

Remembering Sugihara, Re-framing Japan in Europe: Holocaust Era Altruism and the Politics of Cultural Memory

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This paper is a comparison of two museums dedicated to the Japanese diplomat to Lithuania during World War II, Sugihara Chiune. Credited with having written over 6,000 visas to save the lives of Jews fleeing German occupied Poland into Lithuania, Sugihara is regarded in Europe, in Japan, and within the Jewish community as a whole as an altruistic person.

This study is not an inquiry into the merits of Sugihara's action, but rather a study of how the process of memorializing, narrativizing and celebrating the life of Sugihara in two vastly different museums is part of a larger project of selective cultural memory on the part of various Japanese organizations and institutions. This paper situates the themes of altruism and heroism in the larger process of cultural memory, to see how such themes operate to advance other projects of collective memory. The case of Sugihara is fascinating precisely because the vastly differing processes of cultural memory of the Holocaust—in Lithuania, in Japan, and in a wider post-World War II, post Holocaust Jewish Diaspora each have different ways of constructing, disseminating and consuming narratives of altruism. This paper is based on fieldwork in Kaunas and Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2003, 2004 and again in 2005 and in Japan in 2005.

In August of 1940, in the city of Kaunas, the Japanese consulate to Lithuania, Sugihara Chiune, was approached by a Dutch Jewish yeshiva student by the name of Nathan Gutwirth. Gutwirth's Dutch passport was stamped with the sentence "No visa to Curacao is required." Curacao, in the Dutch Caribbean, indeed did not require a visa for entry, and the Dutch consul in Riga, Latvia, L.P.J. Dekker, had instructed, at Gutwirth's request, that any Jew requesting such a stamp in their visa be given it. Gutwirth had therefore received it. The problem lay in the Soviet Union with whom Holland had no relations. To cross the USSR, one needed a transit visa. Gutwirth asked Sugihara for a transit visa, and he received one. A few days later, Sugihara was met by a few more such requests, which he granted. Finally, one morning, he awoke to find the street in

front of his house, which doubled as the consulate, crowded with Jewish refugees awaiting the chance to request such transit visas. Sugihara felt he could not act alone, and cabled the Japanese Foreign Minister for permission to continue. The answer was quick and to the point: No transit visa could be issued to a person not holding an actual entry visa to the country.

As the crowd outside the consulate in Kaunas grew, Sugihara telegraphed again requesting permission. The answer was to the point: "Concerning transit visa requested previously stop advise absolutely not to be issued any traveler not holding firm end visa with guaranteed departure ex Japan stop no exceptions stop no further inquiries expected stop. (signed) K. Tanaka Foreign Ministry Tokyo." A third request from Sugihara went unanswered.¹ Over the next few days, Sugihara made the decision to write the visas anyway, against the expressed refusal of his government's Foreign Minister to allow him to do so. It appears that Sugihara then proceeded to craft a confusing series of incomplete communications with the Japanese government via telegram, ostensibly to help any transit visa holders who might get to Japan and be turned away, hoping perhaps that it would appear he had never received the cable indicating he was denied permission to grant them. His communications he perhaps hoped would make it appear that further documentation was on its way or had been lost.²

During that month of August in 1940, Sugihara wrote over a thousand visas, and since whole families traveled on one passport, his actions, which he continued literally from the train as he was forcibly removed by the Japanese government from Lithuania to Berlin in September, saved over six thousand people. Upon his return to Japan in 1945, he was forcibly retired from the Foreign Service and lived the rest of his life in relatively humble circumstances, running a trading company with Eastern Block countries until he visited Israel in 1969. In 1985, one year before his death, he was awarded the prize of "Righteous Among Nations" by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Archive in Israel.

Today, the descendants of "Sugihara survivors" as they are called, number over 100,000. Like a few other diplomats during World War II, and a number of private people throughout Europe, he faced a decision to act humanely, he did what he considered to be the right thing, and his memory is now honored for those actions. Sugihara and people like him who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, "rescuers" as they are collectively called, are often studied and scrutinized to determine what if

¹ Marvin Tokayer and Mary Schwartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II*, New York and London: Paddington Press, 1983, 42.

² This explanation of the extant and confusing communications from Sugihara sent to Japan has been suggested by Hillel Levine in his probing study and quest for Sugihara entitled *In Search of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust*, New York: The Free Press, 1996.

anything they may have had in common with one another at the level of their moral make-up. What makes altruistic people do what they do?

In studies of Sugihara, the events just described often vary in details. It was not Nathan Gutwirth but a lawyer named Leon Ilutovicz who first approached Sugihara. I have heard many competing narratives suggesting different beginnings to the actions Sugihara took in August of 1940. What remains constant in all narratives, and what is clearly irrefutable is this: Sugihara faced a growing throng of people requesting transit visas from him. He attempted to get permission from his government to write them and was refused permission. He then chose to act alone and his actions saved the lives of thousands of people.

In this paper, I am less concerned with what Sugihara actually did or why he did it, though I am always deeply moved by the story of his decision to disobey the Japanese government to save innocent people. Let me be very clear: This paper is not a critique of Sugihara. I have nothing but respect and gratitude for this person. Rather, I am interested in the ways that the narrative of his altruism is produced, consumed and even played with in constructing a shared cultural memory in Japan, and to a lesser extent Lithuania concerning the fate of those Jews who came to Sugihara seeking assistance, and, as if hyper-present by their absence from the narrative in Japan, the fate of the overwhelming number of Jews who never met Sugihara or made it out of wartime Europe alive.

This paper then is an exploration of the major generators of this Sugihara narrative: two museums dedicated to Sugihara: one situated on the site of the actual consulate where he wrote the visas in Kaunas, Lithuania, and another situated on a mountainside overlooking his hometown in Yaotsu Japan. This discussion is based on first hand field research at both sites, in Kaunas in August of 2003, March and October of 2004, and in Japan in August of 2005. Both museums are about Sugihara, but because each exists in vastly differing larger projects of cultural memory in their respective countries, I argue that the similarities almost stop there in terms of how the museum designs try to relay the events of Sugihara's actions to the museum goer, how they situate Sugihara in the history of the destruction of European Jewry and the claims they make on larger, more complex processes of cultural memory. This paper is an inquiry into these museums as productions and producers of cultural memory.

Few reasonable people working in reconciliation work in Eastern Europe would expect contemporary generations to step forward and apologize on behalf of their parents or grandparents' generation. The issue is more complex, and goes to the heart of how cultural memory works to create amnesia. How the contemporary generation chooses to participate in the collective cultural memory of these events is a contentious issue. There is a legitimate demand on the part of the Holocaust victims who survived and the countless number who did not that at the very least, the truth of events be faced

squarely.³ Remembering, or not, becomes in the eyes of those seeking redress through cultural memory an act of either reparation or continued injury. So, a great deal is at stake in how one responds to a museum, and the ways that a museum's highly crafted narrative and the various rhetorical strategies therein are incorporated into how one participates in a larger cultural memory of the past. Like a Lithuanian undergraduate from Klaipėda said to me in the spring of 2004, with a wall of tears streaming down her face, "I just want to know what really happened, so I can have a normal country." This need for effective historical memory is necessary in Japan no less than in Lithuania, and not just about such places and events as the Yasukuni shrine or the Nanjing Massacre (issues addressed in other papers in this volume of the journal), but also about the Holocaust and just what happened to Sugihara Chiune after he returned to Japan.

I would like to suggest that a critique of the rhetoric of altruism embodied in the foregrounding of Sugihara's life becomes essential because the very act of "remembering" Sugihara (something of a recent Sugihara boom in the past decade since the opening up of the Baltic States) can be understood on one level to be an attempt to avoid an honest confrontation with the past. I would like to echo the sentiments of the cultural critic Lawrence Langer who notes that such discussions turn what on one level should be a "discourse of ruin" into a project that is a "discourse of consolation."⁴ Who are we consoling and about what? The answer to this question depends in great part on what context the narrative of altruism is being produced and by whom it is being consumed. What was Japan doing in Europe in World War II? Why rescuing Jews, of course. Sugihara becomes, if you will, to use Michel Foucault's phrase, a national counter memory to knowledge of atrocity and alliance with National Socialism any honest remembering of Japan's past would demand.

I proceed as follows: First, I discuss the museum in Lithuania. Then, I explore the theme park nature of the Japanese Sugihara Mountain, before turning to some reflections on this consumption of altruism.

The museum in Kaunas, Lithuania

In a currently affluent neighborhood in the city of Kaunas stands the house which was the consulate of Japan during the 1930's. The building became a private residence during the Soviet era. Following independence, a plan was developed by the small remaining Jewish community in Lithuania, the Sugihara family and other stakeholders to convert the building, which had undergone virtually no renovations, into a museum

³ Although comprehensive studies of the destruction of European Jewry exist in numerous languages, an excellent study of the state of the Lithuanian Jewish dialogues following the Holocaust (including discussion of the pre-war Jewish-Lithuanian relations and the destruction of Lithuania's Jews) is Alfonsas Eidintas' *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003).

⁴ Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 157-78.

and Japanese cultural center. In 2000, it opened as a small museum known as Sugihara House. With a limited budget from the Japan Foundation, a language lab and lecture space for presenting lectures on Japanese topics installed on the second floor while the first floor was turned into a museum showing Sugihara's actions and the fate of Lithuania's Jews during the Holocaust. I have visited this museum on several occasions during my visits to Lithuania over the past four years.

The museum does not go to any lengths to craft an experience for the visitor. In the room where Sugihara wrote the visas, his original desk, some photographs, a non-war time flag of Japan and his visa stamp are on display. In an adjacent room, there is an explanation of the events that unfolded there, and photographs of Sugihara survivors, as well as a limited archive on Holocaust research in the back room. A map on the wall when I last visited allows visitors to indicate where they are from. While many countries are represented, the vast majority of visitors are Japanese tourists and business people. Visiting Sugihara House while in Eastern Europe is written up in all Japanese tour guides of Eastern Europe I have seen as a "must see."

In the front of the museum, a gate has been created, and over it, the phrase considered now to be the "logo" brand name of the Sugihara narrative is written "Inochi no visa." Visas for life. There is no record of Sugihara using the term. In front of the gate, created for the museum opening, are cherry trees from Japan, planted by the widow of Sugihara with the assistance of the noted Lithuanian artist and Vice Rector of the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts Arūnas Gelūnas.

In the rear of the museum, there are two apple trees, both producing transparent apples, a common variety in Lithuania. When I first visited the center in August of 2003, I was served some of these apples by the center's director, Simonas Dovidavičius, who told me the trees may have been planted by Sugihara. He later said he doubted this, as they would not still be bearing fruit.

One feature of the Sugihara narrative that features prominently in all versions of the story is Sugihara looking out the window and suddenly seeing a throng of people. In fact, though, events did not originally transpire that way, and he was approached first by a single person and then by a few people, the "window" had also become an important part of the hyper-real set presented in Sugihara narratives. In the actual consular building, it is clear the window would have been upstairs, and so one does not see it while downstairs.

The museum is straightforward, the museum director is very knowledgeable about the details of the evacuation and murder of the Lithuanian Jewish population, and in fact has precise details about what were called *Kinderaktion*: special raids to take children out of the ghettos in Kaunas and Vilnius for execution in the forests or transport to death centers. A visitor to the small museum is likely to be accompanied throughout the museum by the director, who will narrate the meaning of the visit. He knows dates of evacuations and mass killings, and can recite this history with a quiet

and confident accuracy. A Lithuanian Jew, whose family was all but wiped out during the war, was raised in Lithuania and is all too aware of the complex and painful issues of Lithuanians coming to terms with Lithuanian complicity and participation in the murder of its Jewish population. He remarked wryly to me on one of my visits, “Everyone wants to talk about rescuing Jews, but nobody wants to admit there was anything to rescue them from.” In fact, a recent exhibition in 2004 at the Vilnius Jewish center consisted of the following exhibits: an exhibit featuring American soldiers of Lithuanian descent who fought in WWII against the Nazis, a room dedicated to Lithuanians who rescued Jews (and there were indeed many, common, decent Lithuanians who risked their lives to do this and they should be celebrated) and a room dedicated to Yasha Haifetz, born and raised in Vilnius. Perhaps the altered landscape of the city of Vilnius, where in 1939 almost 45% of the population was Jewish, says enough about what happened.

The events of the summer of 1941 in Lithuania are certainly not unrecorded. Nor are the larger events of the deportation of Europe’s Jews to death camps. In a visit to Sugihara House, the museum director does not try and conceal or downplay what Sugihara was rescuing people from. On the contrary, he wants Sugihara’s actions properly situated in events in which the Sugihara survivors were the miniscule number of lucky ones amidst an overwhelming loss of human decency and human life. The presence of this director with a significant personal investment in the museum visitors having a larger perspective from which to understand Sugihara’s actions is impressive, and in fact is a feature of a number of other museums of atrocities (both National Socialist and Soviet) that I have visited in Lithuania.⁵

While on every occasion I have visited the museum I have encountered Japanese tourists and business people, I am always deeply moved to be in this place. The museum is simple, unpretentious, and like many other such Jewish sites in Lithuania, strapped for cash to prepare elaborate museum schemes. Perhaps its simplicity is due to the finances. Or perhaps it is due to the fact that an elaborate, Disney-like theme park on a Holocaust event would just be in bad taste in a country in which such a past is evident on every street and in many villages, haunted by the dramatic change in the unique culture of this country under Nazi and Soviet rule.

⁵ For example, the guide at the site of the KGB torture and detention center on Gedimino Avenue in Vilnius in the basement of what is now a State Genocide Archive, but what until the end of the Soviet era was the KGB headquarters, was the son of a man who had suffered there. His father had served as guide for a number of years after the end of the Soviet era. After his father was too old to continue as the guide to the museum, his son took over the task, because he feels strongly that telling this story and making sure it is always connected to an actual person is an important function of such museums. I noticed at other museums in Lithuania a tendency for guides to play an active role and also to be directly connected to what they are narrating through their own personal histories.

The only things for sale in the museum are a few postcards and a Sugihara pin, in the shape of the chrysanthemum seal. The entrance fee in 2003 was five litas, about one dollar US at the time.

After visiting this museum in Kaunas several times, I became curious to see how Sugihara's life and actions were being presented in Japan. I learned of a new Sugihara museum, and set out to visit it in August of 2005.

Jindô no Oka: The Hill of Humanity in Yaotsu, Gifu-ken, Japan

The Japanese museum theme park complex was completed in the year 2000 and is located in the hometown and birthplace of Sugihara, Yaotsu, in Gifu prefecture. Built with a combination of Ministry of Culture money, particularly a series of grants designed to promote regional tourism and improved public restroom facilities at tourist sites, prefectural government matching funds, grants from the Israeli Yad Vashem Center and private donations, the entire museum comprises a full side of a mountain overlooking the town of Yaotsu. One arrives in Yaotsu and ascends the mountain either by car or taxi (or if on a tour, by bus) encountering the many aspects of this museum mountain dedicated to Sugihara, and a celebration of altruism. The entire hill is called "Jindô no Oka," Hill of Humanity. I will take you up the mountain as I visited it, arriving at the base by taxi, and ascending the mountain on foot, following the proscribed course of ascent from the parking lot to the memorial hall at the top of the mountain.

The first thing the visitor encounters is an open-air performance space, which boasts a parking lot large enough to handle buses. Along the edges of the performance space, we see a theme that will be repeated throughout the mountain, the three bells, symbolizing three virtues Sugihara is said here to embody: love, courage and heart. The bells are at a level where children can ring them and play with them. Behind the performance space, again with a great view of the town of Yaotsu, there is a playground for kids. My thirteen-year-old son played with a young Japanese boy from nearby whose grandmother took him there to play. It is a pretty terrific playground, to tell the truth, with a superb view.

Across the street from the performance space, one finds the truly remarkable public toilets, with immaculate facilities in both Japanese and western style. Inclusion of excellent public facilities was a significant component of grant competition for this museum's construction. Alongside the toilets, one can walk out onto a hill overlooking Yaotsu, where three large bells stand, each resonating down through the town with the virtues of love, courage and heart. The bells themselves are shaped to resemble the stacks of visas Sugihara wrote for the Jewish refugees.

As one walks up the hill, there is an exercise station course, where you can stop and do various forms of exercise on stationary equipment (upper body workout, abdominal

workout, stretching exercises, etc.), underscoring the multi-use design of the mountain: memorial park, performance space, playground, restroom facilities, and now outdoor gymnasium workout course.

Scattered up the hill, as one treks up doing exercises along the way, are two statues of unimpeachable altruistic people: Albert Schweitzer and Florence Nightingale. Absent from the statues, however, is any description of what they actually did or when they did the work which made them famous. It is as if, like Sugihara, they have an iconic status on this mountain as signs of altruism, a-historical and yet easily recognizable to anyone who comes. Interestingly, while on this research trip, I asked several educated Japanese I know about these two people. Everyone knew who they were, yet none could place where they did their famous humanitarian work or when they did it. They were certainly virtuous people, though, but what they did is secondary to their status on the mountain, a hill of humanity.

The situating of Sugihara alongside Schweitzer and Nightingale serves to place him in an international context, rather than a Japanese one. While I do not argue with placing him among such company (though perhaps a focus on altruism during the war, perhaps even in Nanjing or Singapore, would have been more appropriate), I am struck by how this universalizing of Sugihara trivializes and even mutes the great irony and tragedy of Japanese government funds paying for such a museum: It was a previous incarnation of the Japanese government that not only denied him the permission to act, but later, after his return to Japan, punished him for ignoring this denial and doing what has earned him our respect as a humanitarian. This trinity of Schweitzer, Nightingale (two medically trained people) and Sugihara, a diplomat, seems almost random and even incoherent and sloppily conceived.

A little further up the hill, the mountain museum reveals another aspect of the multi-use space: picnic space and small rest area. Behind this space, we find a small shrine dedicated to the mountain deity who would have been displaced and upset by the building of the elaborate museum. This is not at all uncommon in a construction project of this scope.

At the top of the hill, we arrive at the memorial to Sugihara and the museum itself. I will treat each separately. The outdoor memorial is approached through a long walkway. As one enters, to the left is a memorial bust of Sugihara, as well as a monument in his honor placed there by his alma mater, Waseda University. This monument is a near replica of the Waseda Memorial situated in Vilnius near the art museum and surrounded by cherry trees planted in 2001. The walkway eventually leads to a large pit, circumscribed by circles in the ground. While circles have become an almost ubiquitous marker of war memorials, I am haunted by the similarity between this configuration and the circles of granite used to demarcate the execution and cremation sites at Paneriai in Lithuania. The reflecting pond contains a large set of chimes, which play three songs Sugihara is said to have liked.

Across the street, one approaches the *kinenkan*, memorial hall. The entrance references what are to be two motifs of this hill: the universalizing of Sugihara with a small globe of the earth turning in a stand, and the Kaunas museum, with an apple tree as the icon for this museum. Furthermore, the façade references in a stylized way an architectural feature of rural Lithuanian wooden synagogues and domestic architecture, few examples of which remain.

As I entered the museum, and paid my fee of ¥500 for an adult, accompanied by my son Sam, age thirteen and just weeks beyond his bar mitzvah ordeal, and my graduate student Masaki Matsubara, I was curious about how much one would learn about the period of history in which Sugihara operated, or the extent to which the Holocaust would be discussed in any meaningful way. Aware that the major consumers of this museum are school children on their *shugaku ryôko*, school sponsored field trips, it was interesting to see the museum through Sam's eyes. We were given a pamphlet, and a passport. We became, or so I thought, Jews, set up to experience the museum as seekers of visas. The passport makes us all Jews, and yet the pamphlet encourages us to imagine ourselves in Sugihara's shoes. The pamphlet says on the front, in the English version they gave Sam, "1940, the time to make a decision draws near for Sugihara. Jews fleeing the advance of the Nazis are gathering at the gates of the Japanese consulate. What should be done?" Inside, it underscores the intention to create an identification of self with Sugihara, by asking, "If it were you, what would you feel? If it were you, what would you do?" The dual nature of one's experience in the museum, at once the refugee with a passport and a decider, is confusing. In short, one gets to save oneself! To the left, one sees glass panels describing in the most brief of terms the events of Sugihara's life, with fleeting, non-upsetting references to the Holocaust. The panels diminish the tragedy of the fate of the six million Jews who perished by identifying a photograph of the selection platform at Auschwitz-Birkenau, certainly one of the most famous images of the Holocaust, as "Jews being sent to work camps." One small photograph shows a pile of bodies, and indicates that many Jews were also killed. The laxity with which the panel describing Hitler and the Nazi party is written is bested in vacuity only by a similar panel at the Yushûkan at Yasukuni shrine. It becomes clear that one is not here to learn about the Holocaust, but to participate in the decision of Sugihara, as if the two—the Holocaust and his decision—can be separated. On the floor, one can trace the footsteps of the Jews who fled Europe via Sugihara's "inochi no visa." The only set of footsteps are those that lead to life. In other words, we experience a Holocaust in which everybody gets out alive. In this museum, there is no Simonas Dovidavičius reminding us of kinderaktions, the liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto and the slaughter in the forests at Paneriai or what happened at Ninth Fort in Kaunas. The actual fate of Europe's Jews during the war seems almost irrelevant here.

After this room of panels, we enter a video room where Sugihara's life and decision are portrayed. The video, as well as the pamphlet go to great lengths to emphasize

Sugihara's nationalism and to explain that Sugihara did what he did because he thought it would be good for Japan.

Next, through a long corridor displaying Sugihara's humanitarian awards, we move into what is called "the decision room." Here, the museum attendee becomes both refugee and Sugihara, granting oneself, or the disembodied people on the video screen a visa. As one grants the visa, and replaces the stamp, the screen changes to the word "arigato," or "Thank you." The room is designed in such a way that a person doing this will likely be photographed, and the Sugihara photo is properly placed so that when one views one's *kinen shashin*, memorial photo, one will see the suggested resonance. Sugihara sits behind you as you grant the visa for life. The room features a replica of the Kaunas desk and objects. A window, carefully draped with what would be western style draperies, figures prominently in the room, though one cannot see out of it.

The drawers of the desk in this Japanese replica room are filled with sheets of paper on which visitors in the early twenty first century to this Japanese museum have stamped the visa mark and written a note to Sugihara. Most are addressed directly to Sugihara, praising him for his virtue and vowing to be a person of courage like him. The practice is not unlike that of writing shrine placards to the *kami* in Shinto shrines. One's private sentiments become public, and others read what has been written, enforcing a kind of shared experience of what is a private sentiment. Museumgoers from past and present form a kind of virtual community through these messages. In fact, this visa stamp becomes another logo for the museum, just as shrine placards have a logo of the shrine's founding myth (*engi*) on them.

On the wall, one can put on headphones and hear Sugihara's voice describing what he did. We all found this part of the museum to be very moving, hearing Sugihara's voice.

Upstairs in the Japanese museum, there is a relaxation corner and an area for changing exhibits, as well as windows from which one can see breathtaking views of the Yaotsu mountains and town. There is also a section dedicated to Sugihara survivors and their families. Furthermore, the museum becomes a catch-all for what can only be described as Sugihara kitsch: a Sugihara wine bottle from Israel, a Sugihara shofar (ram's horn) from the Mir Yeshiva students in NY, awarded to the Japanese consulate the United States, a wreath of *Senba zuru*, origami peace cranes, made of sheets of paper stamped with the Sugihara visas, one for each survivor), etc. In the computer corner, one can do some basic research on some bookmarked web pages, and the gift shop sells a Sugihara *manga* (comic book) and a few basic research books, as well as a keychain. The manga, geared at junior high school students, is very informative actually.

What do I make of this museum, mountainside theme park? It is elaborate and beautifully done. I was moved on many occasions by small details and exhibits, and all in all have a warm and pleasant memory of a lovely August day spent on this

mountainside with my son and graduate student. I am left, however, with an uneasy feeling, and have been at odds with myself to explain this haunting sense that something is not quite right. Here, I would like to turn to two angles for reflection.

Melanie Klein's idea of "manic reparations"

One theoretical framework which I have found thought provoking in locating a certain grandiosity and busy-ness of the Japanese museum is Melanie Klein's category of "manic reparation."⁶ There are real problems with using psychoanalytic theory to discuss cultural collectivities, since it assigns the agency of an active unconscious to an entire collectivity, but I have nevertheless found this useful. Allow me to play with this idea in the context of museum as crafted cultural memory.

According to Klein, in an event where there has been a splitting and demonizing of the other (the slaughter of the Jews in Lithuania being one such example or Sugihara being dismissed from his post in post-war Japan because he had disobeyed his government being another), and some event which ruptures the relationship has taken place, there emerges on the part of the "splitter" a need to repair the object so no sense of loss or guilt must be experienced. In Klein's theory, out of fear of guilty feelings and perhaps even a fear of retaliation, reparation is sought. In the end, however, Klein differentiates between genuine reparations, which include a renewed appreciation and even affection for the repaired "object," and "manic reparation" in which the pseudo-actions of reparation include no genuine sense of contrition and no emerging feelings of appreciation for the "object" as a genuine person beyond. The manic quality of this false reparation is the repetition of hollow, manic or empty gestures, devoid of genuine recognition of one's culpability in the rupture, or even recognition of the emotive level of the events that happened.

I found that the Japanese museum seemed literally stock-filled with things to do and see and play with and touch and participate in, and yet there was little appreciation for the very dangerous situation Sugihara was in, or what he was actually rescuing Jews from. In fact, I noted that a Holocaust denier, or doubter at the least, would not be challenged in the least by the historical displays in this museum. The museum is designed to allow Japanese people to retell the Sugihara story for themselves, except this time, Japanese-ness is not complicit in having forced Sugihara to work alone, or cut short his work with evacuation to Berlin, or live out his post-war life in poverty and obscurity. This time, Japan by association is rescuing Jews. Sugihara is typical, rather than the rare person he was. He becomes everyone.

Who is seeking reparations with Sugihara and why, I found myself wondering.

⁶ This is a recurrent theme in Klein's work, but my discussions of it are drawn from her work, co-authored with Joan Riviere entitled *Love, Hate and Reparation*, with a preface by John Rickman (New York: The Norton Library, 1964).

Tim Cole's work *Selling the Holocaust*⁷

Another angle from which to reflect on this recent fascination with Sugihara is to see it within the larger cultural dynamic, common to both the US and Japan, to retell for ourselves a Holocaust we can live with, a Holocaust in which all the Jews we care about survive, and the main people we are asked to identify with are rescuers. Such a Holocaust is not only good business, but allows us, in the process of crafting a shared cultural memory about what the Holocaust means to US (be we Americans or Japanese) to basically tell a story about ourselves, to subordinate historical facts and what really happened to what we want and need to reaffirm about ourselves.

On the surface, this seems harmless enough, even laudatory. Would that every German, Japanese, Lithuanian, Pole, Latvian, Estonian, etc. had been a Sugihara. May we all be so brave. But in the end, by failing to allow Sugihara to be Sugihara, to bear witness to the larger context of his times, we run the risk not only of trivializing the Holocaust and packaging it so it can be easily consumed, but actually diminishing our appreciation for Sugihara's real altruism and bravery. As Tim Cole, in his *Book Selling the Holocaust* remarked, concerning the new museum nature of Auschwitz as a UNESCO site "Representing the complexities of the past in a (ghoulish) theme park has consequences. The "tourist Auschwitz" threatens to trivialize the past, domesticate the past, and ultimately jettison the past altogether."⁸

The Japanese Jindô no Oka is pleasant enough—domesticating the Holocaust so it becomes not a reality of human depravity but merely a celebration of disembodied altruism, which we know was rare.

I feel we all share an obligation to the young woman from Klaipėda, perhaps to the boy on the playground in Yaotsu, to ourselves, to be able to tell the truth about the past without needing to sanitize it, cheer it up. Perhaps then we can all live in normal countries. We all deserve nothing less.

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⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

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