POST 3-11 JAPANESE POLITICAL CARTOONING WITH SATIRICAL BITE:

Non-newspaper Cartoons and Their Potential

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Abstract

Japanese political cartooning is widely considered to be weak: lacking in number and scope, and importantly, lacking in the aggression necessary to produce biting satire. A major reason for this low assessment is that the most publicly visible forum for political cartoons, the national daily newspapers, have, particularly since the 1980s, reduced the number and prominence of the cartoons they carry, and settled into using primarily mild, non-offensive cartoons. Yet there are political cartoons to be found elsewhere in Japan, in smaller circulation magazines and on the Internet. The aim of this paper is to examine these less viewed political cartoons as an alternative source of critical cartoon commentary. To do this a comparison is made of how these “alternative cartoons” and political cartoons in the major dailies responded to a single news event of national significance—Japan’s triple disaster of March 11, 2011 and problems arising in its wake—over a four-month period. The paper begins with a brief sketch of the state of Japanese newspaper political cartooning, and then a discussion of the function of political cartoons in general. This background serves to contextualize and theoretically ground the comparison between newspaper and alternative cartoons that follows. The paper finds that political cartoons outside of newspapers are much more aggressive in their satirical comments, employ a more diverse range of styles, and offer criticism on a broader range of problems. The paper concludes that for these reasons, they are potentially more effective than newspaper cartoons at contributing to public debate, framing, and drawing attention to important issues.

Keywords

3.11, alternative media, disaster, earthquake, Internet, Japan, magazines, mainstream media, newspaper, nuclear accident, political cartoons, satire, tsunami

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INTRODUCTION

The most visible political cartoons in Japan appear in the traditional home of editorial cartooning, the daily newspapers. Despite the wide distribution of these newspapers, their political cartoons offer commentary on a narrow range of issues and contain very little satiric bite. As a result, they mostly fail to provoke wide public interest in important issues. Since the end of the 1970s, commentators and practitioners alike have lamented the state of this art form in Japan, which they perceive to have peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. However, because cartoons in the major dailies are the face of political cartooning in Japan, there is a tendency for these critics to have only newspaper political cartoons in mind when damning Japanese cartooning as a whole.¹ In fact, these are not representative of all Japanese cartoons. A broader variety of political cartoons can be found in Japan if one looks beyond the newspapers to smaller circulation magazines and to newer forms of publishing made possible by the Internet—news commentary websites, individual cartoonist blogs, and image sharing sites. These less prominent alternatives offer commentary on current news in the same single panel frame tradition of newspaper editorial cartoons, yet appear less restricted in theme and less restrained in showing the aggression necessary to produce satire.

The aim of this paper is to examine these “alternative cartoons” by comparing and contrasting them with those found in the mainstream daily newspapers. For ease of comparison, the analysis focuses on how these cartoons responded to a similar to a single major news event over a limited period. Cartoons dealing with Japan’s immense March 11, 2011 disaster and its ensuing problems over an approximately four-month period were chosen for this purpose. This was a time of crisis in which national concerns drew closer together and interest in politics heightened. Did newspaper and alternative political cartoons both adequately fulfill their primary functions of highlighting problems and offering critical commentary during this period? What subjects did they tackle? And how? To help bring into clear focus the differences between alternative and newspaper cartoon responses to the disaster, after looking at initial responses this paper divides the examination into five themes that arose within the cartoon commentary of the period. These are obfuscation, morally questionable relationships, inaction, responsibility, and serious consequences.²

The newspaper cartoons examined are from the “big-three” national daily newspapers, the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, *Asahi Shinbun* and *Mainichi Shinbun*, as well as from the syndicated newspaper cartoons of Kyodo News Service (through the regional paper *Sanyō Shinbun*). The “big-three” national newspapers have a combined circulation of over 23 million, and in 2011 all ran political cartoons. Kyodo News supplies political cartoons to a number of its over seventy affiliated

regional newspapers nationwide. Together, the political cartoons of these national newspapers and national news syndicate form a very narrow range of cartoon commentary that dominates political cartoon discourse in Japan.³ These will be compared and contrasted with the political cartoons of a small number of cartoonists—their work, for want of a better word, will be labeled as “alternative” in this paper—who post their work intermittently on the Internet, or contribute to relatively small circulation print publications.⁴ These cartoonists include newer and little-known artists such as Ichi-Hana-Hana and Mattari Takeshi, who have been putting their work on the Internet respectively since 2006 and 2010. They also include veteran cartoonists like Mad Amano and Hashimoto Masaru, both active since the 1970s, who publish their work both on the Internet and in other print periodicals.⁵ Through comparison, this paper will show that Japanese newspaper political cartoons are more limited than their alternative counterparts in terms of the strength of their critical commentary, and in terms of variety of subject and style. This will highlight the potential of political cartooning found outside of the newspaper industry. To begin, however, let us first look at the state of newspaper political cartooning in Japan leading up to the disaster, then briefly consider the function of political cartoons in general.

NEWSPAPER POLITICAL CARTOONING IN JAPAN

Japanese newspaper political cartooning has, for decades, been in a steady state of decline with regard to the forcefulness of their satire, their number, and in their ability to draw popular attention. On the rare occasions when political cartoons are publicly discussed, it is usually to point out their limited view of politics, the banality of their commentary, the weakness of their satire, and to lament the worsening state of this once popular art form. Throughout the 1950s and well into the 1970s, political cartoons had been a selling point for Japan’s “big-three” national newspapers and enjoyed more prominence than today. Their cartoonists, such as Yokoyama Taizō at *Asahi Shinbun*, Nasu Ryōsuke at *Mainichi Shinbun*, and Kondō Hidezō at *Yomiuri Shinbun* were all well-known public figures. From the late-1940s to around 1970, newspapers even featured the political cartoons on their front pages (Ibaragi 72, 86). The *Yomiuri Shinbun* alone had for a time run up to 14 cartoons per week—eight in morning editions and six in evening editions (Ibaragi 90–91). It also ran the Yomiuri International Cartoon Contest, one of the world’s largest single panel cartoon competitions.

However, things had changed by 1983 when four Japanese and three foreign cartoonists gathered for a panel discussion to ponder the nature of political cartooning (“*Seiji manga tte nan da*” 71). They lamented the lack of popularity and vigor in Japanese cartoons. Popular comic strip artist Satō Sanpei claimed cultural

reasons for the comparative tameness of Japanese political cartoons. Japanese people, he said, are not comfortable with the type of direct attack seen in foreign cartoons. Political cartoonist Yamafuji Shōji admitted that there were only a small number of people doing political cartoons in Japan, and while they try their hardest, their cartoons were mostly uninteresting. He blamed this situation on a general lack of interest in politicians and politics. For Yamafuji, Japan had experienced no large political changes over the previous 30 years, so there had been no political conditions to fire up the country's youth. He claimed that for the population this has been a happy situation, but for cartoonists it was a situation that provided little motivation ("Seiji manga tte nan da" 71).

In the two decades following this roundtable, things grew from bad to worse. According to cartoon researcher Ibaragi Masaharu, newspapers began reducing the number of political cartoons they ran, starting with the evening editions. By 2006, the number of *Yomiuri*'s cartoons had fallen to just seven per week, and *Asahi*'s to just six. Newspapers were no longer fostering new talent, and most remaining cartoon spots were left with a handful of aging cartoonist (Ibaragi 90–91). By 2011 the number of cartoons had shrunk even further. Among the newspapers surveyed for this paper, only the regional newspaper *Sanyō Shinbun* ran a political cartoon every day. *Mainichi* and *Asahi* were printing on average four cartoons per week, and *Yomiuri* a mere three.

In 2008, a year after *Yomiuri* ended its Yomiuri International Cartoon Contest,⁶ another panel discussion was held, but this time with more of a sense of impending doom for newspaper political cartooning. Titled, "Will Single-panel Cartoons Survive?" the panel's participating scholars and cartoonists echoed many of the reasons given in 1983 for the art's lack of popularity and its gradual withering, but also added some more. For cartoon historian Shimizu Isao, society was now more complex with no clear "enemy" to satirize. Manga scholar Hosogaya Atsushi argued that the flow of conservative politics in the post war has led to a loss of opposition and to cartoons that offer just explanations rather than critical commentary. Cartoonist Aki Ryūzan blamed the rise of other media. He claimed that political cartoons have had their function usurped by TV, and that young people now only read comics narratives, so they are not used to reading and understanding the political commentary of single panel cartoons. For manga scholar Omote Tomoyuki, the decline of political cartooning was due to a pluralization of values that had weakened the broadly held "common sense" necessary for producing satire. Tokoro Yuki Yoshi identified financial reasons, pointing out there was no income to be made from cartooning so the profession attracts no new young artists. The panel also bemoaned the dwindling number of newspaper editors who understand political cartooning (Ogawa 14; "Tōkyō Shinbun fōramu").⁷ There appeared to be no hope for this art, reduced from being a popular form making meaningful critiques of

ideologies and social problems, to being a largely overlooked form offering little beyond trite summaries of events or the light heckling of political personalities with little or no satirical punch (Ibaragi; McNicol). Perhaps an upheaval as hinted at by Yamafuji at the 1983 panel discussion was needed to fire up interest in politics and shake political cartooning back to relevance.

On March 11, 2011, an upheaval came. The Great East Japan Earthquake, more commonly referred to as just “3.11,” shook the nation. With this event a number of the reasons given above by cartoonists and scholars as to why Japanese political cartooning lacked vigor appeared to vanish. There was now a much broader interest in politics,⁸ there were clear targets for criticism, and pluralized values seemed to move closer together towards a “common sense” over basic safety, health, decency, responsibility, and moral concerns.

Within the first four months of 3.11, initial support for the government quickly turned to widespread popular criticism, distrust, and even outright anger (Abe 105, Duus 176, Kingston 7, 189). There was a sense of national crisis and a heightened public interest in the handling of the disaster and its aftermath, in particular the resultant ongoing crisis in managing safety related to the dangers, both real and perceived, of radiation after the multiple nuclear reactor meltdowns at the crippled Tokyo Electric Power Company’s (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi power plant. A large section of the public turned a critical eye to politicians, bureaucrats and corporations. To answer this, media coverage and scrutiny surrounding the tragedy intensified. By the summer of 2011, public dissatisfaction also gave rise to large-scale public protests against nuclear power and government policy.⁹ This was an environment where, one would think, cartoons with their ability to make concise meaningful comment and sharp criticism could come to the fore to help both stimulate and frame debate. It was an ideal opportunity for newspaper cartoonists to contribute to public discourse, a chance to expand their critical perspectives to problems beyond their usual narrow view fixed on politicians and politicking, and a chance to resuscitate a seemingly dying art.

Unfortunately, for newspaper political cartooning, a revival did not eventuate. Cartoons mostly continued to poke gentle fun at political personalities, rarely questioning the morals or responsibility of all players: the government, bureaucrats, corporations, or even the public at large.¹⁰ Looking beyond the major daily newspapers, however, a glimmer of hope could be found in cartoons by a small number of cartoonists contributing to magazine periodicals, mostly existing on the fringes of mainstream media, or putting their work on the Internet. Amongst their cartoons, more aggressive, biting commentary, and broader perspectives could be seen.

FUNCTION OF POLITICAL CARTOONS

Before examining and comparing newspaper and alternative cartoon responses to 3.11, some consideration to the function and place of political cartoons is in order. While many political cartoons, even outside of Japan, are reduced to nothing more than illustrations or vehicles for gags, entertainment like this should be a secondary function. Their primary function as part of journalism is to deliver a significant message, usually through satire. Cartoon researchers Manning and Phiddian suggest that ideally cartoonists should strike a balance between these two functions in their work. Through the overuse of cartoons that just present jokes, cartoonists risk forfeiting the opportunity to contribute to society. Their readers may also be conditioned to not expect serious comment, and then fail to notice it when it is offered. Conversely, an over persistence in producing cartoons that push opinions can give an impression over time of being didactic, eventually turning audiences off (“Censorship” 3).

Balance in viewpoint, however, should be put aside when cartoonists are tackling political or social issues. Cartoons are at their most effective not when they take a balanced position, but when they take a side and forcefully make a point with humor. Unlike journalists whose role is to attempt to present objective truths, “cartoonists are clearly involved in comment rather than reporting, and the comment made is obviously and recognizably extravagant” (Manning and Phiddian, “Censorship” 27–28). Moreover, unlike text articles by journalists, the cartoonists’ comment is created with text and image, capable of drawing attention to itself more readily and conveying its viewpoint much more quickly. Cartoonists work to condense complex situations through use of caricature, symbols, allusion, metaphor, and metonymy into a simple message (Edwards 8), providing readers not only “with an attractive allusion of understanding” (DeSousa qtd. in Edwards 9–10), but also a framework for thinking about a situation.

The most provocative way to send this cartoon comment is through satire. It is form of humor that is by its nature aggressive, usually used to cut down its subjects by pointing out their moral failings and follies for criticism. And for this reason satirical cartoons are often referred to as weapons. For example, the craft of the cartoonist has been called “laughing with knives” as they usually cause pain and not infrequently anger in their target (Manning and Phiddian, “Censorship” 11). Cartoonists have also been seen as modern day court jesters free to speak up to power, as their “value as critics is widely believed to entitle them to protection against retribution by those whom they ridicule” (Morris 1). In most Western liberal democracies with traditions of satire, this license to mock is culturally

granted, and legally protected as “fair comment” (Handsley and Phiddian 2013). However as suggested in Japanese cartoonist discussions above, and as argued by humor scholar Marguerite Wells (2006),¹¹ Japanese culture tends not to allow satire as aggressive as that found in other countries. Furthermore, the legal position of Japanese cartoonist commentary also appears much more ambiguous.¹² The presence and vitality of political cartoons in a particular country are seen by both academics and practitioners as gauge of the level of freedom of speech; the state of political cartooning is at times likened to a canary in a coalmine that will die if the air of public discourse becomes too stifling or dangerous (Hayden and Phiddian “Censorship” 11; Marlette 21; Alexander Hunter qtd. in Turnbloom 134).

What role does cartoon commentary play in public discourse? While there is much evidence that cartoons have the power to, and frequently do, anger people beyond just their targets (see Lamb 2004 for examples), and the power to create enduring popular symbols and icons (Edwards 19), research on the widely held perception that cartoons have the power to persuade readers is on the whole inconclusive (Edwards 6). Long-serving US political cartoonist Paul Conrad, whose cartoons angered Richard Nixon enough for him to be included on the President’s notorious Enemies List, reflected at the end of his career, “Some say my power is tremendous . . . If I had the power they say I have, after fifty years of drawing cartoons of social wrongs, the United States would be a Paradise!” (Conrad 27). Yet, the critical commentary and attention given by satirical cartoons to social and political issues are considered to be a valuable part of media discourse. Cartoons scholar Christopher Lamb argues that satire at its best can force people to examine their weak points (23). Hayden and Phiddian see political cartoons as working on the periphery of political debate. They suggest that cartoons tend to be read by a self-selecting minority of politically engaged readers, with no direct influence on public opinion. “However, within this substantial and influential minority of people where most policy debate occurs cartoonists play a significant role” (“Censorship” 4). Other scholars argue that possibly the most important contribution that political cartoons make to public debate is their “agenda setting function,” that is, the ability to focus attention on themes and problems that may have been overlooked (Edwards 7–8; Ibaragi 12–13, 121). For influential cartoonist Pat Oliphant, a good satirical cartoon is a “potent galvanizer of opinion,” and a “kick-starter of conversation and discussion” (Oliphant 25).

Did Japanese political cartoonists adequately fill this role in the critical public discourse in the months after 3.11? Let us now turn to an examination of post-3.11 political cartoons. We will look at mainstream newspaper—the big-three newspapers and Kyodo News—cartoons which, as noted above, changed little after the disaster, and contrast their reactions to the much more biting satirical cartoons that appeared in smaller publications and on the Internet. The following

examination will be thematic, but we will begin with the initial cartoon responses to the disaster.

INITIAL CARTOON RESPONSES TO THE DISASTER

At first, cartoonists and their newspapers seemed unsure of how to react to the enormity of the disaster. Perhaps emblematic of the difficulty in cartooning soon after the disaster was the response by Yamafuji Shōji, who had been drawing satirical cartoons for *Asahi Shinbun*'s weekly news magazine *Shūkan Asahi* for four decades. Appearing in his regular full-page "Black Angle" framed cartoon spot in the inner rear cover of magazine on the 1st and 8th of April, he offered no cartoon but rather a text record of his immediate personal reactions in the form of scrawled diary entries, complete with errors, both dated as "a day to forget in a month to forget."¹³ In these he related his inability to continue to watch the endless flow of hell-like images on television, his insecurity with each aftershock, and his anxiety over the natural disaster turning into a manmade (nuclear) disaster.

Newspapers too, seemed unsure about the appropriateness of political cartoon comment, or satirical humor critical of the government at a time of crisis. Unlike the popular comic-strips on the inner rear pages of national daily newspapers which continued almost uninterrupted, some even engaging with post-3.11 society and its problems,¹⁴ political cartoons got off to a much more uncertain start. Despite employing multiple cartoonists, the big-three dailies and Kyodo News were all slow to react to the disaster, and when they did, they offered mostly bland calls for unity and/or support for the government. *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, *Mainichi* and Kyodo News were all unable to respond in their regular cartoon spots during the days immediately following 3.11. Four days after, on the 15th, *Yomiuri* and Kyodo both printed their first disaster-related cartoons. *Asahi* got off to a jittery start on the 16th, running no cartoons the following week, and after restarting for a week, stopping again for a week in mid-April. In *Mainichi*, political cartoons completely disappeared for almost eight weeks until one appeared on May 3rd, but the newspaper did not return to their pre-3.11 pattern of three to four cartoons per week until mid-May.¹⁵ All continued in what is now the typical cartooning style in national newspapers of almost always peopling cartoons with cute-ish short statured figures with large stylized heads, similar to many newspaper comic strip characters, and featuring non-offensive facial caricature, almost never made deliberately ugly. It is a style that is no doubt less insulting to its target, but one that can soften a cartoon's satirical punch on occasions when criticism is deployed.¹⁶ The first two examples of post 3.11 mainstream newspaper cartoons below (figs. 1 and 2) in particular are exemplars of this overwhelming tendency.

The initial cartoons run by all newspapers featured Prime Minister Kan Naoto. Kan had been installed as leader by the ruling DPJ the previous year, and soon faced a “twisted parliament”—a situation where both houses are controlled by different parties making the passing of legislation near impossible. This situation led cartoonists before the disaster to often portray him as weather-beaten and/or inactive, and questioned his leadership. The newspapers’ first 3.11 related cartoons all pushed for action by Kan and called for cooperation from opposition parties. In the *Yomiuri*’s cartoon by Suzuki Takeru political party leaders are shown working together to lift a lethargic Prime Minister Kan into action, “Everybody, lets give it all we got!” (fig. 1). Kyodo News’ Hazama Ryūji’s cartoon depicts Kan springing into action, changing from his suit, hung under a crooked “Leadership” sign, into work clothing with the caption, “Change what’s inside as well!” (fig. 2). Yamada Shin of *Asahi Shinbun* depicted Kan surrounded by a deep chasm desperately calling out for information (fig. 3). Here Kan seems ready to act, but is lacking in the disaster details necessary to do so. The *Mainichi*’s Nishimura Kōichi drew Kan and opposition leader Tanigaki as warriors on a Children’s Day decoration removing their armor in order to stop fighting and cooperate on throwing out Kan’s long planned child allowance, and passing a reconstruction budget, a lifeline for the disaster affected people and industry, as well to cooperate on taking measures shore up the reputation of the region as safe (fig. 4).

Fig. 1. Suzuki Takeru “Everybody, lets give it all we got!” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, Mar 15, 2011

Fig. 2. Hazama Ryūji. “Change what’s inside as well!” *Sanyō Shinbun* (Kyodo News), Mar 15, 2011

Fig. 3. Yamada Shin. "A political disaster after a natural disaster is scary." *Asahi Shinbun*, Mar 16, 2011

Fig. 4. Nishimura Kōichi. "May's 'cool biz' set, the keyword is lifeline." *Sanyō Shinbun* (Kyodo News), Mar 15, 2011

Alternative cartoons in magazines were also slow to react due to their publication schedules. Cartoon responses in weeklies began in early April issues, for example *Shūkan Asahi* April 1 and *Shūkan Shinchō* April 18, which arrive at newsstands a week before their cover dates. Monthly magazines, such as *Tsukuru* and *Kami no Bakudan*, first responded in their May issues. Published responses from the biannual EYEMASK's cartoonists had to wait until the first regular issue after the disaster in June.

In contrast to the late initial responses of these periodicals and of mainstream newspaper cartoonists, alternative cartoonists on the Internet were able to respond to the disaster much more quickly, in particular amateur cartoonists posting on the popular image sharing sites, *Niconico Seiga* and *Pixiv*. Mattari Takeshi was probably the first to respond. Two days after the disaster he posted on *Niconico Seiga* an impressive "*Hi no maru*," or Japanese flag, composed of hundreds of his caricatures. Free from the limited use of color that leaves almost all newspaper cartoons black and white,¹⁷ and free from the newspapers' format restrictions, Mattari was able to produce a much larger, complex, and eye-catchingly colored cartoon. It was a non-critical call for a rallying of the nation which received over 20,000 views and ninety comments over the following three months (*Niconico Seiga*). Another cartoon, posted on *Pixiv* by Akizuki Shino the following day, February 14, was of a personified nuclear reactor covered in ice and a power plant worker, captioned

“Freeze Reactor! Give it your best shot technicians!” It called for support for workers attempting to cool the damaged and overheating nuclear reactors. So, while faster than newspaper cartoons, alternative cartoons on the Internet too, like those in newspapers, were encouraging unity and support with little or no critical comment. However, as we will see, both newspaper and alternative cartoonists after these initial responses did begin to offer criticism on post-3.11 issues.¹⁸

Throughout the approximately four months of cartoons surveyed for this paper, the major dailies continued on mostly as they had before the disaster. While *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and Kyodo News did occasionally offer some critical cartoons, those in *Yomiuri* tended to be mostly descriptive, rather than offering comment many merely illustrated lead articles on the politics page. Moreover, with very few exceptions, the cartoons of major dailies stuck to a narrow view of politics as purely the domain of politicians. They were almost always depicted in cute-ish caricature, focusing on their machinations, particularly power plays—such as the plethora of cartoons about attempts to oust Prime Minister Kan and his reluctance to go. The cartoons rarely questioned these politicians over deeper moral problems, nor did they attempt to question actions, attitudes, or responsibility of political actors in a broader sense, that is, of bureaucrats, the media, corporations, or even the public. In August of 2011, cartoonist Hashimoto Masaru wrote an article damning this situation. A former contributor of social and political cartoons to *Asahi Shinbun*, whose cartoons were at the time appearing on the alternative news website *The News*, in the cartoon magazine *EYEMASK*, as well as being used at anti-nuclear demonstrations, Hashimoto asked, “Why don’t newspaper political cartoons take up the issue of nuclear power?” He argued that Japanese newspaper cartoons are hopeless because they are little more than caricatured portraits [*nigaoe*] of politicians, dealing with politicking but not touching wider more important issues (Hashimoto, “Naze shinbun no seiji manga”).¹⁹

In contrast, cartoonists outside this restrictive newspaper cartoon worldview, began within a week or two of the disaster to cast a much more critical eye with a broader field of vision. We will see how by focusing below on cartoons related the disaster, which fall into the following five themes: obfuscation of truth, unsavory relationships, inaction, responsibility, and serious consequences.

CARTOONS ON OBFUSCATION OF TRUTH

Immediately following the disaster, the invisible menace of radiation from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident caused increasing anxiety amongst the populace (Kingston 7, Samuels xi, 35). Attempts by the government, as well as nuclear agencies and TEPCO, to play down the crisis along with the lack

of concrete information being offered only exacerbated these fears. Alternative cartoonists were critical of the amount, and the presentation of information, being made available to the public by authorities, as well as attempts to dismiss information from non-official sources as “damaging rumors [*fūhyō higai*].” The cartoonists suspected ulterior motives and cover-ups. Internet cartoonist Mattari Takeshi, a week after his own nationalistic cartoon using the Japanese flag to call for national unity, drew a cartoon (fig. 5) titled “Disclosure of Information,” accusing the nation’s leaders of hiding information behind the flag. It was posted on *Niconico Seiga* on March 20 with the message, “Tell us the truth: For me, not making information public is the cause of false rumors and damage to reputations (in respect to the safety of the disaster affected area and its produce), so I want no cover up and the truth made public.” In the cartoon, Prime Minister Kan and the person in his government charged with providing information to the public, Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano Yukio, stand before one of the reactor buildings destroyed by a hydrogen explosion soon after the disaster—here representing the whole Fukushima Daiichi power plant—and try to cover the extent of the damage with the national flag. Both are acting suspiciously; nervous beads of sweat run down their faces. Kan gives a grimacing half-smile, while Edano with his eyes tries to direct view attention to the flag. The cartoonist implies that Kan’s government were appealing to nationalist sentiment and unity precisely to divert attention from the real situation.

Soon after the disaster, the government began trying to suppress public discourse about the dangers and spread of radiation by claiming false information and rumors would do reputational damage to food producers, tourist destinations, and people from the regions unaffected by radioactive fallout (Brasor, Nishioka). On the few occasions when the problem of reputation damage was taken up by the mainstream media cartoonists, it was to caution the public. One example is Kyodo News cartoonist Matsuzawa Hidekazu in the March 24 issue of *Sanyō Shinbun*. It shows a child at a dining table looking concerned with a plate of food, milk and bag of groceries in front of him. His mother beside him with a rolled up newspaper bats away a large ball labeled “rumors.” Her actions, as she defends her child from anxiety of unfounded rumors about food safety, echo actions of the star baseball player on the TV behind them as he hits a homerun. Another example is a cartoon by Arai Tarō in the March 25 issue of *Sanyō Shinbun*. On the right it shows a mother working hard to raise her child, sweating as she prepares to feed the baby on her back with milk and water. Her baby points angrily to the left of frame where a woman frantically fills her shopping cart with bottled water. The baby warns her not to foster a bad reputation. The hoarding shopper shoulders on her back not a baby but a small black devil labeled “reputation.” Unlike alternative cartoonists, however, the major newspaper cartoonists did not call into question the government’s motives in controlling information.

Fig. 5. Mattari Takeshi. "Disclosure of Information." *Niconico Seiga*. March 20, 2011

The disaster also caused widespread public and media reflection on government and energy industry's past assurances that nuclear power is safe, and their continued support for this position after the disaster (Kingston 197, Abe 102–105). Internet cartoonist Ichi-Hana-Hana, in a cartoon on her own website in March captioned, "Persuasive Power Zero [*Settoku-ryoku zero*]" (fig. 6), pointed out the contradictions inherent in Japan's appeals to the world regarding the threat of nuclear weapons. For her, Japan's continued appeals from its perspective as a victim of atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are at odds with the country's domestic nuclear energy policies which are capable of bringing about an equally devastating nuclear catastrophe. The cartoon shows a Japanese representative clad in radiation protective hazmat suit addressing the United Nations. To the surprise of those listening, the speaker emphasizes the threat of North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons by repeating well-worn the anti-nuclear weapon campaign protest phrase, "No more Hiroshimas," while behind the speaker a nuclear power plant of his country's own making explodes in an atomic bomb-like mushroom cloud.²⁰

Fig. 6. Ichi Hana Hana. “Persuasive Power Zero.” (“North Korean nuclear weapon development threat!” “No More Hiroshima”), *ichi-hana-hana Political Cartoons*, March 2011

Alternative cartoonists in the twice-yearly small circulation cartoon magazine *EYEMASK* also took aim at those who appeared to be hiding problems from the fallout of 3.11. Hashimoto Masaru, in light of news in May 2011 that Japanese manufacturers such as Hitachi still planned to export and build reactors in Vietnam, Turkey, Lithuania, and other countries (Nakata), questioned the morality of continuing to sell nuclear power as a safe technology. His cartoon (fig. 7) in the June 2011 issue depicts a Japanese salesman pointing to his product samples suitcase full of nuclear reactors, held by a giant in a radiation safe hazmat suit, telling a group of Vietnamese potential buyers that the technology is “safe” and “clean.” The cartoon caption alluding to the Fukushima Daiichi accident says, “Even after that, (he/we) can’t stop (himself/ourselves) from exporting.”

Fig. 7. Hashimoto Masaru. “Even after that, can’t stop exporting.” *EYEMASK*, June 2011

Hashimoto also took aim at power companies. He saw TEPCO as threatening Tokyo with forced rotating power outages, called “planned blackouts,” in order to give the impression that nuclear power generation is essential. The same June issue of *EYEMASK* featured his cartoon titled, “Appealing the necessity of nuclear power by using planned power outages” (fig. 8). In the cartoon a family—father, mother and young child—huddle around a table in the dark of their home with no power, forced to resort to candlelight due to the rotating power outages. They look towards the sound at their door. Outside knocking on the door is a smiling nuclear reactor with a drum of radioactive material in hand. The reactor is depicted just like a door-to-door salesman ready to make a sales pitch, as always, for a product guaranteed to satisfy the consumer’s needs.

These planned blackouts were implemented briefly in the Kanto region beginning in the week after the disaster. However, despite regular announcements from TEPCO that more rotating outages would follow, these proved unnecessary in the long-run. This exacerbated suspicions that blackout announcements were just an underhanded ruse to appeal to the public of the necessity of nuclear power²¹. Mad Amano also took up this issue in a much more aggressive manner in one of his cartoons accompanying his monthly column *Fūshi gahō* (Illustrated Satirical News) in the June, 2011 issue of *Kami no bakudan*. In it the president of TEPCO, Shimizu Masataka, is represented arm outstretched holding an automatic pistol. The gun is marked with the TEPCO logo on the side, and inside the barrel is an ionizing radiation symbol. Shimizu’s finger is cocked on the trigger ready to shoot, and he has one eye closed as he takes aim at the reader of the cartoon. He threatens the reader, “Freeze! If you don’t conserve energy [Freeze! *setsuden shinai to*] . . .” The cartoon resembles a warning poster even naming its (fake) authorizing authority at the bottom, The Committee for Implementation of Forced Planned Blackouts.

計画停電で原発は必要のキャンペーン

Fig. 8. Hashimoto Masaru. "Appealing the necessity of nuclear power by using planned power outages." *EYEMASK*, June 2011

Another *EYEMASK* cartoonist Kurata Sin (sic), whose work also appears in the Japanese Communist Party newspaper *Akahata*, questions the honesty and motives of government agencies. People and corporations throughout the country donated money through organizations such as the Japanese Red Cross to support disaster victims. Distribution of these donations was overseen by a national government. However, by June with little money seeming to filter through to the disaster victims, agencies charged with reconstruction appeared to be holding on to the bulk of relief money to fill their own coffers.²² Kurata's cartoon in the June issue (fig. 9), captioned "A big bag that can be put to use," shows a plump, satisfied-looking bureaucrat sitting behind his desk, not working, but reading a newspaper. On his desk is a huge money sack marked "internal reserve" [*naibu ryūho*]. Snug in his office, he shows no concern for the difficulties of those in the disaster affected area who face the colossal job of cleaning up and rebuilding. The two figures outside his building look on at the scale of the devastation, dwarfed by a large ship stranded inland above a pile of rubble which was once a township. Kurata's cartoon accuses the bureaucracy of not only dishonesty but also disinterest in those in real need after the disaster.

Fig. 9. Kurata Sin. "A big bag that can be put to use." *EYEMASK*, June 2011

Unlike, these examples of alternative cartoons, major newspaper cartoons rarely criticized politicians, bureaucrats, agencies, or industry of misleading or hiding things from the public. Of the 175 disaster related newspaper cartoons examined only two examples could be found. One by Mainichi cartoonist Yokota Shigi on May 21, 2011, shows Prime Minister Kan, along with both TEPCO's President and Chairman, as well as Nishiyama of the government appointed Nuclear Safety Commission all saying, "*sôteigai* ..." In other words the scale of the disaster, in particular the tidal wave, was "beyond imagination" or "beyond estimation." This became a well-worn phrase in the months after the disaster, used by TEPCO, agencies and the government to explain to the media and public why the nuclear accident had occurred. In the cartoon the public, shown at the bottom of the frame, angry and seeing this explanation as a cover up for a lack of competence, throw the phrase back at the group of four: "This level of incompetence is beyond imagination." "This level of irresponsibility is beyond imagination."

The other example was a cartoon in the April 15, 2011 issue of the *Sanyō Shinbun* from Kyodo News cartoonist Arai Tarō. In it a frazzled TEPCO's president Shimizu mutters, "As quickly as possible..." and, "We will do our utmost to..." In the foreground a hand holds radiation detecting dosimeter-like device. It is labelled as a "concreteness" meter and is pointed at the words emanating from Shimizu's mouth. The meter reads zero, and the cartoon caption, "Exceedingly low level of." The cartoon could be read as criticism of both TEPCO's inability to articulate a clear plan, and of attempts to cover up realities through ambiguous statements. Despite these two examples, cartoons of major newspapers were on the whole reluctant to criticize either TEPCO or related agencies.

CARTOONS ON UNSAVORY RELATIONSHIPS

Alternative cartoonists also broached topics more or less taboo to mainstream newspaper cartoons when examining relationships between politicians, bureaucrats, independent authorities, industry, and the media. In June, Ichi-Hana-Hana took political satire a step further than newspapers could with her cartoon titled “The Grand Coalition of Nuclear Power Promotion” (fig. 9) which uses a metaphor of lovers in bed. This is a metaphor often used abroad in political cartoons but never seen in Japanese newspapers.²³ She uses it to depict the cross political party talks towards a coalition between the JDP’s Okada Katsuya and LDP’s Ishihara Nobuteru. These two politicians joined by their common bond of support for continued nuclear power use, lay in bed with Okada smoking a cigarette. Their bed cover design combines the logos of their respective parties. Close by is a box of tissues—echoing the design of a Fukushima Daiichi’s nuclear reactor building. The scene suggests that the couple had just had consummated their intimate relationship in bed. Okada says to Ishihara, “I’ll forget about your dark past if you’ll join with me.” Ishihara replies, “I don’t think we can trust your boss,” referring to Okada’s party leader, Prime Minister Kan. At the window the pro-nuclear Chairman of the Japan Business Federation, Yonekura Hiromasa, looks on at this bedroom sex scene excitedly like a voyeur.

Fig. 10. Ichi Hana Hana. “The Grand Coalition of Nuclear Power Promotion.” *ichi-hana-hana Political Cartoons*, June 2011

Reports over the years have brought the close relationship between Japanese media and the power industry into question. They have highlighted the vast amounts of money the power industry spends on commercial media sponsorship and advertising (Ida; Honma), work and income provided to cartoonists and comic book artists for nuclear power promotional work (Comic Box; Koyama 44–49; Harada, “Mangaka”), the influence of power companies and the Federation

of Electric Power Companies of Japan on media content (Hirose; McNeill), and the influence of the Japan Business Federation on nuclear power discourse presented on NHK (Ida). Newspaper cartoonists, however, did not problematize media and industry relationships. Cartoonists working for magazines also mostly avoided the problem. The sole exception being a double page cartoon by Mad Amano in monthly magazine *The Tsukuru* (May-June 2011) of politicians trying to control a meltdown in Japan's Diet Building, shaped like Fukushima Daiichi's no.1 reactor building after it exploded. In the cartoon "the mass media" is among a list of those profiting off nuclear power.

Cartoonists working on the Internet free of media companies were able to take up the issue of media and industry relationships more directly. Mattari Takeshi's cartoon posted on *Niconico Seiga* on April 12 (fig.11) depicted TEPCO president Shimizu Masataka, with a company logo on his stomach, in an unseemly embrace with "the mass media." Posted under the title, "A Sticky Close Relationship: It looks like television appearances are disappearing for personalities who express anti-nuclear power opinions, doesn't it?" Within the cartoon panel is a secondary title, "Stuck Together," and onomatopoeia indicating sticky, sweaty sounds [*beta, beta, beta*]. These along with the darkness of the image, suggest an illicit sexual relationship. The bundle of cash the company president holds in his hand seems to imply that the media was actively prostituting itself for TEPCO money. Mattari's cartoon satirizes both as being morally corrupt. It accuses TEPCO of using the power of its money to control of media discourse, and the mass media of selling out, more concerned with money than content or its viewers.

Fig 11. Mattari Takeshi. "Sticking Together." *Niconico Seiga*, April 12, 2011

Another example is by Ichi-Hana-Hana. In her October cartoon (fig. 12) titled "The Mystery of the Yomiuri International Cartoon Prize," she imagines the money from *Yomiuri Shinbun's* former international cartoon awards being stashed away in order to be spent on the newspaper company's promotion of the nuclear industry. The late *Yomiuri* President and owner, Shōriki Matsutarō (1885–1969), known as

the “father of Japanese nuclear power” for his long-time promotion of the industry, is depicted as the Japanese fairytale character “The man who made the cherry blossoms bloom” [*Hanasaka jiisan*]. He sits in a radioactive tree, labeled *Yomiuri Shinbun*, but not sprinkling cherry blossom petals over the countryside as in the fairytale; instead he sprinkles radiation from a drum of radioactive materials. Below the tree is current *Yomiuri* President Watanabe Tsuneo with hoe in hand, and a dog by his side. The dog is the former Prime Minister and earliest government promoter of nuclear power, Nakasone Yasuhiro. These two have dug up a stash of money that the *Yomiuri* radioactive tree grows from. The cartoon implicates a tangle of money, media, industry and politics. It hints at the newspaper’s uncritical stance on nuclear power and perhaps a reason why *Yomiuri*’s political cartoonists in particular do not touch the issue.

Fig. 12. Ichi Hana Hana. “The Mystery of the Yomiuri International Cartoon Prize.” *ichi-hana-hana Political Cartoons*, October 2011

CARTOONS ON INACTION

Both mainstream newspaper cartoons and alternative cartoons criticized government inaction.²⁴ However, alternative cartoons tended to be more aggressive in their satire. Mainstream national newspaper cartoons, keeping to mostly to their narrow focus politicking and politicians, were able to criticize parliamentarians on the issue of inaction or slowness to act, whether through indecisiveness, procrastination or political fighting. Indeed, on a few occasions, they did this quite effectively. For example, Hari Sunao’s cartoon in the *Asahi Shinbun* (May 23, 2011) shows a map of North-Eastern Honshu venting its anger at the politicians below in Tokyo, exclaiming, “How long are you going to keep up this clatter? What are you doing?!” (fig. 13). The three political party representatives, the LDP opposition leader Tanigaki Sadakazu, Kamei Shizuka of the New People’s Party, and PM

Kan, fight amongst themselves oblivious to this anger. All helmeted and wearing workers clothing, they drive different reconstruction committees—depicted as frontend loaders—blocking each other's movement and making a clamor but no progress. The cartoon satirizes the politicians' misplaced priorities, bickering and maneuvering for political advantage rather than cooperating to deal with more pressing and important issues.

Fig. 13. Hari Sunao. “How long are you going to keep up this clatter? What are you doing?!” *Asahi Shinbun*, May 23, 2011

Another example is a June 18, 2011 *Asahi Shinbun* cartoon by Yaku Mitsuru (fig. 14) showing Prime Minister Kan and the opposition leader having an endless parliamentary debate over leadership, set not in parliament, but amongst weary and anxious evacuees, who continue live with little comfort or privacy in cramped cardboard partitioned areas of sports centers or community halls, as they still wait for temporary accommodation some three months after the disaster. The two politicians waste time debating endlessly over Kan's resignation, while the people around them continue to suffer. The inclusion of victims here helps make a powerful moral swipe at both politicians. Instead of using an abstract symbol like a map to represent the disaster area, as in the previous example, the use of more realistic images here of people suffering, or of devastation in the disaster area, makes the situation seem more urgent and political inaction more immoral.²⁵ However, the depictions such as this of disaster victims, or even of the public in general, were rare in mainstream newspaper political cartoons surveyed.

Fig. 14. Yaku Mitsuru. “The pressing theme for party leaders debate is ‘Is there any meaning to the party leaders debate so far?’ –the pattern from start to finish.” *Asahi Shinbun*, June 18, 2011

Alternative cartoonists working outside of the national daily newspapers, such as Hashimoto, Amano, Mattari, and Ichi-Hana-Hana, directly depicted victims and the devastation of the disaster with greater frequency. One example is Mattari’s April 21 *Niconico Seiga* cartoon (fig. 15) posted online on the day of Prime Minister Kan’s rushed first visit to an evacuation center. The visit appeared more like a photo opportunity than an act of concern for the victims, and the cartoon echoes the evacuees’ anger at the prime minister by paraphrasing their words. Kan in the cartoon foreground is about to leave without taking the time to listen to the grievances of more than a few evacuees. In the background a disgruntled evacuee calls out, “Are you leaving already?!” Outside of the cartoon frame Kan’s minders hurry him along, “Prime Minister, lets quickly move on to the next evacuation area.” Mattari’s cartoon is not only an example of depicting the disaster victims, but in his distinctly unflattering depiction of Kan’s disheveled hair, sour facial expression and deeply lined face, it is an example of alternative cartoonists’ ability to escape the non-offensive caricature style common to most cartoons of the major daily newspapers. Moreover, posted online within hours of the incident, this cartoon also shows a speed of response that cartoonists working independently online are capable of. Daily newspaper cartoonists with their set, often weekly, work rosters, along with newspaper editorial processes, and printing schedules, cannot make their work public so quickly. In many cases their responses are no quicker than cartoons in weekly magazines. Mainichi cartoonist Yokota Shigi usually takes three days from idea to publication of his weekly cartoons (Yokota 2014).

Fig. 15. Mattari Takeshi. "Are you leaving already?" *Niconico Seiga*, April 21, 2011

An example of an alternative cartoon that utilizes realistic depictions of the disaster's devastating consequences is a photomontage cartoon by Mad Amano.²⁶ In his *Parody Times* June 3, 2011 cartoon (fig. 16), he suggests forcing the procrastinating Prime Minister Kan, asleep at his desk in the safety of his office, closer to the reactors by moving his office within the 20 km exclusion zone. Outside Kan's window can be seen the Reactor No.3 hydrogen explosion of March 14th sending a pillar of smoke and debris into the sky. A crow flies by his window carrying a symbol for radioactive materials in its beak. In the foreground, a handheld device measures the radiation level in his office. The cartoon's photo-realism and its contrast of comfortable office and explosion work to emphasize Kan's apparent indifference to the danger out of his window.

Fig. 16. Mad Amano. "Prime Minister Kan who moved his prime minister's residence within 20km of the nuclear reactors." *Parody Times*, June 3, 2011

CARTOONS ON RESPONSIBILITY

Questioning responsibility more broadly and with greater regularity is another area where alternative political cartoonists outstripped their mainstream newspaper counterparts. *Asahi's* Yamada Shin drew the only newspaper cartoon (fig. 17) criticizing those who set the man-made disaster at Fukushima Daiichi power plant in motion. In his powerful May 21, 2011 cartoon, a huge fragile eggshell, broken open with radiation spewing from it, rolls down a hill towards a fleeing crowd. Members of the crowd reiterate the criticisms voiced by the Japanese Communist Party's leader Shii Kazuo. They say, "It is the responsibility of the (former) LDP government that a large number of nuclear power plants were built with no regards to safety measures." A voice from the crowd adds, "but this is something large numbers of Japanese citizens are now thinking!" The caption reinforces this sense of blame laid on the political party that led the development of Japan's nuclear power industry over the proceeding half-century, "Isn't it terrible that there is no sign of soul searching or even apology from within the LDP?" While this is forceful criticism aimed the newspaper cartoonists' usual target the government and politicians, it does not directly seek to question power industry or agencies over responsibility.

Fig. 17. Yamada Shin. "Isn't it terrible that there is no sign of remorse (reflection) nor apology from within the LDP." *Asahi Shinbun*, May 21, 2011

Three of the numerous examples by alternative cartoonists seeking to lay blame for the disaster, or problems arising in its aftermath, are cartoons by Mattari Takeshi, Mad Amano, and Hashimoto Masaru. Mattari's cartoon (fig. 18) posted on *Niconico Seiga* May 5, 2011, was titled "The Apology Trio: apologizing again today, apologizing again tomorrow." It shows three figures. On the right is Prime Minister Kan and in the center is the Chairman of TEPCO, Katsumata Tsunehisa. Both had

apologized publicly numerous times for their handling of the nuclear accident. The cartoonist puts these two on the same level as the third figure Kanazaka Yaushiro, the president of the barbecue restaurant chain Ebisu, who sits beside them on the left. During May 2011, Kanazaka had apologized after around twenty of his restaurants' customers fell ill and four died from E-coli bacteria. He later admitted his company had been systematically mishandling meat since 2009 (*J-Cast News* 2011). All three figures in the cartoon have nervous sweat beads on their foreheads and guilty expressions on their faces as they kneel in front of a short sword and white cloth on a stand. This is a setting for committing ritual suicide by *hara-kiri* [*seppuku*], a traditional method of accepting blame and apologizing in Japan's pre-modern times. The caption reads, "We sincerely apologize." The allusion to ritual suicide in this cartoon would be understood by readers as satirical hyperbole, but also as a strong demand and acceptance of guilt along with genuine expressions of apology and remorse, rather than the repetition of their hitherto superficial face-saving apologies staged for the media.

Fig. 18. Mattari Takeshi. "(We) sincerely apologize." *Niconico Seiga*, May 5, 2011

Mad Amano's June 2011 *EYEMASK* cartoon "Heroes or Slaves?" (fig. 19) questions TEPCO's treatment of, and responsibility for, the lives of its workers. It alludes to the workers sent into the damaged reactor buildings after the accident in order to contain the problem at risk to their lives, such as the first group of workers, the so called "Fukushima 50," widely depicted in the media at the time as heroic (Samuels 44). Were they heroes or, as this cartoon suggests, just slaves to the power industry? The cartoon hints at the power company's disregard for their lives. It uses the iconic image of United States servicemen raising the US flag on a mountain of Iwo Jima during World War II to indicate they had taken control of the area. In the cartoon the mountaintop is replaced by one of Fukushima Daiichi power plant's damaged reactor buildings. On top of the building TEPCO workers in protective

hazmat suits assert their control of the situation by raising an ionizing radiation symbol flag.

Fig. 19. Mad Amano. "Heroes of Slaves." *EYEMASK*, June 2011

Hashimoto's cartoon on *The News* website August 2, 2011 (fig. 20) shows the media, academics, corporations (TEPCO), politicians, the financial sector and bureaucrats sitting in the defendants' dock in front of a cracked and leaking reactor building waiting to be tried for their responsibility in the nuclear accident. The pro-nuclear lobby in Japan is made up of members of these groups, and their overly close relationship has earned them the label of the "nuclear-village" by critics of the nuclear power industry (Samuels 118–122, Nishioka). It appears no one is willing to prosecute them, and the cartoon calls out to a judge hidden behind this group to come out and do his work, with the title, "The judge hidden behind the defendants dock, stand up, and get out here!!" In this cartoon, as with the two previous examples of alternative cartoons, a wider net is cast than newspaper cartoonists in terms of who they target with their satire.

Fig. 20. Hashimoto Masaru. "Hey judge hidden behind the defendants dock, stand up, and get out here!" *The News*, August 2, 2011

CARTOONS ON SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Alternative cartoonists also linked the nuclear problem to dire consequences, illness and even death. This too moves well beyond mainstream newspaper political cartooning in which allusions to disability and death are more-or-less taboo²⁷. Ichi-Hana-Hana in April and May took aim at the seemingly dangerous game of raising the standard safety levels for radiation, firstly for workers and food, then for the public and children. These alterations to long-standing radiation safety levels were not questioned by major newspaper cartoonists. The seemingly ad-hoc changes by authorities and nuclear safety committees intended to reassure people in the wake of continuing radiation contamination had the reverse effect and instead brought increased confusion, anxiety, and anger. One of Ichi-Hana-Hana's April cartoons titled "Standard Level" (fig. 21) shows a TEPCO employee wearing a protective hazmat suit with a company logo badge and a mask to avoid ingesting radioactive particles. In one arm the TEPCO figure carries a crying baby, and in other hand holds up a feeding bottle containing yellow liquid marked with an ionizing radiation symbol. About to feed more of this radioactive material to the baby, the TEPCO figure decides, "(you) can probably drink a little more." This cartoon was in reaction to the Japanese Ministry for Health, Labor and Welfare provisionally raising the maximum safe level of radioactive substances in food products just six days after the nuclear accident (Ichi-Hana-Hana 2013: 160). In May the artist vented her anger at the Minister for Education and Science, Takaki Yoshiaki, for his May 15 announcement that the acceptable level of annual radiation for Fukushima school children would now be 20 millisieverts (fig. 22). Her cartoon shows a schoolhouse near an exploding reactor building, both situated on a map of Fukushima Prefecture and contained within a glass dome. An arm extending

from the school building clutches the ankle of a schoolboy trying to escape the danger. Safe outside of the glass domed area the Minister for Education looks on demanding that the schoolboy, representing all schoolchildren in the area, “Go on, withstand up to 20 millisieverts.” The cartoon was posted with the title “Let’s hang in there, Japan! [*Ganbarō Nippon!*]” making ironic use of this well-worn call for perseverance which became ubiquitous in the months after 3.11 (Samuels 39–40). The newly introduced level was 20 times higher than the previous safe level for adults and equivalent to that used for adult German nuclear power plant workers. Public anger, including demonstrations by parents outside the Ministry of Education (Willacy), led to a reversal of the policy by the end of May.

Fig. 21. Ichi Hana Hana. “Standard Level.” *ichi-hana-hana Political Cartoons*, April 2011

Fig. 22. Ichi Hana Hana. “Let’s hang in there, Japan!” *ichi-hana-hana Political Cartoons*, May 2011

In another May cartoon by Ichi-Hana-Hana, she links the planned thirty-year survey of 150,000 Fukushima residents by members of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF) back to its roots in the post-war US Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC). After the Second World War, the ABCC collected data on atomic bomb victims [*hibakusha*] rather than treating their medical problems and even claimed body parts of the dead for their research. The cartoon’s title “Guinea Pig [*Morumotto*]” alludes to this kind of treatment of victims as mere test subjects, questioning RERF’s motivations for the survey and hinting they may treat disaster victims the same way. The cartoon depicts a Fukushima victim with an exploding reactor building inside a laboratory specimen jar. The jar is lined up alongside other jars labeled Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Lucky Dragon No. 5—the name of the Japanese fishing boat irradiated during the 1954 US hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll. The ABCC looms ominously in the background depicted as the Grim Reaper, or the “God of Death [*shinigami*]” as he is referred to in Japanese.

In the foreground, the RERF dressed as a doctor with smiling eyes is about to examine the Fukushima victim and says, "Let's do our health survey."

Other alternative cartoonists also evoked death in their work: on the Internet Mattari Takeshi used an allusion to ritual suicide in his cartoon (see fig. 18 above), and in *EYEMASK* the cartoonists Hashimoto Masaru, Morimoto Kiyohiko, Tsujishita Koji, and Mad Amano, all employed symbols of death. Mad Amano produced one of his "parody" cartoons (fig. 23) for the June 2011 issue called, "Rather than planned power outages, how about a planned dismantling of nuclear power!" In it a figure in a business suit and TEPCO corporate logo necktie, unscrews its light bulb head with a radioactive material symbol in front of a skull, clearly making a link between TEPCO, nuclear power and death. A similar cartoon in a major newspaper seems be unthinkable. It is apparent from the newspaper cartoons surveyed that they are not only reluctant to make references to death, but also reluctant to directly attack corporations. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from active *Asahi* and *Mainichi* cartoonists suggests that newspaper editors actively dissuade them from doing this (Yamanoi; Yokota).

Fig. 23. "Rather than planned power outages, how about a planned dismantling of nuclear power!" Mad Amano *EYEMASK*, June 2011

CONCLUSION

The above examination shows that, despite a tendency in Japan to associate political cartooning only with newspapers, political cartoons can be found in alternate places, in smaller circulation periodicals and on the Internet. Moreover these cartoons, on the whole, offer more variety in form, style and subject. In regards to form, particularly on the Internet, they are not as restricted in size, format, or use of color. In style, while some alternative cartoons are drawn using the same

cute-ish non-offensive facial caricatures common to most newspaper cartooning, many escape this by projecting the repugnant morals or actions they perceive in their targets onto their faces. This can be seen in the cartoons of Mattari Takeshi examined above, and in cartoons by Kurata Sin, Morimoto Kiyohiko, and Nekomaru-Z. The use of photo-collage by Mad Amano also adds to the diversity of styles found outside of newspaper cartooning. In regards to subject, alternative cartoons do not stop at being critical of just politicians, who major newspaper cartoons overwhelmingly focus on. Alternative cartoons also make bureaucrats, agencies, corporations, and even the public targets of their satire, and in doing so cover a greater range of political and social problems.

In examining and comparing four months of cartoons following the 3.11 disaster, this paper sought to assess if major newspaper and alternative political cartoons both adequately fulfilled their primary functions of highlighting problems and offering critical commentary. It was shown that both were capable of making effective satirical critiques which could help draw attention to problems of significance and help frame discourse around these issues. However, it was found that alternative cartoonists covered a wider variety of themes with more imagination and bite. Less restricted by the obvious caution shown in newspaper cartoonist approaches to their subjects, alternative cartoonists produced more aggressive satire more likely to cause offense. They did this in a variety of ways. One was the use of unflattering likenesses and at times realistic images. Another was the use of and more striking contrasts between those accused of misconduct and their victims. They also did this through the use of metaphors and allusions absent from the major newspaper cartoonists' toolbox, for example sexual intimacy, human experiments, illness, and death. This type of aggressive satire is more likely to provoke reactions and draw attention as good cartooning should. As political scientist Sodei Rinjiro puts it, "the aim of political cartoons should be to raise hell" (qtd. in McNicol).

This study shows alternative cartoons held greater potential for fulfilling their primary role as political cartoons than the cartoons of major newspapers. Yet, in reality, alternative cartoons fail to adequately fulfill this role as they are limited in a number of ways. While alternative cartoonists slightly outnumber newspaper cartoonists, their output is limited, producing less cartoons on the whole—while Mattari produced thirty-one cartoons in the period surveyed, other cartoonists on Niconico Seiga, like Tokkun and Sugumo produced just one each, and EYEMASK cartoonists Takagi Hiroshi and Nishida Toshiko produced only two and three cartoons respectively. In the case of periodicals such output is partly a result of the slower pace of weekly, monthly, and bi-annual publications, allowing less opportunity to publish cartoons when compared to newspapers with their three to four spots per week. Particularly in monthly and semi-annual magazines, this slow pace can also produce another limitation, a lag between event and cartoon

comment weakening the cartoon's impact and satirical punch. Another reason for the low output is that for most alternative cartoonists, cartooning is an amateur endeavor. That is, cartooning is neither a profession nor major source of income for them—the only exceptions to this would be only Yamafuji Shōji and possibly Mad Amano. In the case of *EYEMASK* and those publishing political cartoons on blogs and image sharing sites, they receive no income at all; cartooning here is purely a hobby.²⁸ As a result, most do not have the rigorous schedule of newspaper cartoonists and their output fluctuates often producing only when they have an idea or when their anger is fired up. This makes their work on the whole sporadic and less likely to draw regular viewers. It also means some issues—mundane but worthy of attention—that arise from parliament are picked up by newspaper cartoonists, though are not commented on by the alternative cartoonists. Moreover, post-3.11, the limited number and infrequency of alternative cartoons resulted in many other problems remaining untouched by either them or mainstream cartoonists, examples of which, TEPCO's refusal of foreign help, radiation drug scams, poor wheelchair access resulting in many deaths, court decisions leading up to disaster, and victim anger over compensation, etc. The tendency of alternative cartoonists to work only when inspired and/or angry also leads to a tendency of lacking balance between serious satire and entertainment in the form of lighthearted joking. While newspaper cartoonists could be accused of offering too much light entertainment in illustrations, light mocking, and gags, leaving readers not expecting strong satire when they do produce it, alternative cartoonists who are almost always on the attack could create a didactic tone over time, turning some readers off. This could be exacerbated further by a narrow choice of themes by individual artists, such as Hashimoto Masaru's almost exclusive focus on war and nuclear issues, even before 3.11, in his cartoons.

Another limit to the potential of alternative cartoons is that they fail to reach many people. The large circulations of the big-three dailies, *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, and *Mainichi* and national reach of Kyodo News through dozens of subscribing regional newspaper means their cartoons reach millions of readers. However, the circulations of weekly magazines that carry cartoons are only a fraction of this size; the specialist subscription-only cartoon magazine *EYEMASK* has a circulation of less than a thousand, and the number of views logged by political cartoons on popular image hosting websites such as *Niconico Seiga* and *Pixiv* range from a mere handful to a few thousand.²⁹ Only sometimes do these cartoons have lives beyond the Internet. Hashimoto Masaru's cartoons have been used on placards in some post-3.11 anti-nuclear demonstrations, giving them a little more exposure. Alternative cartoonists have also been able at times to collect their work in book form, for example Mad Amano (2012), Hashimoto Masaru (2013) and Ichi-Hana-Hana (2013), but these tend to be by small publishers making equally small print

runs, and by the time they are printed the immediacy of the cartoons on once pressing issues is largely lost.

Nevertheless, despite the present limits of these alternative cartoons, with mainstream newspaper political cartooning in apparent terminal decline, the best hope for political cartooning to play a useful critical role in public discourse in Japan in the future is for alternative cartoonists to continue to hone their skills in small circulation publications and on the Internet, for them to inspire more people to take up a pen and begin drawing, and for greater exposure for their work.

Notes

1. This tendency to equate Japanese political cartooning with only newspaper cartoons can be seen in symposia and roundtables where practitioners and scholars discuss the state of Japanese political cartooning (for example those reported in *Asahi Shinbun* 1983, *Tokyo Shinbun* 2008). This perception of newspaper cartoons alone being representative of contemporary Japanese political cartooning is also evident in the work of one of the only scholars specializing in this area, Ibaragi Masaharu, whose numerous studies over the last twenty examine major newspaper cartoons and exclude, sometimes explicitly, political cartoons in magazines and on the Internet (see for example, Ibaragi 2007).
2. Apart from noting initial responses, this paper avoids making a strictly chronological comparison of the cartoons. One reason for this is that a thematic focus allows easier comparison of what and how subjects were treated. Another reason is that dating many alternative cartoons is problematic. While those posted on image sharing sites have exact upload dates, those on some personal websites only indicate a month of publication. Also the publication of cartoons in monthly and semi-annual magazines can lag their execution by weeks or months.
3. A total of 175 cartoons were collected for analysis from these newspapers between March 11 and mid-July, 2011, a period of just over four months.
4. The use of “alternative” here to label this group is purely to indicate the work of cartoonists outside the major daily papers. This is not a black and white binary particularly as there are some areas of overlap between newspapers, and because of the broad range of publications and websites included in this alternative category. For example, cartoons of the weekly magazine *Shūkan Asahi* have been included in the alternative category even though the publication is owned by the major newspaper *Asahi Shinbun*. Also Hashimoto Masaru and some other older cartoonists whose work is included in the alternative category have in the past contributed cartoons to major dailies. Nonetheless, there are two good reasons for making this newspaper versus alternative division. One is because, as mentioned earlier (footnote 1), there is a tendency to only look at newspaper cartoons when talking about Japanese political cartoons, and this paper seeks to highlight cartoons found in other forums. A second reason is that cartoons in non-newspaper publications clearly enjoy more freedom to pursue a broader range of subjects than mainstream newspaper cartoons. This is true even in case of the weeklies *Shūkan Asahi* and *Shūkan Shinchō*, (circulations of 180,000 and 560,000 respectively) which would normally be considered mainstream media. The cartoons of Internet websites and of other much lower circulation magazines, such as the monthly news magazines *Kami no Bakudan*, *Tsukuru* (both with estimated circulations of 20,000) and the cartoon magazine *EYEMASK* (a small circulation coterie magazine), enjoy an even greater degree of freedom in subject matter, design, use of color, and size. A difference between newspaper and non-newspaper news reportage in general has also been noted by others. David McNeill, for example, in his examination of post 3-11 media reportage, pointed

- out a similar division between major newspaper conformity and “less inhibited” magazine reporting, labeling it a “major fault line in Japanese journalism” (129).
5. A total of 146 alternative cartoons by some nineteen cartoonists published between the disaster and the end of July were collected for comparison. This number omits cartoons that were repeated in multiple publications, such as Morimoto Kiyohiko’s cartoons in *EYEMASK* which were republished in *Shinpō to Kaikaku*, as well as those repeated on multiple websites such as Mattari’s cartoons appearing on image sharing sites *Niconico Seiga*, *Pixiv*, and now on his own blog. The collection samples for analysis focused on single panel cartoons in the tradition of editorial cartooning, so multi-panel political strips such by Saran in *Shūkan Nichiyōbi*, or by Gōda Yoshie in *SPIO* were excluded. While the sample used is no doubt not comprehensive, the author feels it is large enough to be considered representative. The focus on Mad Amano, Hashimoto Masaru, Ichi-Hana-Hana, and Mattari in this paper is because they were the most prolific, producing between them over half, 77, of the cartoons surveyed.
 6. *Yomiuri Shinbun* began the Yomiuri International Cartoon Contest in 1979, the year most famous cartoonist Kondō Hidezō passed. Held a total of 29 times, it was one of the world’s largest cartoon contests in terms of prize money, offering two million yen for its Grand Prize, and one and a half million yen for its Kondō Prize.
 7. A concise overview of the rise and fall of post-war Japanese cartooning, its four-decade-long decline, and reasons for this decline can be found in Ibaragi (2007), in particular chapter II section 4, pp. 71–93.
 8. The general lack of interest in politics and lack of opposition to the ruling political party had already shown some signs of turning in the late 2000s. This discontent ushered in a new government, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), by a landslide general election victory in 2009, ending the roughly five-decade dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). However, the disaster led to a much more significant turn to widespread public debate on political and social problems.
 9. These were the largest public protest rallies since the 1960s and would grow even larger in 2012 (Abe 90; Kingston 204). Also see Samuels (2013) for an overview of political and public discourse after the disaster and on widely held perceptions that the disaster would cause change in Japan.
 10. One exception to this was in a regional newspaper, the *Fukushima Minpō*. They began in May 2011 to print political cartoons by retired high school art teacher, Asakura Yūzō, once a week. His cartoons, drawn from a local perspective, satirize not only national politicians, but also bureaucrats, industry and social attitudes. I have dealt with his work in a separate paper Stewart (2014).
 11. Marguerite Wells (2006) has argued that in Japanese society there has long been a tendency to either avoid satire, or use it only in a mild form. Wells contends that Japanese society tends to overcome the problem of aggression in humor by containment, the restriction of humor use to certain times, places and situations. In some forms of public humor such as farce in theatre, aggression can be contained within a fantasy world, not hurting anyone in the real world. However, the aggression of satire in the media, which by its nature is directly

linked to the real world and efforts to change or improve it, cannot be contained. This is overcome in countries with traditions of satire, such as in France and English speaking countries, by granting cartoonists and other satirists a special social permission to ridicule, and by elevating this form of humor to one that is considered an important part of political discourse. For Wells, this Japanese tendency to use satire in only a limited way is cultural not essential. She suggests that if the situation of Japanese people changed and the widespread complacency regarding politics in Japan of the second half of the twentieth century turned to a desire reform, “the future may prove a richer field for Japanese satire” (212–213).

12. There is very little legal protection for cartoonists using caricature and parody to make critical comments, even if considered “fair comment.” See for example the reports of court cases related to the use of faces in comics by Ōie (2012), and related to the use of parody in collage cartoons by Amano (Amano 2013).
13. Yamafuji’s reaction appears to have been written within days of the disaster, but was slow to reach print due to publishing schedules. His cartoons in the first two issues dated after the disaster, April 18 and 25, contain no reference to 3.11, and were obviously drawn before the tragedy. Weekly magazines such as this go on sale seven to ten days in advance of their cover dates, and much of the content is prepared a week or two before publication.
14. Two examples of strips that did engage with post-3.11 social problems are *Yomiuri*’s strip “Kobo-chan” by Ueda Masashi, and The *Asahi*’s “Defenders of the Planet [Chikyū bōeike no hitobito]” by Shiriagari Kotobuki. Ueda’s strip continued from the 15th, four days after the disaster, would touch occasionally on the post-disaster concerns of energy saving, donations, panic buying and the desire to help victims, but offered no strong critiques. Shiriagari’s continued from a day earlier, the 14th, with the disaster images on television leaving the strip’s characters shocked and speechless. Over the following weeks and months Shiriagari’s strip engaged with the themes taken up in Ueda’s “Kobo-chan” but more persistently and at a deeper level, even to the extent of actually visiting the disaster area and relating the experience through this strip. Nevertheless, these strips engagement with disaster related themes was on the whole intermittent, rarely producing any satirical commentary, and when they did it was very mild social satire. Rather than critiques, the disaster related themes in the strips were mostly calls for sympathy or vehicles for timely but non-offensive gags.
15. Much of this slow response may be due to newspapers and editors seeking to avoid offence, and rather than the cartoonists themselves. *Asahi* cartoonist Yamanoi Norio claims from experience that there reluctance by newspaper editors to allow make any humor related to death, and by sub-editors responsible for cartoon content for a short tenure to cause trouble that could slow their promotions within the company (Yamanoi “Manga and Japanese Cartooning”). Also newspapers today appear to have a low estimation of the value of political cartoons within journalism. Cartoonist Yokota Shigi when asked about why Mainichi took so long to restart cartoons after 3.11, claimed that it was important for the newspaper to provide information related to the disaster to its readers and this left no page space for cartoons (Yokota). Yet, despite this no space for cartoons stance of the

- newspaper, popular inner-rear page comic strips, as noted above, continued on more-or-less uninterrupted.
16. This cute-ish style is also very common amongst commercial portrait caricaturists who produce non-offensive caricatures on request for events, wedding and other presents, and as illustrations for publications. See for example the caricature [*nigaoe*] instruction books and other work by the prolific professional caricaturist Okawara Tomoko.
 17. Among the mainstream dailies, only *Mainichi Shinbun* allows its cartoonists to use color. However, this is limited to the rare occasions when cartoons appear on color print run pages paid for by advertisers wanting to place color advertisements.
 18. Difficulty in initial responses to national crises is not unique to Japan. In the United States, cartoonists were unsure how to respond to the 9-11 disaster. For cartoonist Mike Lester, “The tragedy was so enormous, you couldn’t be funny” (quoted in Lamb 5). George Bush had been a comic figure before terrorist attacks, but suddenly cartoonists felt it inappropriate to criticize him or his administration, as doing so would be unpatriotic, and as a result many turned to nationalist cheerleading rather than editorializing (Lamb 3–9). Many cartoonists also continued to self-censor in the weeks and months afterward (Lamb 18). Other studies which have examined chronologically cartoon responses to disasters or tragedies in the United States, show there is a tendency for early responses to be non-critical (see Kelley-Romano and Westgate, “Blaming Bush; Kelley-Romano and Westgate “Drawing Disaster”; and Bush).
 19. Though for Hashimoto, even this narrow view was better than no cartoons at all. He expressed his dismay in mid-2013 when *Yomiuri Shinbun* quietly stopped running political cartoons altogether. He pointed out how important cartoons had been in the past, and pleaded with *Yomiuri* even though he did not necessarily agree with their politics, to restart their political cartoons (Hashimoto, “Yomiuri shinbun ni no setaya, waga seiji manga!!”).
 20. All of the cartoons by Ichi-Hana-Hana discussed in this paper have been included along with the commentary in a volume of the cartoonist’s collected works 2006 to 2013, published late 2013.
 21. Planned blackouts were avoided mostly by use of existing water, gas and oil power generation infrastructure, by public and business power savings (*setsuden*), and by the efforts of manufacturing industries to curb demand peaks. By May 2012 all nuclear power generation had been taken offline to be brought up to stricter safety standards. Even so, blackouts continued to be avoided, despite repeated warnings by Japan’s large regional power companies necessity of planned blackouts leading into periods of high demand in summer and winter (Nishioka 2011; *Asahi Shinbun* April 28, 2014). TEPCO still maintains a customer information website for planned blackouts (<http://www.tepco.co.jp/KT/>). For an early report accusing TEPCO of using planned blackouts as “propaganda” for nuclear power, see *Tokyo Shinbun*, May 12, 2011.
 22. Three months after the disaster, it was reported that only 15% of the 251 billion yen donated for victims of the disaster had actually made it directly to them. There

were fears that various levels of government would continue to hold the money in long-term reserve as happened after the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake (Johnson).

23. This observation is based a viewing of all the political cartoons of the Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri newspapers for the years 2001 to 2012 while building a database for the research project, “The Limits of Japanese Political Cartooning: a comparative study of Japanese and US cartoons 9.11 to 3.11” (Kaken Grants-in-Aid for Scientific, project No: 24520170). Cartoons in which politicians or countries are shown in gendered relationships, particularly in the roles of husband and wife, can be readily found among Japanese political cartoons of the 1950s through to 1970s, but even among these there appear to be none that allude so directly to a sexual relationship.
24. For cartoons to be critical of the government’s slowness to respond after disasters appears to be common. The same response by cartoonists can be seen in the U.S. after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005 (Kelley-Romano and Westgate, “Blaming Bush”) and after the 2010 Gulf of Mexico BP Oil Spill Disaster (Stewart, “Kasai no tēma o tōshite saguru nichibei seiji manga no hikaku”).
25. Kelley-Romano and Westgate (“Blaming Bush” 759–763) have examined how U.S. cartoonists after Hurricane Katrina criticized President Bush’s slowness to respond to the disaster. They argue that by contrasting the victim, in a difficult situation, with the political leader, in a position of relative safety and comfort, they were able to emphasize the President’s misplaced priorities, strengthening the rhetoric of blame used to satirize him.
26. Mad Amano who publishes his work in *EYEMASK* and a number of other small circulation weekly and monthly magazines, as well as on his own website *The Parody Times*, has been producing photo montage “parodies” for almost four decades. In 1978 he won a Bungei Shunjūsha cartoon award for his work.
27. See again Japanese cartoonist Yamanoi Norio’s talk on the limits of Japanese political cartooning for an explanation of taboos and examples of his own experience of having cartoons rejected at *Asahi Shinbun* (Yamanoi “Manga and Japanese Cartooning”).
28. This situation was confirmed in conversation with EYEMASK contributor and Japan’s FECO (Federation of Cartoonist Organizations) representative Nishida Toshiko in interview at the Nihon Manga no Kai’s Abe Wars Exhibition, Ginza, Tokyo, August 7, 2015.
29. The number of views and comments for each image are logged on the page they appear on. In comparison, popular fan art and illustrations often log tens of thousands of views on these image sharing sites.

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