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Thesis Prospectus: "Faulkner's Influence: The Effect of a Southern Farmer on Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations"

In the years following the climactic end of World War II, Douglas MacArthur spearheaded an attempt to rebuild a battered Japan so that it could rejoin the community of industrialized nations, and also so it would better suit the American needs as the Cold War began to emerge. Washington, however, was loosely tied to the project as it was heavily involved in the developments in Europe. Even MacArthur himself, the face of Japan's postwar restoration, saw no more of Japan than the commute from his home at the Embassy to his work and back, and by choice rarely interacted with Japanese officials<sup>1</sup>. Though this appearance of disinterest on the part of the U.S. was addressed during the time of the Occupation by a re-centering of priorities as the Cold War progressed in Asia, it presented a fairly strong impression of Americans as at once demanding and distant, a position that was shared amongst a number of nations following the war.

In order to rectify such a negative reputation, the State Department created the "exchange of persons program" in 1952. Its purpose was to invite in noted foreign guests to experience America first hand, as well as to send well-known

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<sup>1</sup> Schaller, Michael. *The American Occupation of Japan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print. Pg 22-23.

American citizens abroad in the hopes of producing a more humanized idea of America<sup>2</sup>. This goal of humanizing America was essentially important given the strongholds in Europe and in East Asia that the U.S. was attempting to create in order to form a blockade against the spread of communism. My thesis centers on this exchange of persons program and its decision to reach out to Japan through the famous, award winning author William Faulkner, and the effects that such a decision had on postwar U.S.-Japan relations. The central argument is that Faulkner had a greater impact in Japan for reasons that were unexpected, such as his personality, his sympathy for the Japanese position, and his cultural upbringing, than for the reasons for which he was chosen, such as his fame and his award-winning works of literature. I have read extensively on Faulkner's biographical information and on the history of the State Department, and currently I am building a base of knowledge regarding the Cold War in East Asia to form a context in which to place Faulkner's government-sponsored trip. I plan to utilize various forms of media, including textual government documents, historical documentation, audio files of interviews conducted with Mr. Faulkner in Japan, transcriptions of many interviews, and video of Mr. Faulkner's time in Japan. In addition, I intend to use both English and Japanese sources to supplement the amount of material available to me.

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<sup>2</sup> N.P. *History*. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2010. Web. 7 Sept. 2011. [<http://exchanges.state.gov/ivlp/history.html/>]

I will approach this topic from several angles. First, I will look into the history of the State Department and its United States Information Service program. I will research the origins of the program and the relation of the State Department to the idea of spreading American culture in a positive light, specifically in Japan. I intend to utilize information from several books, including Alvin Snyder's *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War*, Robert Elder's *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy*, and Nicholas J. Cull's *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*. I will also look at several online sources, such as "USIA: an overview" and "USIA Factsheet" to achieve a more holistic perspective on the US Information Agency.

I will examine the Cold War in East Asia in order to gain a broad idea of the context in which Faulkner made his trip to Japan. Along with the resources noted above, I will be utilizing Kenneth Osgood's *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, and Hasegawa's *Cold War in East Asia* to gain a better understanding of the groups at play and the intentions behind decisions at that time. This is an important aspect to the research as a whole because it provides an idea of the state in which the U.S. sent Faulkner abroad and the state in which Japan received him, which could help explain reactions to the trip on both sides.

For this same reason, I will also be looking at the broad idea of U.S.-Japan relations during the years preceding Faulkner's trip, the time of his stay in Japan, and the years immediately following the trip. A large part of this angle of research is aided by Michael Schaller's *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, as well as V.P. Dutt's compilation of documents on Asian affairs titled *East Asia 1947-1950*.

Regarding the years preceding Faulkner's trip, the U.S. Occupation of Japan was the major factor influencing U.S.-Japan relations and is thus extremely valuable as contextualizing information for this research. I will try to find numbers regarding the amount of Faulkner's work that had been translated and circulated in Japan by the time of his arrival, and together with the numbers of other Western authors' publications in Japan attempt to understand the degree to which the Japanese people were acquainted with Western authors and what kind of esteem they held them in. It would also be interesting to look into the amount of effort the Occupation put into expanding the Japanese people's understanding of English and thus their understanding of Western works of literature and the ideals therein.

Regarding the more long-reaching effects of Faulkner's trip to Japan, I plan to look into local news articles involving foreign interest in his house and grounds here in Oxford. I was informed of a group from Japan that is known for bringing students to see Faulkner's house, which is an extraordinary trip to make just to

come to such a small town. I believe this and similar stories may speak to Faulkner's influence not only at the time but decades later as well.

I have many questions in regard to this project. In what other ways did the Occupation attempt to make America accessible? How did these attempts, including Faulkner's attending the Nagano Seminar, speak to the position of the U.S. on promoting Western culture, specifically making American culture more widely accepted and thus making America itself more widely accepted? Why should such concerns arise; why would the U.S. attempt to make itself more accessible? Though I cannot fully answer all of these questions, I will attempt to investigate them all in order to better understand and explain my research as a whole.

Overall, my goal at this point is to find enough historical information to really ground my research in the larger picture of what was happening in the 1950s and in so doing give the research a more contextual meaning and importance. Understanding the position that the Japan and the U.S. had in relation to one another during the Occupation and the Cold War affords not only a better understanding of the events that took place but also a better understanding of the motives behind them and the varying expectations each side held.

Specifically looking at the Nagano Seminar, which was the annual writers conference held in Nagano, Japan, and even more specifically William Faulkner's participation in it, I hope to find what it was that convinced the reclusive self-described farmer to travel across the world to do what he did not enjoy: talk to the

press. I also want to better understand the Japanese perception of Faulkner prior to, during, and following his brief stay in Japan. Finally, I want to look at the ways in which the trip was expected to succeed from the Japanese perspective, how it was expected to succeed in the American perspective, and how Faulkner himself expected it to succeed, compared with the manner in which it actually succeeded.

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