

Babysan's Burden: An Analysis of the American Occupation of Japan through Cartoons

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Abstract: Babysan appeared in 1951, arguably intended as an everywoman in Occupied Japan, yet a uniquely American abstraction. Babysan offered a humorous take on the Occupation by one of its own servicemen. But she became a way to approach an indigenous and occupied population and a representation of what occupation does to a former enemy. With enough cartoons to fill multiple volumes, Bill Hume, entertained his compatriots in peacetime. His was a Japan devoid of starvation and devastation. Rather, it was a thriving society of attractive women, enthusiastic to interact with the occupying American servicemen. Indeed, by creating an innocuous and eager feminized image, American soldiers could find postwar Japan nonthreatening and even welcoming in the face of defeat in total war. Yet Babysan was not just a racist and misogynist portrait. What Babysan now tells us about relations between two unequal powers in the aftermath of destruction is far more than that for which her broken English could then account.

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The Occupation of Japan following the defeat of the nation in 1945 marked an unprecedented age for both the defeated and the victor, America. Having never experienced subjugation, Japan had to re-envision itself vis-a-vis its former rival, and the latter had to re-envision itself as protector of its former antagonist. This self-made onus for the United States obviously altered political and martial relations, but so too did it transform the social interactions between the two states. Considerable scholarship has analyzed both the official attempts to normalize gendered relationships between America and Japan during the occupation of the latter as well as egregious failures to do so. Of the former work, one need only examine, for instance, the role of American-promoted pageantry with the "Miss Atom Bomb" contests on both sides of the Pacific (Nakamura, *Miss Atom Bomb*: 117) or the influence of the Occupation's Civil Censorship Detachment on Japanese women's magazines postwar (McAndrew, *Beauty, Soft Power*: 95). To see the failures, the astute student could easily happen upon accounts of frequent rape and sexual assault that the power imbalance of the Occupation engendered (Eiji, *Inside GHQ*: 67; Svoboda, *U.S. Courts-Martial*: 3). But neither the attempts at normalization nor the failures of such attempts reveal the story for most soldiers, and, perhaps, for a number of women. To many involved in gendered

relationships during the Occupation, the tale was more nuanced and complicated. By viewing this transformation through the lens of something as innocuous as a presumably humorous cartoon, historians can analyze the Occupation of Japan in a very atomized, yet truly universal mode. *Babysan*, a cartoon that portrayed “a private look at the Japanese Occupation” was popular enough to transcend its newspaper origins in *Navy Times* and *Stars and Stripes*, the military periodicals widely read by Occupation forces. Ultimately, the portrayals filled more than two books, outsold both Mickey Spillane and Ernest Hemingway, and were insightful enough to be both comprehensible to and comprehensive for service personnel (Clark, “*Art talent*”).

Born in the full blossom of maturity in 1951, *Babysan* was the creation of William (Bill) Hume, naval reservist in the Damage Control unit of Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron 120 at Oppama during the tail end of the Occupation of Japan. This notwithstanding, Hume was loathed to take ownership of the young, nubile woman, claiming that he “didn’t invent *Babysan*” (Harvey, *Insider Histories of Cartooning*: 162; Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 6; and Clark, “*Art talent*”). Whatever her origin story, *Babysan* was meant to embody the youthful Japanese everywoman – after all, Hume declared, he merely “reported life as it was.”

Hume was joined in his work by his colleague, John Annarino, another naval serviceman, who provided the later commentary for some of Hume’s volumes on the eponymous *Babysan*. Translated literally as “Miss Baby,” *Babysan* offers up an attempt at both politeness that Annarino deemed a “necessity and not a luxury” in Japan, and a shot at “speed(ing) up introductions.” You get to know her quickly in part because she seems easily knowable in multiple senses. She is neither terribly discerning nor discriminatory, nor is she supposedly complex. Gone is the presumably “mysterious Orient” of times past. Instead, the Japan of *Babysan* is wholly novel – a “revamped, Americanized Japan” (Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*: 20; Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 16).

This was not necessarily the case prior to the Occupation, which began with Japan’s defeat, in 1945. But *Babysan* was, at best, inchoate then. As Annarino and Hume inform the reader,

in 1945, in the early days of the occupation of Japan, it was a common sight to see American servicemen giving candy to some baby boy or girl. Most of the Japanese kids were shy and this friendly gesture helped win the youngsters over to the side of the Americans. As the years passed, those kids, naturally, grew up. The little boy grew up to be a boy-san and the little girl grew up to be – like *Babysan*. (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 6)

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This meant that Babysan is not only quite young, she is also wholly partial to the Americans – at least according to the Americans, and, as Hume was correct in maintaining, to them, Babysan seemed ubiquitous. Admittedly, so, too, did boy-san, but the difference is that Babysan became the sole identifier for females – they were not the citizens the Occupation had created, rather, they were “like Babysan.” As sociologist Debbie Storrs’ mother, a Japanese woman who came of age in Osaka during the Occupation, reported, American servicemen “used to call me Babysan, Babysan. [...] I was about fourteen” (Storrs, *Like a Bamboo*: 203). Indeed, Annarino noted, “the serviceman doesn’t really care whether she is Emiko or Keiko, Jean or Linda. For him and his *yen* she is the one and only – Babysan” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 18).

To be like Babysan was to be defined in relation to America. In only one cartoon in *Babysan* is the eponymous woman ever alone. In this image, Babysan, wearing a diaphanous slip, back toward the viewer, gazes over her shoulder toward the viewer, presumably a GI, and pouts, “If you all time look I not undress” (79). Similarly, in the only image of Babysan alone in Hume’s second work, *Babysan’s World: The Hume’n Slant on Japan*, Babysan, undressing for the Japanese bath, scolds an unseen GI (identified also by the fact that his shoes are visible outside of the dwelling) for complaining about the water temperature (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan’s World*: 43). Thus, more often than not, she shares her space, both metaphorical if not literal, with an American GI. Babysan existed solely because of a GI, and continued to do so. As Babysan, while rifling through 17 photographs of different American GIs, informs an older Japanese woman, presumably her mother, who, unlike her daughter, is clad in a kimono, “I think Occupation was dai-jobu” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 13). Babysan is telling her mother that she thought the Occupation was okay, enjoyable, even. This, in and of itself, is not necessarily noteworthy, although it is odd that she would say so primarily in (broken) English. Indeed, initially at least, not a few individuals found the Occupation a surprising relief following years of sacrifice, hardship, and destruction (Dower, *Embracing Defeat*: 88). But to note this in English, to a fellow Japanese citizen, even after years of exposure to Americans, would have been a truly foreign conceit.

In a way, Babysan also existed thusly. She was a liminal individual. As a Japanese woman, she was part of a defeated nation, yet, to the GIs who now occupied their former enemy state, she transcended race and nation – “She looks Japanese (in her physical features). She looks American (in her dress and composure). Nice, you think. Incongruous, you think. Sexy, you think” (Hume and

Annarino, *Babysan*: 10). After all, one GI tells another, as a third dances with Babysan, “she looks just like my girl back home!” (11) Her utility to the Americans was her liminality – and her location. Unlike the American girl back home, “Babysan is here!” (10)

Her liminality was also predicated on her appropriation of American culture. Babysan is keenly attuned to her foreign counterpart, the “girl back home.” Babysan, Annarino notes, “is terribly impressed by American movies, American customs, the American way of life” (24). In another cartoon, Babysan, opening boxes of presents from a loved-up GI, smiles at her paramour du jour, imploring, “You speak. Japanese girls different from girls in states?” (29) Of course, for all her adoptions and adaptations, she still exists as a lesser option – albeit the present one. Hume and Annarino joke at Babysan’s smaller attributes than those of the Americans (“in the Jane Russell department Babysan is slightly understocked”), but applaud Babysan for her ingenuity and effort, noting that “a girl just doesn’t step out of wooden, toe-revealing *geta* into soaring high-heeled shoes without wobbling a little, and she doesn’t shed a *kimono* for a skirt and a sweater without looking a little ‘artificial.’” They commend her on her artifice, as, after all, “she’s trying her darndest (*sic*) to become westernized, more to American liking. [...] It merely shows that she is giving her all to please” (26 and 24).

Although Annarino and Hume are quick to inform us that she is “not a gold-digger,” as she is “in her strange and unusual way [...] sincere,” she is accustomed to payment for her company, either in the form of presents, money, luxuries, or necessities, not merely for herself, but for her family, as well (32, 34, 92, 56 and 95). At first blush, perhaps, she seems a prostitute, as she also enjoys the friendship of multiple GIs, both concurrently and consecutively (53 and 123). Yet she expects each of her male friends to be faithful to her, to maintain her as “the *Ichi* ban – number one – girl in her boyfriend’s life,” or they merit the damning charge of “butterflying,” flitting from woman to woman (65 and 48-49).

If Babysan has expectations of her boyfriends, it is because she can. It would be easy to dismiss Babysan as merely a naïve social climber, but it would shortchange Babysan’s devotion, limited though it may be. Some scholars have deemed Babysan as purely deceitful, but that would equally shortchange not only Babysan, but Hume (Brandt, *Learning from Babysan*; Storrs, *Japanese Feminine Wiles*: 26). Babysan, in spite, perhaps, of her origins, has more depth than that. She possesses a modicum of power, and only occasionally does it manifest in deceit. Out of the 58 cartoons comprising *Babysan*, in only three does Babysan hide her other paramours from the boyfriend (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 53, 97 and 99). In fact, in other

cartoons, Babysan unabashedly flaunts her popularity before her boyfriend (24 and 41). In the sequel, she is even more open about her prior and current exploits (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 35, 37 and 61). Babysan is able to maintain both her stable of men, and her insistence on her "ichiban" status, precisely because she is not considered a prostitute. She is valued because she seems innocent (like the girl back home), in spite of her demand for payment. As one GI tells a second, as they take in a Japanese burlesque dancer, "I'll bet she can't cook worth a damn" (123). Babysan, presumably, can; she exists as a temporary wife to these GIs (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 102). And, as such, she is not embittered, despite the death of her father in the war, save for when the presents disappoint. As she tells Hume in an introductory dialogue in his second work about her, "I remember the war. I was small babysan. I live Tokyo. I remember the big planes come [...] war no good, Hume-san" (96; Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 7).

Nevertheless, she is, more often than not, a replacement, albeit transitory, wife for her boyfriend. As *When We Get Back Home*, a book concurrent to *Babysan's* first volume, notes, the GIs are enamored by blondes, "the one thing it (Japan) does not have." Thus, "when he gets back home and does see a girl with flowing white tresses, he is inclined to stare because she has become a very strange – and a very welcome – sight" (Hume, *When We Get Back Home*: 76). Still, should Babysan get jealous, she need only remember that American women are often supposedly less amenable and subservient to the GIs than are the babysans, their Japanese counterparts. In one cartoon from *Babysan's* second tome, a Japanese American woman berates the GI who tries, in Japanese, to accost her, "Listen bud – I'm just visiting here, too. I was born and educated in Frisco!" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 49)

Whether or not she remains as a lesser option, Babysan makes life in Japan palatable. "To those who served with the American forces in Occupied Japan," Hume and Annarino mention, "this book will bring many a chuckle in recalling the happiness some little Babysan brought into their lives." Yet, they continue, "to others the book will prove a fascinating account of the mutual problems of the Japanese and American peoples in their first chance to become truly acquainted since the days of Admiral Perry" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 7).¹

It is to these problems that I would like to turn. Certainly, Hume and Annarino milk the communication issues, both verbal and psychological, between Babysan and her boyfriend, but there are far more problems inherent in the works that are not truly intentional, but are rather enlightening nonetheless. Babysan's Japan is a world practically devoid of Japanese men. There are none in *Babysan*, and only a

scant offering in the background of *Babysan's World*. In fact, the only Japanese man who has his own page to himself, in the latter, is a salaryman saying, "Gomen nasai – not know how I get into this book!" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 56)² For a series of works that purports to offer a glimpse into a world in which "the little boy grew up to be a boy-san" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 6), there are no boy-sans present.

Without men, the American GIs are met solely by individuals against whom they did not, technically, fight. Certainly and ostensibly, many Japanese subjects endeavored to serve the nation during war, but those whose service was martial are lacking in the Occupation of Babysan's world. Thus, American soldier and Japanese woman can agree that "war no good," as Babysan declares, without actually facing up to the realities of it, including its aftermath.

Therefore, Babysan is resilient, and so is the Japan she represents. In *Babysan's World*, the author notes that "no doubt there was some resentment on the part of the older Japanese as an American Occupation serviceman escorted his Japanese girl friend (*sic*) down the street," but quickly reassure the reader that "the guy who concentrates on one girl commands respect and admiration (from the Japanese public)!" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 14) For Hume, the only residual effect of the war among Japanese in Occupied Japan is the sense that American GIs are promiscuous. Even racial tension is easily overcome for the GI who pursues Babysan exclusively, who, in other words, does not butterfly.

It appears, on first blush, that there are no holdovers from wartime or even prewar Japan in Babysan's world. Yet, as Hume and Annarino gained more familiarity with the nation, they broached the more "traditional" aspects of Japan. These are, at times surprisingly so, approached with more depth than the prejudiced vision of Japan in the works would have the reader believe. Indeed, the author cautions the reader, "a geisha is **not** a prostitute. She is – highly respected. Well educated. Proficient in the fine arts like music, dancing, art, social graces, dress, and the sometimes intricate customs and ceremonies of her country. Moral beyond reproach!" (22) In *When We Get Back Home*, Hume and Annarino continue that the *geisha* "is the mistress of song and dance. She is the queen of oriental fashion and etiquette. She does her job, the job of entertaining, with charm and grace. And rightly so, because she has been trained in the ways of an entertainer from the time she was about fifteen years old" (Hume and Annarino, *When We Get Back Home*: 80). But the geisha is unreachable for the GI. Babysan chastises her boyfriend in front of an image of an *oiran*, a traditional and high-ranking prostitute, "you think Japanese girls look like this?" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*:

9) And it's true, while mistaking *oiran* for *geisha*, Hume was not incorrect about the nature of both.

It seems that, at times in spite of himself, the boyfriend was rapidly learning about the nation, even if the lens was skewed. Babysan was teaching the boyfriend about many cultural aspects of her country, as she became sole ambassador. Indeed, one would be excused for assuming that the GIs' interactions were exclusively with women, and more specifically with Babysan. Yet this was not without its issues. In *Anchors are Heavy*, yet another Hume offering, this one from 1955, an American soldier is being awarded a medal in front of a line of men at attention. The medal, another comments to his compatriot, was because "he spent three days in Tokyo without speaking to a woman" (Hume and Annarino, *Anchors are Heavy*: 93). To fail to speak to a woman was commendable to the Americans, yet to fail to interact with Babysan was thought to be problematic to the Japanese.

And, for the most part, it was to the Japanese that Hume and Annarino would bow. After all, Babysan had a proliferation of boyfriends, to each of whom she would convey a modicum of respect for her nation. Thus, Hume includes a glossary in the back of the first volume for "those who never had Babysan for a teacher" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 124). Moreover, they conclude Babysan's second volume with the note that the American GIs discover "what Japan has meant," and quickly come to realize that "the folks back in the States must be made to understand that the Far East is an integral part of our future, that their culture must make a valuable contribution to ours, and will!" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 126). As the author continues in *When We Get Back Home*,

outsiders tend to look upon Japan as a strange and unusual country, but the serviceman who has lived in and loved the life of Nippon doesn't see it that way at all. His viewpoint is native. He is magically impressed with the colorful, charming country, and when he gets back to the home he left in America it is apparent that the impression has been a lasting one. (Hume, *When We Get Back Home*: 2)

But it is an appropriated Japan. Just as Babysan adopts American customs and culture to adapt them to her own purposes, so too do Hume and Annarino similarly appropriate Japanese customs and culture to create their own version of the nation – one that is "colorful, charming" enough to be removed from the harsh

realities of defeat and destruction. It is also one in which Babysan exists in myriad permutations.

As historian Naoko Shibusawa pointed out, this portrayal was a fiction – “real Japanese women, of course, did not have gravity-defying breasts,” but service personnel soon grew to accept the Japanese women that existed (Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*: 39). Like Hume and Annarino they came to envision the nation as one of little girls who had become like Babysan, but unlike Hume and Annarino, they often proved more callous toward their own versions of babysan in reality. As Lucy Herndon Crockett, an American novelist, recorded during her time in Occupied Japan, two American servicemen “on their way back to the United States” bade farewell to their presumed Babysans, one of whom tearfully pleaded, “When you come back?” Her beau laughed, “Come back? Why, when you – Japs bomb Pearl Harbor again, baby, I’ll be back!” (Crockett, 145-146). These were hardly the sensitive, culturally malleable boyfriends of Babysan that Hume and Annarino imparted. Rather, these men were repeating the same racist, misogynistic tropes of *Madame Butterfly*, the girls to be left behind when the opportunity arose (Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*: 38).

Were Hume and Annarino not misogynistic or racist? Babysan is a product of such skewed views, regardless of whether the historical context made such portrayals more acceptable in their time. But neither are they merely misogynistic or racist. They are, of course, naïve, certainly more so than Babysan herself. For Hume, while some cross-Pacific relationships petered out, “there are many serious Japanese-American romances,” such that, “when it comes time for him (boyfriend) to pack his bags and head for the States, he finds it hard to leave the charming things he has found in Japan. It is so hard, in fact, that there are some things he just refuses to leave behind” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 62; and Hume and Annarino, *When We Get Back Home*; 6). As one boyfriend, returning Stateside, declares his Babysan at customs, he perplexes the agents, who ask each other, “how much duty does he pay on something he’s declared priceless?” (7) If he brings something home, so too does Hume believe that he leaves something of himself in Japan – “a part of him, he knows, will always be in the little country.” Hume and Annarino recognize the ambassadorial role boyfriend and Babysan share, even if the power relations are imbalanced. As they note, “over the years Japan has become a home to the visiting serviceman. He has come to understand and to love the people and the ways of Nippon. He has lived a new life, and the new life has made him, the American, Asiatic” (116). Thus, both Babysan and boyfriend exist not solely as ambassador to each other – Hume and Annarino

comment that “often the personality and behavior of the guy explains the personality and behavior of the gal [...] and vice. (*sic*) versa.” – but to their compatriots in their native lands (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 14).

As Hume and Annarino note in *Babysan*, more likely than not, “he will never see her again but he will never forget her. He taught her much but she taught him more. His education ceases but hers will continue” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 120). But, there are more two more books in which Babysan returns, and, not surprisingly, the ambassadorial role in America is of more note in Hume and Annarino's *oeuvre*. After all, they note, “there is much we can learn from those of the Far East – their polite manners, their self-discipline, their peace of mind, their love of life, their adaptability, their sense of humor. Such things we have in common but perhaps they have mastered the situation a bit better” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 86).

Hume asks if Babysan, a film buff, can differentiate the fiction from the reality. The Japanese, they fear, “get a warped idea of America from such an entertainment diet. Or do they see thru (*sic*) the baloney dished up by crummy movies?” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 110; Hume and Annarino, *Babysan's World*: 88). As they lament, “there's a lot the Japanese don't know about us,” but they follow that by noting that “we know even less about their history, their customs. But the American often seems so conceited that he thinks everyone must know and understand everything that is American” (102).

Not surprisingly, Hume and Annarino do not always see the irony of their warped idea of Japan as they berate the Japanese for their unsophisticated view of America. But they do have the sense to berate their compatriots for their ignorant and hegemonistic views, even when they are complicit in that ignorance and hegemony. As Hume explains, “life in Japan is a fascinating experience for the serviceman. His schooling in the customs of the country knows no recess. He continually learns new rules of behavior.” These extend to the bathroom, where Japanese-style toilets flummox him: “Stateside toilets offer no challenge, but a Japanese **benjo** [...] is in a class of its own.” The former is not challenging, not because of the nature of cultural conditioning, according to the author, but because it is so much more sensible – after all, the American toilet “is chairlike” (Hume and Annarino, *When We Get Back Home*: 62 – emphasis his). Never mind that chairs exist in a myriad of iterations across the globe. The one is an obvious choice for Hume, while the second is the lesser option. Nevertheless, Hume and Annarino maintain, after exposure to Japan, “the serviceman discovers that the folks at home sometimes act in mighty strange ways. **So desu.** (That's right)” (52 – emphasis his).

Why not wear *geta*? As an American mother informs the son she shares with her serviceman husband, who marches ahead, outfitted in the footwear, "Daddy was right – he **doesn't** get his feet wet!" The authors, of course, concur: "Shoes get soggy and feet get damp (in the rain), but when resting the feet on the wooden platforms the wearer can roam through puddles with complete Asiatic abandon" (69 and 68, emphasis his).

Much of the presumed preference or appreciation for things Japanese following service abroad smacks of condescension – the serviceman is "stunned" by the athleticism and skill of the "small, harmless-looking people" of Japan (74). Without necessarily meaning to do so, Hume and Annarino fall in line with postwar propaganda, a process that often is seen beginning with the photograph of Supreme Command for the Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur's first meeting with Japanese Emperor Hirohito on 27th September 1945 at the General Headquarters of the Allied command of the Occupation (Dower, *Embracing Defeat*: 294). As historian Herbert Bix stated, "the emperor in the photograph was not a living god but a mortal human being beside a much older human to whom he was now subservient. He perfectly exemplified the defeated nation, while MacArthur's relaxed pose projected the confidence that comes from victory" (Bix, 550).

The photograph certainly altered Japanese people's perceptions, but so too did it change Americans'. No longer could the Japanese be thought of as bloodthirsty barbarians or monstrous warriors. Rather, they seemed little, weak, even to the point of being immature and effete (Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*: 97). In the altered version of the American propaganda film, *Our Job in Japan*, in 1946, the finale featured "footage depicting friendly Americans mingling with attractive, earnest Japanese women and children." The narrator would chime in that the American GIs were "here to make it clear to the Japanese brain that we've had enough of this bloody barbaric business to last us from here on in. We're here to make it clear to the Japanese that the time has now come to make sense – modern, civilized sense. That is our job in Japan" (Dower, *Embracing Defeat*: 215 and 217).

Hume and Annarino certainly play into the propaganda – after all, Babysan is nothing if not presented as a harmless ingénue. However, they are surprisingly astute when they highlight that "there are many things that Americans didn't have to teach Babysan. They are characteristics that were always there, and merely brought to the fore by the Occupation" (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 66). Babysan, they claim, is a fully democratic individual – "being democratic is a natural part of Babysan's personality and existence" (66). She "makes sense" of her own accord, and not due to the influence of the Americans with whom she

associates. This, despite the U.S. Army's pamphlet *A Pocket Guide to Japan* insisting that the Americans were "trying to teach [an] authority-ridden people the meaning of democracy" (Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*: 18).

Yet, at the end of the day, to her creator, anyway, Babysan seemed uncomplicated. Hume, in an interview with cartoonist and critic R. C. Harvey, noted that his famous character "was an outgrowth of the geisha, who [...] were not prostitutes. [...] In many cases, they were live-in lovers. Babysan became that; she was a poor man's geisha. Geisha were wonderful things in other times; they were not immoral, as such. They were entertainers and I found – maybe I was all wrong but – I didn't consider it as a moral issue." Instead, "Babysan kept a lot of guys out of trouble – kept them preoccupied and because, theoretically, you were Babysan's friend, you were accepted in various places as long as you were with her. You could go places you wouldn't otherwise be able to go. The babysans rode herd on guys, and I think they did kind of a service. [...] All Japanese girls that I heard about, they were all babysans" (Harvey, *Insider Histories of Cartooning*: 166-167).

The work, it would transpire, would be banned in Tokyo, according to Hume, despite its proliferation. Nevertheless, one female reviewer, according to Hume, would proclaim that the first volume "did more to promote good relations, or explain relations between the Japanese and the Americans, than any other book they'd ever found" (166). Hume acknowledged that these relations often involved "a lot of meanness," so intended his work to offer what he deemed as a look at the other side of Occupation (168). After all, MacArthur proclaimed, in his New Year's message to the Japanese people on 1st January 1948, due to the Occupation, "every Japanese citizen can now for the first time do what he wants, and go where he wants, and say what he wants," and according to Hume, Babysan embodied the fulfillment of that desire (Whitney, *The Philosophy of the Occupation*: xxi).

As it would turn out, there were more than two sides to the Occupation, as there were to Babysan. Both proved far more complicated than originally thought. She is innocent and she is conniving. Babysan is naïve and she is intelligent; she is American and she is Japanese. As a cartoon, she proves more than the caricature for which she was often dismissed, both in her time and to this day.

Nevertheless, though Hume does not claim to offer a comprehensive look at Babysan's world, historian Kim Brandt is correct in pointing out that what the works do not include proves telling. As Brandt asserts, the Japan portrayed in Hume's works, though bifurcated between American and Japanese, is shockingly

homogeneous, insofar as there are only white American males and Japanese females. This obscures the heterogeneity of Allied service personnel stationed in Japan (men and women of various ethnicities, races, and nationalities), just as much as it does the fact that Japanese males existed (Brandt, *Learning from Babysan*).

So too does Hume ignore the “meanness” of many relationships that he acknowledged in his interview with Harvey. There was, after all, a vast power imbalance at the heart of the relationship – one half of the pair existed as emblematic of a defeated nation, the other, representative of the victor. It is hardly surprising, though quite unfortunate, that many of these so-called relationships were rooted in objectification at best and cruelty at worst. Annarino obliquely acknowledges this – when dealing with Babysan, who wants to grant your every wish, “let us suggest that your wishes be reasonable,” he chastens (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 20). After all, rape was not uncommon during the Occupation, as were other forms of sexual violence (Svoboda, *U.S. Courts-Martial in Occupation Japan*: 4-5).

In her world, Babysan is the perpetrator, not of violence, per se, but of power. It is she who controls boyfriend; it is she who is permitted to juggle multiple paramours; most importantly, it is she who understands both worlds well enough to exist within the American and the Japanese spheres. She, Annarino maintains, “has grown up with servicemen around her. She’s associated with ship sailors and base sailors. She’s listened to their wildest ideas and their bawdiest jokes. She even agrees with some of their private theories” (Hume and Annarino, *Babysan*: 70). Additionally, she has proven intelligent enough to play dumb, when need be. “Babysan is smart,” Annarino comments, “She may not always seem clever, but she has brains – and uses them. Newcomers to the land of Fuji-san will bluntly state that no girl can outwit them. Such a statement confirms the fact that they are either deluded ignoramuses or that they haven’t met Babysan. She will be careful not to appear too brilliant. She may even tell him frankly that she is a little dense, keep her mouth shut, and let him convince himself.” In the end, “everything is just the way she wants it” (86).

Furthermore, that she is versed enough to understand ideas, jokes, and theories indicates a level of fluency in English that boyfriend lacks in Japanese. Certainly, he has picked up phrases here and there, but he expects English to be *lingua franca*, and Babysan can comply in ways boyfriend cannot. Moreover, “people like Babysan are tolerant” of Americans’ “undeserved feeling of accomplishment” when they master a few words in Japanese and after “they manage to

mispronounce three or four words of the Japanese language they are sure they know everything there is to know about it" (88). Babysan and her ilk will proceed "with patience and understanding (to) try to further educate the Americans without being obvious about it" (88). As a proud American boyfriend brags to Babysan, "Of course I can speak your language – I can say BOTH takusan and sukoshi," Babysan politely giggles to herself, rather than call out her ignorant friend on his puffery (89). Besides, if boyfriend "starts comparing qualities [...] he may find out that he is the loser" (84).

Her tolerance only extends towards boyfriend's good nature. She is discriminating in other areas. As Annarino insists, in addition to stinginess and butterflies, "Babysan will not tolerate a drunken boyfriend" (92). As Babysan pushes an inebriated boyfriend out the door, she scolds, "sukoshi stinko, maybe okay – takusan stinko, sayonara!" (91)³ Despite her desire for his support, Babysan is hardly as dependent on each boyfriend as he is on her. In one cartoon, as a curious boyfriend eavesdrops, Babysan converses with her girlfriends, remarking on the arrivals of various ships: "Antietam come 15th – Joe-san on Boxer come in 17th – takusan sailors on number 32" (99). She is capable of supporting herself, albeit by utilizing the boyfriends. If this is misogynistic, it is only so because society has created it as a way of life, and one that is not necessarily always pursued volitionally. It is not misogynistic in that it exists as a choice. As Hume notes, it exists across the Pacific with "the 'baby' of the chorus line who is showered with gift-wrapped affection from the bulb-eyed gentleman in the front row [...] the 'baby' who keeps the pin-striped business-man chuckling and carefree at the annual convention" (28). Nor is this unique to Occupation Japan, as Hume maintains geisha predated Babysan, but as he notes, while "this sort of girl still inhabits Japan [...] she is not usually found clinging to a serviceman's arm. In GI circles, Babysan has edged her out of the scene" (36).

Babysan also edges boyfriend out of the scene. Boyfriend always leaves, and, save for the rare occasions when she accompanies him, Babysan remains. As one boyfriend, eyeing his discharge orders, with a nubile Babysan in the background, perky buttocks facing the viewer, laments, "I hate to go and leave all that behind!" (121) She, however, smiles beatifically. Annarino recalls that,

When his ship pulls out the boyfriend's thoughts are with Babysan. He wonders how she will manage without him. He wonders if she feels the same sense of loss. Sure, he remembers her soothing words as she smiled up through a trace of tears, "I all time remember," but he wonders. He wonders if she too is lonely.

Close Encounters in War Journal, 2: "Close encounters in displacement" (2019)

Meanwhile, in the cartoon, as the ship pulls away from the dock, and Babysan stands, waving at the ship receding in the distance, her attention is drawn to another sailor, walking slowly up the dock towards her (122-123).

Babysan, a symbol of Occupation and subjugation, of racism and misogyny, finds a way to undermine such classifications. She is savvy and aware, culturally flexible and at times, even culturally powerful. Though at her heart she is an American invention, she is meant to be one that reflected reality. Even if the lens is skewed, her presence proves that there were ways to exist under domination and still maintain agency, at least in the wishful thinking of her creator.

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¹ American Navy Commodore Matthew Perry is credited with "opening" Japan in 1853 after years of relative international isolationism by the archipelago (Hawks, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron*: 256).

² *Gomen nasai* means "pardon me."

³ *Takusan* means “a lot,” while *sukoshi* indicates “a little.”