Mire Koikari: Yes. And another group of women – American home economists dispatched by Michigan State University to Okinawa – also aided the mission of the military occupation by containing anti-American protests in the islands in a gendered manner. What better way was there than to turn Okinawan women into a pro-America constituency by teaching them American domestic knowledge and techniques – cooking, sewing, and so forth. These home economists, too, were cognizant of their role. And their activities were inseparable from the military. Their travel from the US to Okinawa was by military transportation. Once in Okinawa, they travelled to other regions in Asia and the Pacific, where the US military was present. They always found their colleagues (other home economists) in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Korea. Once again, their trips to these places were aided by the US military. While in Okinawa, the home economists lived in the same housing facilities as the military families, and they dined at the same place. The link between domesticity and military was visible among Okinawans as well. Older Okinawans remember such things as kitchen utensils made from downed Japanese airplanes, or children’s coats made out of American military blankets. Most poignant of all is the wedding dress made of an American military parachute. Everyday lives on the occupied islands were deeply intertwined with the military. These things really fascinated me.

Heike Paul: Professor Carruthers, you have researched what happens to American soldiers when the war is over, and how they become agents in the occupation. Those American “post-warriors”, as you call them, often had limited training to prepare them for their post-war role. In your book *The Good Occupation*, you analyse at length the founding of the “School of Military Government” in Charlottesville, Virginia, where soldiers received training for their post-war mission. How did you become interested in the “School of Military Government”? And would you say the soldiers there were trained to become agents of re-education? Were they trained merely for aspects of governance, or could it be argued that they were also trained to “re-educate” civilian populations in Germany and Japan?

Susan Carruthers: I don’t remember exactly how I first became interested in it. It may have been in the National Archives that I came across references to it, but I did actually go to Charlottesville, because the special collections of the University of Virginia have a lot of the materials from the School of Military Government. I was able to read the lecture notes and study the curriculum. There were also photo albums. So, it’s a bit like Mire was describing with the unexpected troves of self-representations. And some of the particularly revealing things in the photo albums weren’t just the photos that were rather static: “Here’s the class of...” These guys were going for maybe three or four months, but they would compose little poems and ditties and songs, which were very revealing, and sometimes quite disturbing, about the sorts of self-identities that they were trying out as post-war “pro-consuls.” Often very much indebted to America’s imperial lineage.

But the question of empire, it seems to me, and the question of historical genealogies that arrive in Charlottesville, are intriguing, and they pull in different directions. One of the interesting things, of course, about the occupation and about the mobilization of that analogy in the run up to the so-called “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, is that the “O-word,” as Paul “Jerry” Bremer termed it, reminds us that on the one hand there was a desire to fabricate an ennobling, affirmative vision of America as a capable re-educator and uplifter of benighted parts of the world in the shape of Germany and Japan after World War II. But the “O-word” nevertheless conjures all sorts of things that smack of imperialism, from which one, nevertheless, wants to create some distance. So, you have these rather head-spinning juxtapositions of invoking occupation without being able to say “that word” about the very things that are being conjured. And similarly, in Charlottesville, one of the things I found most fascinating is that the instructional manuals that were at the centre of the education provided there – particularly the Field Manual on Military Government – explicitly warns that the occupying power should *not* try to change the culture or the social norms, of the place that is being occupied. So, in that sense, the officers that went to Charlottesville were not receiving any training to be re-educators. They are actually told that they should leave in place the existing culture and folkways, rituals and patterns of the people with whom they come into contact. This is curious, if we think about the occupation as intended to “re-educate”, which is the language with which they spoke of themselves very soon thereafter.

So, where does that come from? Well, interestingly, as I traced back the genealogy of these ideas – about what occupation should or should not aspire to do, that firm stipulation against trying to change a culture or the way people think – to the aftermath of the American Civil War, and the occupation of the most unregenerate parts of the Confederate South by Union troops during the period of Reconstruction. By the end of the nineteenth century, most white Americans had converged in a shared understanding that imposing military government over Southern states had been a terrible disaster; that Union troops should never have been used to try eradicating certain ideas in the South; that their presence there was odious; that white Southerners were right to take up arms in some cases against that federal presence, and so on. The occupation of the South is really quite explicitly referenced in both the training lectures, as well as in the Field Manual, which is explicitly described as the “Bible” for men being trained. Of course, the fact that they were in Charlottesville, a Southern town, added public interest and indeed controversy to the existence of a School for Military Government. The Hearst Press called it “the school for Gauleiters”, terribly un-American, the idea they are going to occupy anywhere was an anathema. But the iconography of the school, and some of the ditties, songs, and poems that officer trainees themselves produced, all point to their very Southern location. The campus itself, the town of Charlottesville, was replete with statuary commemorating Confederate generals and heroes. So that troublesome aspect of the US past was very “undead” in that particular place.

4. The Role of Women: Gender and Re-Education in the Post-War

Heike Paul: But let's turn to yet another aspect, i.e., gender. Professor Koikari, women appear as agents and objects of re-education. They are also frequently represented in popular culture, in films, magazines, and popular novels in quasi-allegorical fashion to shed light on post-war relations. What "types" of women do you see standing out? And how do you problematize them in your work?

Mire Koikari: In the case of the US occupation of Japan, Beate Sirota Gordon is enormously important. This is not only because of what she did, that is, her involvement in the constitutional revision. But also because of the fact that she went through several imperial spheres before she landed in occupied Japan. She was originally from Vienna, where her artist parents were Russian Jews from Kiev. Her father happened to be visiting Manchuria and befriended a famous Japanese musician, and this led to the family moving to imperial Japan. Right before Pearl Harbor, she moved to the US to attend Mills College in California. Once the war was over, she came back to Japan as part of the American occupation forces. The kind of mileage and mobility she had is exceptional. What is equally or even more interesting about Sirota Gordon is the legendary status she has come to assume in Japan. This has partly had to do with Japanese women volunteering themselves to write her biography, produce a documentary film, and do various other work to sustain her "mythology". After 9/11, Beate Sirota Gordon gained public attention as she spoke about similarities between women's liberation during the US occupation of Japan and women's liberation during the US occupation of Afghanistan. By now, there is even a children's book (in Japanese) on Beate Sirota Gordon.

In the case of the US occupation of Okinawa, when I think of women having an exceptional mobility and going through several spheres of empire, Kimiyo Onaga comes to mind. She was the head of the home economist department at the University of Ryūkyū during the occupation. Not of Okinawan background, she was originally from the Tōhoku area, a northern region of Japan historically perceived as "other". Growing up in this marginalized region, she was determined to get out of poverty and make something out of her life. She wanted to become a doctor, but could not. So she studied home economics, a feminized field of science and technology. After her college, she relocated to Japan-colonized Korea and became a well-known home economist. Once the war was over, she repatriated to Okinawa, because she got married to an Okinawan in Korea. And during the occupation she became the "queen" of home economics. She travelled to Michigan, Hawai'i, and other locations, all in the name of home economics research and education. And as Onaga, Gordon, and other women travelled across borders, they created vast networks of women reformers and educators who criss-crossed multiple regions and oceans.

Heike Paul: It is very impressive to see how you trace this network around the globe, and how you establish these women's mobility and connectedness. Professor Carruthers, in your book you write about the family entering the scene of the occupation as a way to

domesticate occupation: that is, to prevent single American soldiers from intermingling with “foreign women”. In particular, when the latter were perceived as traditional and submissive, rather than as self-assertive and on the verge of a feminist movement.

Susan Carruthers: I definitely agree that the way in which segments of the US press and culture industries in the late 1940s, early 50s, constructed images of GIs and their sexual encounters with foreign women was quite explicitly intended to critique US women – to showcase the less desirable attributes that supposedly characterized American women as more aggressive, more career minded, and contrast this to Asian women. These gendered constructions are absolutely entangled with ideas about race and racialization. So Asian women get figured in very different and particular ways, so that they are elevated by these discourses into the most desirable kinds of helpmates, back scrubbers, pleasing, docile, submissive, attentive, never complaining, companions and so on.

And there I probably take issue a bit with the book *GIs and Germans* by Petra Goedde and with the claim she makes about the feminization of Germany. And Naoko Sibusawa’s book, *America’s Geisha Allies*, which we could think about as the counterpart that explores how those processes of gendering defeat play out in the Pacific. But my sense, at least in the early phase of the occupation, is that we see something quite distinct in Germany and Japan. That is, that German women are actually understood to be *political*. And one way in which American GIs are warned against fraternization – a euphemism for a rather shorter “f-word” – is by reminding them that German women are supposedly unreconstructed Nazis: and that GIs therefore risk being poisoned, and toxified not only by venereal diseases, but also with the ideological toxin of Nazism.

That motif appears in a wide array of American popular culture representations, and journalism written by both men and women. I am even thinking about how the centre piece of the original re-education program – the film *Die Todesmühlen*, rubbing German noses in the fact of Nazi atrocities and genocide – takes pains to show women SS guards, and to fixate on the figure of the female guards as particularly horrifying agents of atrocity. So, I would want to nuance Petra Goedde’s claims a bit. I think it is striking that I didn’t find any trace in Japan of Japanese women being configured as dangerous because they’re, for instance, fanatical Shinto worshippers devoted to the emperor, to Japanese imperialism, and should not be slept with on account of the ideological peril that they pose to naïve young, wholesome, uniformed American boys.

There are all sorts of very intriguing and telling differences in how these occupations are construed, how they are talked about, and the categories generated to conceive otherness in these places. But that’s the one thing that I find very striking, that German women are actually understood as ideological. They are not simply considered to be passive. It happens only later German women are reconceived as respectable, or indeed desirable, romantic partners, potential and actual wives, and so on.

Of course, these processes are complicated by race in the Pacific. But coming back to the point about families, American women and children heading first to Germany, and Japan, and Korea, and elsewhere – one of the things I find so intriguing about that process

of “domestication” is that it was not really part of the original blueprint for occupation. This happened because some very senior officers were eager that their *own* wives should come and join them – including Eisenhower, which is interesting since we know that he was having a relationship outside of marriage with an American woman in uniform – and responding to the groundswell of pressure from both American women, who wanted to join their husbands if they were not going to be demobilized quickly, and American men overseas themselves. So, these imperatives alter the complexion of the occupations. Truman cedes to that pressure, and the occupations are domesticated, sooner rather than later. And I think there was indeed an aspiration that the women would have a domesticating, softening, disciplinary function on the unruliness of male desire as it exceeded the boundaries that officers had tried to impose. Officers were, of course, often the worst “offenders” in violating non-fraternization rules and so on. That’s one of many ways in which I was really struck by unruliness, the uncontainability, of all sorts of processes and forces in the occupation, where desire undoes military hierarchy and chains of command. And how, unsurprisingly, the presence of American women and children doesn’t do that disciplinary work in any sort of straightforward or uncomplicated way. Men continued to sleep with foreign women at prodigious rates, despite the fact that there were wives and families around. So, all of these things I find very intriguing.

5. Similarities and Differences between the Two Occupations

Heike Paul: What do you consider characteristic specificities of the occupations in Japan and Germany? Where do you observe striking difference or similarities, broadly speaking? Where do you see the need for further comparative, transnational work?

Susan Carruthers: If I could just pick up on the “comparative, transnational” piece of this question, I would suggest that we complicate things further by adding more occupations into our comparative analysis. Because here, we have been, talking about Germany and Japan. And, of course, these were arguably the most consequential, certainly the best remembered and most studied of the occupations, but I think we would do well to additionally consider the occupation of Korea, the occupation of Italy. Remember that Germany and Japan were not the only two places subject to long occupations after World War II. They are also the two occupations I spent most of my book talking about. However, I do at different times talk about Italy and Korea. And, in terms of future directions, I think it would be useful to see more work that really brings these different occupations into the same frame. One of the things I was most struck by – and Mire has already talked about Japan and Korea, and about how Koreans are racialized and othered in Japan – is that Korea, it seems to me, gets the most punitive occupation of any place. And what is so striking is that Koreans had, of course understandably, expected that this would be their moment of restored self-determination, self-rule, and then – lo and behold – the peninsula is carved in half, and remains divided to this day, unlike Germany. And what goes on there has different kinds of dimensions. We haven’t really

touched on that aspect of occupation or post-war re-ordering that was about producing more ethnically homogeneous states, and how the United States particularly led massive “ethnic cleansing”, if one wants to call it that, in the Pacific. And it also happened in Europe, giving rise to all sorts of epic re-shuffling of populations. But it was particularly in the Pacific that the United States took it upon itself to remove people from Japan to Korea, and from Korea to Okinawa, and to other places, like the Philippines. And I think this dimension of post-war occupation is perhaps especially timely, as we live in an age of wrenching dislocations, refugee movements, forced relocations. So, this perhaps hasn’t received as much attention as it might. And those other occupations – which starkly draw out the way in which questions of empire and reconfigurations of imperial power are central to what is happening in terms of post-war reordering – might be very productive.

Heike Paul: Professor Koikari, would you also like to expand on what is your sense about what needs to be done?

Mire Koikari: When I started doing my research of the mainland occupation of Japan, the so-called *senryō kenkyū* was a main context, a Japanese-American scholarly network centred on studies of the post-war US occupation of Japan, or *senryō*. The problem is that this *senryō kenkyū* has been dis-articulated from other instances of occupation, including the occupation of Okinawa. The problem occurs in an opposite direction as well: those involved in studies of the occupation of Okinawa are not necessarily talking with scholars on the mainland occupation. This leads to various misunderstandings and misrecognitions, including the notion that there was no exchange, no connection whatsoever, between mainland Japan and Okinawa during the occupation years. In reality, there were many exchanges between the two in terms of people, ideas, resources, etc. Also, the occupation of Korea, which Susan mentioned, is out of the purview of analysis of *senryō kenkyū*, and so are the occupation of Germany or Italy.

Another issue is that “cold war” and “cold war culture” are not fully integrated into discussions of occupied or post-occupation Japan. It is as if the cold war never happened. One Japanese scholar, who speculates on the reason of this omission, states that Japanese academia, and the populace in general, really do not talk about the cold war, because the topic forces us to think about Korea, Taiwan, and other areas that were colonized by Japan prior to 1945 and placed under US rule after 1945. So not talking about the cold war feeds into historical amnesia. This is another issue I keep thinking about. I wonder, if we look at these different occupations all at the same time, what new questions and insight might emerge?

6. Questions of the Archive

Heike Paul: Perhaps you can speak to questions of the archive and to the culture – as well as media-specificity of your sources. What is the most unusual source that has

helped you understand the post-war moment and its consequences for all groups involved, men and women, Americans, Japanese, or Germans, military personnel and civilians? Professor Koikari, having been in conversation with you for a while I have come to admire the breadth of your sources. Professor Carruthers, you have stated in an interview that you somewhat enjoy chasing after “unpublished sources” (and that you have become acquainted with the US through the archives and through visiting them in different parts of the country). In your work you engage with the perhaps cliché notion of a “good war” (referring to the somewhat ironic title of Studs Terkel’s oral history collection) followed by a “good occupation”, the equally ironic title of your own book. Has this irony always been understood?

Susan Carruthers: My book *The Good Occupation* has been translated into Japanese recently, and I noticed, although I don’t read Japanese – hang on, one second [retrieves book] – I have noticed that they’ve given it a question mark. Sorry, I lost my chain of thought in my excitement to show off my Japanese question mark, just in case anyone misses that it was an ironic title!

Well, I adopted a very eclectic approach to gathering sorts of materials, because I was interested both in public narratives around occupation and the subjectivities of occupation soldiers, which make up the bulk of what’s explored in the book. And I was keen to try to find men and women of as many different ranks as possible, different regional backgrounds, different ethnicities, and so on. Also, I read fiction, I looked at movies, and these were sources I used a lot in my work: but, for me, what was different about the research for this book was that I had never really used what might be called “ego-documents” so extensively. So, that was some of the most rich and eye-opening material. These came from letters home that were written by men and women in uniform, unpublished memoirs, and particularly diaries.

So, you asked if we could identify, perhaps, one especially revealing document that we had happened upon. And I guess I’ll just limit myself to two finds that were differently exiting to me. One of them was a diary, which was kept by a nineteen-year-old boy who spent his nineteenth year in Korea, where he was sent in 1946. He was obviously drafted and had no desire to be an occupation soldier in Korea. He wasn’t any sort of elite and hadn’t even had time yet to have gone to college. But, because it was particularly hard to find those sorts of materials relating to the occupation of Korea, it was especially instructive to read what an ordinary poor white southern boy would think he was doing by occupying Korea. And in that era of his young life. And his diary is like the diary of teenagers everywhere: it’s full of angst about his relationship with other boys, with girls, and it gave me a different way of thinking about sexual relationships. He spends a lot of time in his diary agonizing about whether to sleep with Korean girls or not. The women that he and his buddies are sleeping with, and paying money to for their sexual services, are also in and out of their house all the time – they’re doing domestic work for them, in a sense, they are friends, in a particular kind of a way. And he is clearly experiencing some male peer pressure to have sex, and this complicated my understanding of American

men and their sexual relationships with women overseas. That far from being exercises in dominance – assertions of power that happened easily for the men and were uncomplicatedly gratifying – I was really struck by the torment that this young boy experiences about what he is doing there, and particularly about what he is doing having or not having sex with Korean women. So, I found this a very useful diary.

In terms of the biggest sort of pleasure of a completely different kind that I got was at the Yale special collections, the Beinecke Library. So, a novel that I have written about, both in the book and in a separate stand-alone essay, is John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano*, which functioned both in de facto and quite explicit ways as an affective primer for men who are going to be occupying all sorts of places. It was based on two weeks that Hersey spent with American occupation forces in the invasion and occupation of Sicily in 1943. And on his return, he wrote a novel which was intended to encourage Americans to think about occupation as a liberalizing undertaking that they should feel positively about. The novel quickly became a bestselling, multi-dramatized, radio-serialized, movie-ized cultural phenomenon. As Hersey became master of one of the Yale colleges in later life, all of his private papers were there, and I was eager to read the correspondence he received about the novel. And there were sack-fulls of mail that arrived. He was only 24 when he writes this: it was his third book, but first novel. A lot of the letters he got were from young men and women, school children, some occupation soldiers, thanking him for giving them positive resources to think favourably about the thing that they otherwise had much more anxious and edgy apprehensions about. In the midst of all of these eclectic letters, there is a letter from Albert Einstein – and it was like “oh my goodness!” It hadn't been highlighted in the finding aid for this collection. So I was taken aback to be handling an actual letter written by Albert Einstein to John Hersey, thanking him for his tremendous service to humanity, saying that he had stayed up until 5 a.m., reading *A Bell for Adano*, and that everyone should read it, because, yes, America is going to have to occupy places after the war, and the future of humanity lies with men like the fictional character Major Victor Joppolo. And it was just like “wow”, I am handling something by Einstein! But imagine that: You're 24 years old and Einstein writes you this mash note saying he stayed up 'til 5 in the morning because he couldn't put your novel down. So: archive fever, indeed!

Heike Paul: Really amazing! Professor Koikari, you have examined material that no one has ever looked at. For instance, a plethora of objects of popular culture, such as magazines, from Okinawa.

Mire Koikari: The archives have always been a source of inspiration. In addition to historical records, museum artefacts have often sparked my curiosity. In the case of the US occupation of Japan, there is a place called MacArthur Memorial with an archive in Northern Virginia.¹ It is MacArthur's personal repository. The first time I visited the

1 MacArthur Memorial (Norfolk, Virginia): <https://www.macarthurmemorial.org/>.

memorial (in the 1990s), their exhibit on the MacArthur family made me think about a genealogy of empire. As we all know, Douglas was the supreme commander in occupied Japan, but his father was the military governor of the Philippines following the US-Philippines War, and his grandfather fought in the American Indian Wars in the West. This presentation was followed by – and this was the most surprising and interesting part for me back then – a series of displays of numerous gifts General Douglas MacArthur received from people in various countries in Asia. Among them was this large tapestry, a portrait of MacArthur, made up of tiny needlepoints. It represented Asian gratitude to the American General in a gendered manner, telling complicated stories about memory, masculinity, empire, history, etc.

In terms of Okinawa, as I already talked about, I am intrigued by various military materials – planes, blankets, shell casings, coke bottles – that were turned into household objects. You would find many of them in a city museum called “Histreet”, a combination of “history” and “street”. It’s located in a place formerly called Koza and now Okinawa City.² It was the place where a major riot took place by Okinawans against the US military in 1970. Part of the exhibit talks about how some African-American military personnel, who were Black Panther members, sided with Okinawans during this uprising. This and other museums and archives in Okinawa reflect people’s strong commitment to historical preservation where alternative voices, stories, and histories are kept alive.

7. New Scholarship / New Books

Heike Paul: Professor Koikari, you have just published *Gender, Culture, and Disaster in Post-3.11 Japan* (Bloomsbury 2020). How does this book continue the narrative of gendered and racialized scenarios in post-war Japan? Which role, if any, does the US play?

Mire Koikari: At the most superficial level, the connection is that I was doing research for my second book in Okinawa, when I began to notice various discourses and practices concerning post-3/11 recovery, reconstruction, and resilience that were circulating in mainland Japan. At a deeper level, after I had studied the mainland occupation of Japan (which took place in the early cold war years) and the occupation of Okinawa (at the height of the cold war) and associated dynamics of militarization in both, my next question was: what about militarization after the cold war was over? During the disaster in 2011, the “Operation Tomodachi” (“Operation Friendship”) that mobilized the American military and Japanese self-defence forces was a salient factor, and militarized and militarizing dynamics continued after 3.11. Thus, 3.11 and post-3.11 mobilization became a topic of my third book.

Post-3.11 mobilization heavily targeted women. They were told how to refortify their homes, re-strengthen their families, and re-vitalize their communities. Women were ex-

2 Histreet (Koza/Okinawa City, Okinawa): <https://www.city.okinawa.okinawa.jp/about/130/233>.

pected to build “resilience” against earthquakes, tsunamis, and other emergencies and crises such as terrorist attacks. Women, and also children, were mobilized to the project of crisis containment and national securitization in a manner very similar to cold war civil defence in the US.

And just as it was the case with the US occupation of Okinawa, in post-3.11 Japan, Hawai‘i became one of the offshore sites selected to resolve this national crisis. The Tōhoku region, which includes Miyagi, Fukushima, and Iwate, were hit by the earthquake and tsunami, and then by nuclear meltdown. Volunteer groups from the region as well as Hawai‘i – among them Japanese Americans – started coordinating to send children in the three prefectures to Hawai‘i in the name of “healing tourism”. Because of its reputation as a “paradise”, Hawai‘i was considered an ideal place to regenerate these children’s bodies and spirits. The same kind of regenerative discourse was articulated by Americans at the turn of the last century, whereby Hawai‘i became an ideal destination for the white elites to travel to and recuperate.

The significance of Hawai‘i in post-3.11 Japan was not limited to this. In Fukushima, there is a resort called “Spa Resort Hawaiians”, where a group of Japanese hula dancers perform a variety of Polynesian-style dancing. It was established in the 1950s, when the region, once a coal mining field, began to decline as a result of “energy revolution” which initiated a shift to petroleum. To save the community, one of the mining companies began a tourism venture, opening a Hawai‘i-themed resort named Jōban Hawaiian Centre, which was later renamed Spa Resort Hawaiians. Following the 2011 disaster, the resort became a gendered symbol of recovery and reconstruction. The dancers started travelling across Japan, spreading the spirit of “Aloha” and “healing” (or regenerating) the crisis-ridden nation. Hula, part of indigenous culture in Hawai‘i, was appropriated to cope with the 3.11 crisis, which in so many ways has stemmed from Japanese post-war arrangement (which emphasized, among other things, the use of nuclear energy production). Japanese hula dancers came to embody “resilience” of the nation. Hawai‘i, an island community in the middle of the Pacific, has come to play a part in Japanese body politics, and not for the first time.

Heike Paul: Professor Carruthers, your new book (forthcoming with Cambridge UP) examines Dear John letters in US military culture: that is, women’s break-up letters become a key “to unlock larger themes about wartime intimacy and infidelity”. The women at home, they probably do not differentiate between deployments in Japan and Germany. How are these letters offering us a more nuanced understanding of the war and post-war period?

Susan Carruthers: I am laughing because, counterintuitively enough, I’ve had an unseemly amount of fun reading about Dear John letters. But one of the intriguing things about writing a history of Dear John letters is that there are almost no Dear John letters to be read. So that’s perhaps the first thing I would say.

But I became very interested in soldiers and their correspondences through the occupation project. This book about Dear John letters isn’t really a book about post-war occupa-

tion in any explicit or direct way. But it is about romantic relationships in wartime, and how they're sustained – or severed – by writing. And it is also about storytelling. Perhaps my biggest epiphany in this journey of discovery about Dear John letters is that the Dear John letter is far better understood as the male oral tradition than as a female epistolary genre. So, men give us pretty much everything we know about Dear John letters because they tell stories about them. They invent apocryphal versions of Dear John letters; they have elaborated all sort of rituals for excoriating the women who write them, and so on. This book is my sixth, and it is much more explicitly about gender than any of my previous books, although gender is, obviously, a highly operative category in my occupation book as well. It's tragic in some ways and takes both me and readers into some very distressing terrain: the final chapter, particularly, deals with something that the military in recent years has been grappling with, which is about the relationship between romantic intimacy, or the implosion thereof, and suicide. And that's a long-running motif in discourses around Dear John letters: the relationship between romantic break-ups and men's mental health breakdowns, and the sometimes lethal consequences ascribed to Dear John letters.

To make another connection with Mire's project: discourses of resilience turn out, of course, to be very powerful in that regard, as well. As I am sure you all know, in the last decade or so, the US military, like many other institutions around the world, has really seized on "resilience" with a capital R as the inner state that the people should be psychologically striving to achieve; or that the military as an institution should be working to impart in not only men and women in uniform, but also spouses, family members, and so on. So I am also interested in how that discourse of resilience gets configured in terms of disciplining emotional life in wartime. How often women end up being targeted as those who have failed in their emotional obligations in wartime and may even be deemed culpable of in effect killing, from long range, the men with whom they break off relationships during wartime service.

8. Re-Education in the Classroom

Heike Paul: For a graduate seminar on the two occupations, what would be some of the sources that you would assign your students to read? A re-education curriculum may be important precisely because this historical period has been instrumentalized in so many ways. It is currently discussed with renewed poignancy – for instance, in suggesting a new Marshall Plan for the US and Europe. What should be canonical reading among the sources of and about the time of the post-war?

Susan Carruthers: Since I came to the University of Warwick, where I have been since 2017, I have taught a final-year undergraduate special subject module, which is called "Post-War: Aftermaths of World War II", which I adapted from a master's course that I taught at Rutgers. So, I used this opportunity to problematize periodizations, to think through everything that makes "post-war" a very tricky way of periodizing time, because,

of course, what was “post” in some places wasn’t at all “post” in others. At what point could we satisfactorily say, the war was “post”? Arguably, that moment has not yet arrived and will not and cannot ever arrive.

I really enjoy teaching this course because the point of special subject module, as it is understood in a British history curriculum, is to thoroughly integrate primary and secondary sources. So, you invited us to think about what materials we would imaginatively offer to use at graduate students. I have used the same sorts of sources for both the master’s students at Rutgers and my final-year undergrads at Warwick. I tend to liberally expose them to sources of a whole array of different kinds: we watch some films, I show them *Die Todesmühlen*, we talk about re-education, and we think about the project of exposing, in a very visceral way, atrocities perpetrated in Nazi extermination concentration camps and the politics of that venture. We also watch other films: we watch *Drunken Angel*; I invite them to watch *A Foreign Affair*, *Teahouse of the August Moon*, a film that I find particularly difficult to watch, with the “yellow face” drag that Marlon Brando wears as an Okinawan character. And I’m very interested in the connections between *A Bell for Adano*, the John Hersey novel I mentioned before, and *Teahouse of the August Moon*. Vern Snider, who wrote the novel on which the movie was based, himself spent time as an occupation officer in Okinawa, and in interviews he expressly cited Hersey as the most instructive training manual that he received to prime him for this venture. There are very obvious parallels in terms of plot and also the sentimentality of occupation: in which it turns out that everyone’s visions for the post-war good life converge, that no one can tell anymore who is who, which is such a ludicrous lie to imagine that Okinawans and Americans dissolved into one. Marlon Brando’s yellow face attempts to make literal this vision of erased of racial distinction... fading into nothingness.

Those are some of the different sorts of primary sources. I also encourage them to read a lot of contemporary newspaper sources, magazines, photojournalism as well as historiography that cuts across all the occupations. So, we do talk post-war Korea, as well.

Heike Paul: Professor Koikari, in your teaching, how do you refer to the period that we are talking about?

Mire Koikari: I talk about post-war occupations and other instances of colonial occupation in my class on feminism and empire. One thing that I’ve tried to do with my students is to make them see the history of American occupation in Japan and Okinawa in relation to feminism, particularly imperial feminism. For this, Beate Sirota Gordon’s book *The Only Woman in the Room* and her film *The Gift from Beate* can be used to discuss the mid-twentieth century manifestation of imperial feminism. From there, you can go back in history and try to see what was happening in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, a story of Mary French Sheldon, an American female explorer at the turn of the century, can be meaningfully compared to Gordon’s because of their similarities. Following her alleged discovery of a lake in Africa, French Sheldon became well known as an adventurer, explorer, and scientist, being associated with the National Geographic Society and developing a career as a public lecturer. She became

a symbol of New Woman, a feminist icon, whose discourses and practices were deeply embedded in racist and imperialist dynamics of the day.

In turn, the dynamics embodied by Gordon and Sheldon can be compared to those in the twenty-first century. One interesting example is the project, *Beauty without Borders*, whose members' activities are depicted in a documentary film *Beauty Academy of Kabul* by a British film maker, Liz Mermin. The project sent a group of American and British hairstylists to post-Taliban Kabul to teach Afghan women American-style cosmetics in the name of women's liberation. There is a book written by one of the participants in the project, Deborah Rodriguez's *Kabul Beauty School – An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil*. The *Beauty without Borders* repeats some of the tropes Beate Sirota Gordon and Mary French Sheldon articulated, with additional layers of neoliberalism and globalization informing its operations. So looking across these three examples can be a useful exercise.

9. The Future and the Past of Occupation Studies

Heike Paul: In closing and to both of you, and this is in terms of new collaborative projects in the field. How do you see such things as “global occupation studies” or “global re-education studies” continuing to develop in the next decade?

Mire Koikari: In terms of collaborative research, we know about a project at Nottingham University in the UK under the leadership of Jeremy Taylor. That project has looked at sound and space, with specific topics ranging from photography to music to architecture. I don't think he, or anybody else, is doing anything at all about taste, that is, food-related topics. Since food studies seems to be an expanding field, and since I've looked at home economics, nutritional studies, and bodies and biopolitics in the context of occupation, there seems to be a lot of potentially interesting questions and topics there. I also wonder about children and juvenile culture in the occupation contexts. Not so much about schooling/education policies set by the occupiers, but rather more about war-orphans, children involved in a black market, mixed-race children, as well as occupation-era proliferations of American snacks, candies, chocolate, toys, and other things. Children making “friends” with the occupying soldiers could be part of the discussion as well. When I look at post-war essays – written by ordinary people and submitted to the newspapers or included in collections of life narratives – there seems to be quite a bit going on in terms of juvenile culture.

Yet another question is: What are some of the impacts of the occupation on knowledge-making institutions? How did intellectuals who had to contribute to Japan's empire-building go on to collaborate with foreign occupiers, re-establishing their authority and taking part in new empire building in the post-war context?

Susan Carruthers: Where I think more collaborative work might be done is not only to extend the range of what I talked before, with Italy and Korea in the matrix of US

occupation, but also obviously to think about the other powers who were involved in post-war occupation. I went to quite a useful conference in 2018, I think, the result of which was this book, *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany* edited by Camilo Ehrlichman and Christopher Knowles, scholars who also study French and British occupations of post-war Germany. You know, we haven't mentioned the Soviet Union as an occupying power, though the United States construed its cold war projections of power in opposition to Soviet Power. For obvious reasons, since we're all Americanists, our conversation has foregrounded the US as the dominant player in post-war occupation. But thinking about the contributions of not only other European countries, but also the way in which imperial troops were also deployed as occupation forces, might be interesting to think through in terms of the subject positions of soldiers of colour from the United States, whom we mentioned before.

Having taken "time out" from occupation to write my Dear John book, I am planning to go back to post-war occupation for my next project, which will be about clothing – "refashioning the post-war world". So I was particularly intrigued to hear about that parachute being repurposed into the bridal gown. I agree that food is a really rich area that scholars are increasingly exploring, but we also need to consider clothing as an important space in which ideas about identity – about both militarization and the afterlives of military apparel – are being refashioned. What are the different meanings that people bring to clothing, the way that clothing itself is an artery of power, how the United States disposed of military surplus, using clothing as a disciplinary tool in some ways? So, I would be happy to engage in collaborative work on these sorts of questions.

Heike Paul: Thank you, both, for this wonderful conversation!