

OPIATE ADDICTION AND
THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF IMPERIALISM
AND PATRIARCHY IN MANCHUKUO, 1932-45

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Abstract. In the Japanese colonial state of Manchukuo, opiate addiction was condemned by officials and critics alike. But the state-sponsored creation of a monopoly, opium laws, and rehabilitation programs failed to reduce rates of addiction. Further, official media condemnation of opiate addiction melded with local Chinese-language literature to stigmatise addiction, casting a negative light over the state's failure to realise its own anti-opiate agenda. Chinese writers were thus transfixed in a complex colonial environment in which they applauded measures to reduce harm to the local population while levelling critiques of Japanese colonial rule. This paper demonstrates how the Chinese-language literature of Manchukuo did not simply parrot official policies. It also delegitimised Japanese rule through opiate narratives that are gendered, consistently negative, and more critical of the state than might be expected in a colonial literature.

*... This sacrifice is truly terrifying
You've turned your life's blood to mud
The price is far too high.
If it were your lover
You'd have to let it go.
It goes without saying that your enemy/lover
Is also my enemy/lover...*

Jie yan ge [Get Off Opium Song]¹

IN 1942, LI XIANGLAN (B. 1920), THE MOST FAMOUS entertainer in the Japanese colonial state of Manchukuo (1932-45), sang the *Jie yan ge* to decry the “truly terrifying” cost of the “enemy/lover”

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[*yuanjia*] relationship through which opium could seduce and destroy those who fell under its sway.² Li sings of a fictional lover, yet her words echo the sentiments of a restive colonial population: the Manchukuo state grew dependent upon revenue raised by the *Yapian zhuanmai gongshu* [Opium Monopoly Bureau, hereafter “Monopoly”], thereby dissipating the spirit of its subjects who wearied of continued Japanese domination. In 1939, the Director of the Monopoly, Lo Cheng-pang, argued that the Manchukuo government established the Monopoly to achieve “the eventual eradication of the noxious habit permeating the whole of society.”³ But the Monopoly that was supposed to restrict access to the colony’s drug supplies failed to curtail widespread opiate addiction. Anti-opiate reformists, anti-Japanese activists, and Western critics all denounced the failings of the Manchukuo Monopoly and that state’s inability to reduce levels of addiction.

The *Jie yan ge* occupies a space at the intersection of mid-twentieth century Chinese national weakness, Japanese imperialism, and a century-long engagement with opium in China: it is the theme song of the 1942 Japanese-sponsored, Chinese-language movie *Wanshi liufang* [Eternity], which dramatises the Anglo-Chinese Opium War of 1839-42. *Wanshi liufang* was produced in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during the height of the Japanese empire’s “Sacred War” (1941-45) against Great Britain and the United States, and stars Manchukuo’s Li Xianglan. Although it was intended to incite anti-opium, anti-Western sentiment in Japanese-occupied Chinese territories, the film issues a negative reflection on its producers. While the Japanese publicly vowed to liberate China from the yoke of Western degradation, they inflicted brutal colonial regimes that belied the ideological underpinnings of Sacred War. Japanese efforts to placate critics through the promotion of domestic Chinese popular culture, such as *Wanshi liufang*, ironically accentuated for the colonised the “far too high” costs of addiction and subjugation.

Li Xianglan is an enduring symbol of the Chinese culture produced within Japanese-occupied Manchuria.⁴ Li was born to Japa-

nese parents in Fushun, Manchuria, and was raised in the region and in Beijing.⁵ Reflecting her parents' admiration of Chinese culture, Li attended Chinese schools, adopted a Chinese name, and pursued a Chinese-language career. In her late teens and early twenties, Li starred in films produced for Chinese audiences by the Japanese-sponsored *Manying* [Manchukuo Film Corporation]. Audiences were led to believe that Li was a pro-Japanese Chinese national.⁶ Li also established a formidable career as a singer, popularising several of the most beloved Chinese songs of the twentieth century.⁷ Her rendition of the *Jie yan ge* was lauded not only in Japanese-occupied territories, but also in Republican- and Communist-held areas, including the revolutionary stronghold of Yanan; its anti-opiate message had a universal appeal in war-torn China. But in the post-occupation period, all popular culture produced under Japanese dominion was tainted by a presumed "traitorous" collaboration with the imperialist power. Following Japan's defeat in 1945, the Republican regime condemned Li to death. Li escaped execution by producing a genealogy that proved her Japanese identity, and she then fled to the United States and Japan.⁸ Li Xianglan, like the colonial state of Manchukuo, was wiped from the face of China but left long shadows in the national psyche.

The popularity of Li Xianglan and the *Jie yan ge* raises difficult questions regarding Japanese imperialism, narratives of addiction, and Chinese popular culture in Manchukuo. How did Japanese rule affect the opiate industry in Manchuria? Why were the Japanese unable to implement effective drug policies to placate critics and further their own Sacred War ambitions? In the battle against opiate addiction, did Chinese-language popular culture propagate an "enemy/lover" bond between the colonisers and the colonised? This paper seeks the answers to these questions through the nexus of Japanese rule, opiate policies, and Chinese-language literature in Manchukuo. Part One sketches the development of the opiate industry in Manchuria, and the Manchukuo Monopoly in particular. Parts Two and Three interrogate the opiate narratives that

emerged from men's and women's Chinese-language literature in Manchukuo.

Opiates, Manchuria, and the Japanese Empire

It is unquestionably a part of the Japanese policy to poison the whole world. The more Japan can undermine other nations through these body-and-soul-destroying drugs, the easier it is going to be to conquer them. The logic of the programme is irrefutable. The conception and execution are possible only to sons of the Sun-Goddess.

Vespa Amleto, *Secret Agent of Japan*.⁹

Vespa Amleto's assertion that Japan devised a "policy to poison the whole world" resonates with racism yet underscores the Japanese construction of opium monopolies throughout their empire. Amleto crudely articulates the findings of the Opium Advisory Committee (OAC) of the League of Nations and the International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Japan conspired to promote drug traffic in China to weaken the resistance of the Chinese people.¹⁰ In Manchukuo, from remote farmlands to the highest level of the court, opium played a decisive role that is attested to by the colony's puppet rulers. In his autobiography *From Emperor to Citizen* (1964), Manchukuo's Kangde emperor (r. 1934-45), Henry Aisin-Gioro Puyi (1906-67), claimed that one sixth of Manchukuo state revenue was derived from opium.¹¹ Opium propped up a court that it decimated. By 1943, Puyi's empress, born of noble Manchu parentage, Elizabeth Guobuluo Wanrong (1906-46; r. 1934-45), was reputedly so hobbled by drug addiction that she was incapable of standing unaided.¹² Empress Wanrong proved a fitting symbol of Manchuria's subject position within the Japanese empire.

The condemnation of Japanese imperialism for widespread opiate addiction in Manchuria tends to discount the domestic opium industry that had its roots in the Qing dynasty (1644-1912).¹³ Opium was introduced to Manchuria during the Kangxi era (1662-1723), cultivated since around 1860, and first taxed in 1885.¹⁴ Long before the Japanese occupation began, farmers discovered that Manchu-

ria's soil had an ideal mix of loam and sand for growing opium.¹⁵ In the frontier region, opium came to play a role "similar to that of gold in the settlement of California," as it drew immigrants from the rest of China to engage in the lucrative enterprise.¹⁶ The importance of opium was even marked in the local dialect, as harvests signalled the beginning of autumn, the "smoke season" [*yanji*].¹⁷ Opium became a requirement of polite society that was as routinely offered to guests as tobacco and tea.¹⁸ An extensive range of secondary enterprises (including brothels, hotels, restaurants, and stores) was influenced by fluctuations in the volume of opium trade.¹⁹ As demand for opium increased, the local Manchurian economy flourished. Despite an attempted prohibition of opium in 1906, by the end of the Qing dynasty opium was one of the top three agricultural products in region.²⁰

The Republican warlord regime of Zhang Zuolin (1873-1928) that succeeded the Qing dynasty half-heartedly extended prohibition, but opium retained its high status. Manchuria excelled in the growth, production, and distribution of a range of opiates.²¹ Prohibition of a lucrative industry that provided the means for rapid economic development and leisurely diversion proved difficult in a vast region with a relatively dispersed population, limited state resources, and officials with disparate priorities. The use of opium for entertainment and for medicinal purposes earned it a prominence that could not be dislodged easily. Unless officials were aggressively committed to prohibition, the industry expanded exponentially. Farmers began to exclusively cultivate opium, or planted it alongside other crops. Researchers strove to increase levels of morphia in poppies and to bolster production of morphine for export to Japan, to reduce reliance on German sources.²² As opium spread through Manchurian society, it became cheaper and more potent, an ominous combination. The opium industry boomed, exerting an influence beyond its borders.

In 1920s Manchuria, opium revenue was a mainstay of the Zhang Zuolin regime: "opium was used as a money-grab as Zhang tried to pay for pretensions to rule all of China."²³ Although opium was offi-

cially prohibited by Republican law, Zhang “left his satraps to their own devices to promote or prohibit opium production.”²⁴ In February 1927, Zhang moved to control the opium market, and to reap the benefits of it. Opium Monopoly Offices opened in the regional centre of Fengtian (present-day Shenyang) and increased rapidly in number along counties bordering railways operated by the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway (SMR) conglomerate.²⁵ The opium revenues that accumulated were forwarded to Zhang in Beijing, where they were invested in his army. In 1928, after Zhang was murdered by the Japanese, control over Manchuria fell to his son Zhang Xueliang (1898-2001) who, in 1929, re-asserted opium prohibition to dovetail with Republican law; he similarly outlawed opium cultivation to no avail.²⁶ Two years later, Zhang’s rule was ended by the Japanese invasion while he was undergoing rehabilitation in Beijing for his own long-standing opium and heroin addictions. Foreign occupation replaced warlord rule, yet opium endured in Manchuria.

With the invasion of 1931, the Japanese seized control over a region that was famously difficult to rule and that fostered an extensive opium industry. This was not without precedent. Nearly half a century before, in 1895, Japan assumed sovereignty over Taiwan. Japanese colonial officials resolved to legalise opium in the colony, to supervise its growth and distribution. In 1895, an Opium Monopoly was founded to bring dens and dealers under police supervision, and to make doctors’ exams mandatory for registered addicts; all profits were to be used for public health and education programs.²⁷ Gotō Shimpei (1857-1929), the first Japanese Governor-General of Taiwan, was a leading figure in the legalisation movement who advocated gradual withdrawal for addicts under medical attention rather than outright criminalisation. He anticipated that five decades would be required to eradicate opiate addiction in Taiwan.²⁸ Gotō implemented the system from 1896 until 1905, when he was transferred to oversee Japanese interests in Korea and Manchuria.²⁹ Although Gotō was assassinated before the Japanese occupation of Manchuria began, the policies that he developed in

Taiwan provided a model for Manchukuo, where opiates were even more entrenched.

The Japanese cited widespread opiate addiction in Manchuria as one excuse for overthrowing the Zhang regime. In October 1931, the SMR estimated that “roughly 5 percent of Manchukuo’s total population of 30 million were opium and narcotic addicts—1.5 million people.”³⁰ Colonial officials argued that the Japanese had to intervene to save the indigenous population: “[w]ith the Manchu and Mongol races opium-smoking is, so to speak, a historically hereditary disease,” which was exacerbated by inhumane warlord rule under the Han Chinese.³¹ The Japanese condemned the decadence of contemporary Manchurian society, decrying “the whole body of public servants [who], in fact, seemed to be devotees of Morpheus.”³² Officials and anti-opiate reformists in the new colonial state of Manchukuo publicly attacked opium as the “arch-enemy of mankind,” advocating restricted cultivation and an end to imports.³³ In November 1932, the Opium Law was promulgated to establish control over production and distribution so that opium usage “can be gradually lessened, and the evil eventually exterminated.”³⁴ According to the Opium Law, permits for smoking opium would only be granted to adult, non-Japanese addicts, who were to commit to rehabilitation. Manchukuo’s Monopoly began to oversee implementation of the Opium Law at the beginning of 1933.

The Monopoly was launched amidst much fanfare, as an anchor of Japan’s East Asian modernity project.³⁵ Throughout the occupation, media blitzes denounced opiate addiction in the colony’s leading Japanese-owned, Chinese-language newspapers, such as Fengtian’s *Shengjing shibao* [Shengjing Times]. To promote awareness of official policies of the Manchukuo government, reports on the battle against opiates and accounts of recovered addicts shared headlines with war victories and economic development; representative titles of the former include “*Yinzhe de xin*” [An Addict’s Letter] and “*Jin yan lun*” [Discussion of the [Opium] Smoking Prohibition].³⁶ The prominent space devoted to raising public awareness of the costs of opiate addiction underlines the earnest posi-

tion of anti-opiate reformists who advocated aggressive eradication policies in their program to modernise life in Manchukuo. To their chagrin, they faced an uphill battle against long-entrenched opiate usage, popular and official non-compliance, insufficient resources, and, not least of all, the greed that drove the industry.

In Manchukuo, an environment was created in which popular demand for opiates was facilitated by officials who implemented the Opium Law, “employing the rhetoric of opium control to destroy independent competitors, not opium use.”³⁷ At the high end of the industry, Japanese were employed as chemists, wholesalers, and importers while Koreans or Chinese ran retail shops at street level. The manufacture of heroin and morphine was brought under the control of the Kempeitai (the military police) and the Special Service Section (army intelligence), driving out the last European firms; private local heroin manufacturers who survived came to terms with the army.³⁸ The confluence of aggressive Japanese manoeuvres to control an industry that manufactured increasingly addictive products and extensive media condemnation of the recreational use of opiates stigmatised addiction to the extent that even efforts to identify and license users failed. Officials conceded that addicts were reluctant to register out of fear of taxes, compulsory labour, or other punishment.³⁹ Despite all the publicity generated for the Monopoly’s noble agenda, the public suspected that the Japanese were engaged in subterfuge, casting suspicion over all of their activities.

The Japanese were criticised for launching the Monopoly as “a legitimate, bureaucratically controlled opium monopoly to cover their covert schemes” since dealing in opiates had the appearance of a lucrative as well as a legitimacy-producing venture.⁴⁰ Nitamosa Otozō rose from obscurity to reign as a regional opium king. Yamauchi Saburō founded the South Manchuria Pharmaceutical Company, through which he and other producers donated as much as 50,000 yen to the Japanese imperial army in exchange for decorations in formal military ceremonies; Yamauchi even claimed that Fujita Osamu, who built his fortune in the drug trade, had financed

the establishment of Manchukuo.⁴¹ Under Japanese rule, the port of Dalian was transformed into “an opium smuggling centre,” with the highest annual consumption rates of morphine and cocaine [*kekeyin*] in the world.⁴² Chinese critics condemned the Opium Law as “a bloodless means of killing the people” [*sha ren bu jian xue*].⁴³ The “ash heap of Mukden,” an entirely unceremonious dumping ground for dead and dying addicts, was the most visible manifestation of the failings of Manchukuo’s drug policies.⁴⁴ The perpetuation of a lucrative domestic industry under Japanese colonial auspices was condemned as evidence of the genocidal nature of their rule; opiates were politicised as never before.

Western critics joined the chorus condemning Manchukuo’s opiate industry. In 1934, in “Japan Builds a New Colony,” famed sinologist Edgar Snow recounted his impressions of Manchukuo for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Snow argues that the Monopoly “vastly stimulated both production and consumption” of opiates.⁴⁵ He blames the Japanese for turning “once delightful” Harbin into “a place of living death.”⁴⁶ In *Secret Agent of Japan: A handbook to Japanese imperialism*, Vespa Amleto contends that in Harbin “one cannot find a street where there are no opium-smoking dens or narcotic shops.”⁴⁷ Vespa cites a Japanese Military Command booklet to support his argument that the Japanese sought to “poison the whole world”:

The use of narcotics is unworthy of a superior race like the Japanese. Only inferior races, races that are decadent like the Chinese, the Europeans, and the East Indians, are addicted to the use of narcotics. This is why they are destined to become our servants and eventually disappear.⁴⁸

This racist rhetoric parallels assertions in the Japanese-produced *Manchukuo Yearbook* that Manchus and Mongols shared a “historically hereditary” addiction to opium-smoking. It also suggests

the reasoning behind prohibitions against Japanese use of narcotics in Manchukuo.

Alexandre Pernikoff argues that the Japanese sought the “moral destruction” of Manchuria by disseminating free or artificially cheap narcotics among peasants (including “trial offers” for property owners and “junior doses” that were cheaper than bread for children), promoting cheap prostitution, and breaking up families.⁴⁹ Pernikoff maintains that such tactics were “more subtle and more effective” than jail, torture, or murder.⁵⁰ These Western critics argued that “Manchuria was being slowly poisoned to death, while the Japanese army supervised and encouraged it, reaping huge financial benefits.”⁵¹ Amidst claims that Japan was producing 90% of the world’s illicit drugs, a majority of the League of Nation’s OAC was persuaded that the Manchukuo Monopoly was designed “to encourage, rather than control, drug abuse.”⁵²

In 1936, the Manchukuo General Affairs Board Director, Hoshino Naoki, acutely aware of the negative publicity generated by the controversial Monopoly, argued that his government recognised that the financial losses of opiate addiction outweighed its benefits.⁵³ Officials vigorously denied that the state benefited from the Monopoly, insisting that its highest annual profits were less than 10 million yuan.⁵⁴ This was an insignificant figure because, they contended, annual opiate consumption in Manchukuo was worth approximately 180 million yuan. Officials calculated that the eradication of opiate addiction could free up to 300 million yuan annually for industrial development. In light of such economic arguments, “opium fiends” were condemned as immoral, physically weak, and in pursuit of a “dope habit” that was ruinous to the labour pool.⁵⁵ Addicts were maligned for consuming rather than producing resources: they were “fond of eating, but dislike work.”⁵⁶ Crime rates were also alleged to increase in direct proportion to the number of addicts. Intensified anti-addict rhetoric attests to the severity of the crisis in Manchukuo and to continued promotion of the colonial state’s official *raison d’être*, to provide Japanese “protection of the social bond” in Manchukuo.⁵⁷ Opiate addiction was

to be eradicated in service of the colonial economy, to bring to fruition Japan's modernity project, rather than for the sake of addicts and their families.

The negative atmosphere surrounding the Monopoly enabled reformists and officials who sought expanded control to secure revisions to the Opium Law. The revisions expanded state control, placing the industry even more firmly under Japanese dominion. In December 1937, Imperial Ordinance No. 487 established a State Retail Sale System to eradicate the "undue profiteering" of private trade; control over drugs was to be transferred to municipalities, counties, and banners.⁵⁸ The anchor of the revised, state-run program was a ten year prohibition act to survey and rehabilitate addicts, and end opiate use by 1947. The State Retail Sale System was enforced on January 1, 1938, as 1,867 private establishments were co-opted or dissolved, leaving 1,363 state-owned companies in their stead.⁵⁹ But despite demands for rigorous compliance, again, less than half of the estimated number of addicts registered. Three years later, in 1941, colonial officials still maintained that the "number of addicts is roughly estimated at one million, although no thorough surveys have as yet been made."⁶⁰ Rehabilitation for those addicts was to be undertaken in forty-six "Healthy Life Institutes" [*kangsheng yuan*], which officials conceded were "far from satisfactory in point of scale and equipment."⁶¹ Rehabilitation programs ranged from withdrawal and harm-reduction strategies to forced labour; "the period of accommodation for each addict [was] 50 days."⁶² But even in the most positive contexts, rehabilitation is controversial: sudden withdrawal can result in death while harm reduction raises cries of addiction-enabling. In a colonial context, rehabilitation through labour bears a distinctively negative tone. To make matters worse, rehabilitation proved elusive: according to the most positive state statistics, seven of ten patients relapsed.⁶³ Reformists faced the unenviable task of applying inadequate funding to treatments that were made even more controversial by their colonial genesis.

Healthy Life Institutes were established as Manchukuo resources were stretched thin by domestic “security” operations, industrial development, and Sacred War demands. The forty-six ill-equipped, over-crowded institutions designed to serve a population of addicts estimated at one million reflect the difficulty anti-opiate reformists faced in acquiring funding for their programs. A 1941 advertisement for Healthy Life Institutes from the capital Xinjing’s Japanese-sponsored, Chinese-language newspaper *Datong bao* [Great Unity Herald] exemplifies the official stance towards rehabilitation.⁶⁴ A woman holds a banner that beseeches: “Give up opium and morphine medicine.” She towers over a number of faceless bodies that raise their arms upwards. The caption at the side reads: “Opium dens guide you into hell, Healthy Life Institutes lead you into paradise.” Drawing on propaganda portraying Manchukuo as a “paradise land” [*letu*], Healthy Life Institutes were meant to symbolise the state’s benevolence. The female figure melds the nurturing nature of rehabilitation programs with the “good wife, wise mother” [*xianqi liangmu*] ideal through which officials sought to modernise women of the region.⁶⁵ The figure appears vital, but as a woman she physically embodies the passivity idealised by officials and required by the Healthy Life Institutes: active rehabilitation of Manchukuo’s addicts was well beyond available resources.

Japanese rehabilitation programs were derided by the Chinese as “fraudulent” [*qipian*].⁶⁶ The handful of Healthy Life Institutes was not only numerically inadequate, but it was widely believed that the institutes operated as drug-distribution centres or labour camps.⁶⁷ Addicts who entered rehabilitation often ended up losing their lives along with their addictions; Chinese mocked the centres as “Cheating Life Institutes” [*kengsheng yuan*].⁶⁸ Amongst a population yearning to improve their lives in a difficult colonial environment, the failings of state-sponsored rehabilitation programs led local Chinese to ridicule the centres as “Raising Resistance Institutes” [*shengkang yuan*].⁶⁹ The “resistance” that such centres inspired is suggested by the summary execution of Healthy Life Institutes directors by enraged locals upon liberation in 1945.⁷⁰ The Japa-

nese were condemned for “trying to pawn off something inferior to what it purports to be” [*gua yang tou mai gou rou*].⁷¹ Efforts to implement fundamentally flawed rehabilitation programs simply enflamed anti-Manchukuo sentiment.

Anti-opiate reformists, anti-Japanese activists, and Western critics condemned “the Japanese [for] turning Manchuria into the world’s chief narcotic supply base.”⁷² In 1937, the Japanese had vowed to rehabilitate addicts and to end opiate usage within a decade, but their promises turned against them as vigorous condemnation of opiate addiction in all media publicised the failings of the Monopoly and, by extension, the Manchukuo regime. In 1944, officials estimated that the number of addicts in the colony had reached a daunting 1,200,000.⁷³ While the exact number of addicts will never be known, sources suggest that the Monopoly did little to reduce widespread opiate addiction among the subject peoples of Manchukuo. Since the state seized control over the industry in 1938, its continued, expansive scope reflected negatively on the colonial regime and its eradication policies. A product that was once considered a boon to pleasure-seekers and the economy alike was linked with individual and national weakness, to be condemned throughout popular culture.

Japanese opiate policies stigmatised addiction, the demonisation of which turned the Manchukuo regime into a lightning rod for criticism. The Japanese had taken over a region with a long-term engagement with opiates as well as a burgeoning literary world, where writers aspired to awaken the social conscience of the masses.⁷⁴ The official promotion of local literature as a key element of regional development, to foster a distinctly Manchukuo identity, thus provided an environment in which writers could pursue their own ambitions as publication opportunities expanded through the 1930s. But the literary world that eventuated was characterised by negativity and pessimism, forcing officials to create a framework of regulations to contain criticism.⁷⁵ Dark portraits of life in Manchukuo were explicitly forbidden, but highly critical opiate narratives emerged nonetheless—in Japanese-sponsored publications—to

support the anti-opiate movement and, echoing official media, to critique its shortcomings. Opiates assumed an unprecedented significance in the Chinese-language literature of Manchuria.

From the Pens of Men

From various corners, different noises are emitted—is it the plaintive cry of girls selling their bodies for the first time? Is it the secret words of young lovers embracing under peach-coloured lights? Is it the rustling sounds of opium being smoked? Is it the whispering of daughters-in-law? Is it the silent tears of the wrongly imprisoned? Is it the howling sound of the prison guards' leather-thonged whip? Is it the gasping for breathe of the sick? Is it the ravings of the dying? Is it the sighs of poets? Is it the shouting of soldiers, at war because mankind is not at peace? Isn't it a pity that these shocking sound-waves are so weak? How is it that they can't reach my ears?

Xiao Jun, *Zhuxin* [Candlewick].⁷⁶

In one of his earliest works, *Zhuxin* (1933), Xiao Jun (1908-88), Manchuria's most celebrated male writer, cites opium smoking as a characteristic sound of the one year old colony of Manchukuo. Emulating China's foremost social critic of the twentieth century, Lu Xun (1881-1936), Xiao Jun aspired to heighten public consciousness of the "shocking sound-waves" of contemporary society through his writing. He depicts Harbin as "a hell of this world" that is composed of two sides: one is anticipating "the dawn" while the other is like a "lazy woman, sleeping in the dusk."⁷⁷ Xiao Jun contrasts the vigour of a sun that has not yet risen in Manchukuo (a subversion of imperial Japan's sun symbolism) with the dark, lethargy, and "woman." This dichotomy is a defining element of the Chinese literature produced in Manchukuo. Xiao Jun ascribed characteristics to opium, passivity, and woman that inspired several of the most prominent male writers in the colony: Jin Yin (b. 1916), Li Qiao (b. 1919), Wang Qiuying (1914-97), and Ye Li (1902-86). These men all interrogate the relationship between a world that "is not at peace" and opium, in work rife with stereotypes that their female counter-

parts sought to dispel. The opiate narratives that emerge from their work are gendered, consistently negative, and more critical of the state than might be expected of a colonial literature.

In *He liu de diceng* [The Bottom of the River] (1941), Wang Qiuying casts opium as a causal factor of the occupation of Manchuria.⁷⁸ The novel, set in the early 1930s, criticises Fengtian's elite for leading a "dissipated bourgeois lifestyle" at a time of national crisis.⁷⁹ Their profligate lives are contrasted with those of the poor but steady folk of the countryside who mourn the Qing dynasty; rural life is a virtuous world apart, yet it is also vulnerable to devastation by the occupying forces. Wang's extolment of rural society reflects official Manchukuo promotion of "rural values," yet is also sharply critical of the brutality of the occupation and the Chinese who did nothing to stop it. The novel recounts the fictitious Lin Mengji's move from the countryside to attend university in Fengtian. Lin does not heed his parents' admonition to avoid their urban relatives and is "contaminated" by them (742). Ultimately, he is unsuccessful in his studies. As well, his involvement with the Common Sense Society [*Changshi hui*], a group of youths dedicated to consciousness-raising among the masses, is terminated by the invasion.

Wang blames the occupation of Manchuria on a dereliction of duty that has its genesis in opium addiction among the wealthy. The elite shirk their responsibilities and provide a negative example for their children, who grow up to be wastrels. The "yellow and skinny" matriarch is most ravaged by opium addiction (721). She smokes opium all day and night, with behaviour that alternates between drug-induced energy and exhaustion. As the invasion occurs, on "a night of terror in history" [*lishi shang de yi ge kongbu zhi ye*], she busily toys with her pipe, the servants hurry about flustered, and there is no trace of the patriarch (811). The invasion encounters no resistance and exacerbates the younger generation's "intoxication" [*mizui*] with petty affairs (805). Lin's cousins do not smoke opium, but spend their lives gambling, eating in expensive restaurants, and pursuing love affairs. Lin, unable to focus on his studies, returns home defeated. At the end of *He liu de diceng*, Lin revisits Fengtian

to find his uncle dead and his lonely aunt cradling her opium pipe. With the servants discharged, the family scattered, and Manchuria under foreign occupation, the full price of their intoxication is realised.

Wang further decries the influence of opium on Manchukuo society in his novella *Lou xiang* [Vulgar Alley] (1944), which examines life in a suburb that the narrator describes as a “festering finger.”⁸⁰ At the centre of the poverty-stricken community is an opium den owned by the “greedy ruffian” Gao, who uses his profits to make loans to neighbours at usurious interest rates (116). Although none of the residents appears addicted to opium, they are all “trampled on in the evil environment” generated by Gao’s business (119). Their misgivings about the Manchukuo Monopoly are expressed through debate over whether Gao’s prominent and lucrative business is licensed. Negativity towards the Manchukuo state is accentuated by the neighbours’ apprehension over Gao’s business and the well-orchestrated eviction to labour camps of all residents without “regular” employment, a threat to almost all of the Chinese. Their miserable lives are relieved by occasional drinking binges, which on one occasion provide the backdrop for the ironic employment of two Manchukuo slogans, “Dedicated Service to the National Economy” [*jingji baoguo*] and “Exterminate Dark Behaviour” [*pumie anxing*] (112). The dedicated service to the national economy that lies at the heart of the “festering finger” is the operation of an opium den, which fuels the dark behaviour that “suffocates to death” [*dusi*] its Chinese inhabitants (131).

In *Lou xiang*, Wang explicitly links the opium trade with degeneracy. Opium dealer Gao is greedy and lascivious, his son is an inveterate gambler, and his daughter is “loose” [*fengliu*] (127). Gao forces an aging entertainer to become his mistress to pay off her debts; she resigns herself to being “played with” by men (120). Gao’s son exposes himself, urinates in public, and screams obscenities at young women. The only positive act attributed to the family is performed by the daughter, who gives a student money to save his sick friend. But she steals the money from her father, and only gives it to

the student to pressure him to have sex with her; she wraps around him “like a snake” (140). *Lou xiang* climaxes as Gao is stabbed to death by a poor worker who mourns the love of his life, the aging entertainer. In a final, misogynistic insult, Gao’s fatal stab wounds are compared to his daughter’s “big gaping mouth” (141). At the end of *Lou xiang*, the aggrieved worker stands stoically beside the dead Gao. Neighbours gather around, but are hesitant to summon the authorities because to them justice has seemingly, and unexpectedly, been delivered. Gao died with a violence that befitted his life, for the betterment of the community—indicting Manchukuo’s opium industry and those employed in it.

The trade in opium is also closely linked with individual treachery and the state of the nation in Li Qiao’s play *Xue ren tu* [Bloody Sword Scheme] (1940).⁸¹ The play opens with the female protagonist, Qian Hong, anxiously awaiting the late-night return of her husband, Lin Lang. He is a “courageous and upright” manager who loses his job after co-workers discover that “trafficking in opium is the easiest way to make lots of money!” (242). They conspire to get him fired so that they can deal opium under the cover of a legitimate business. Their immoral activities are contrasted with a positive depiction of the police investigation, which is conducted in a professional and courteous manner. As gunfire rings out, the neighbours are unsympathetic to the “bastard” conspirators and cheer the colonial authorities on (252-53). Qian and Lin conceal their former colleagues from the police, and lie about it, at their peril. The chief conspirator, Xiao Peng, eventually betrays his fellows who are taken into custody where Xiao argues they will be comfortable, in a safe environment with adequate food and clothing. Ironically, they are saved by their imprisonment.

In *Xue ren tu*, turmoil in the family is cast as a precursor to national decline: “when families hasten to difficulties, the nation is cast into difficulties” [*you jia nan ben, you guo nan tou*] (256). The two women in the play, Qian and Yi, tear their families apart by having affairs with Lin’s duplicitous co-worker, Xiao Peng, the man with a “monster’s heart” (241). Qian confesses to having com-

mitted the “biggest, biggest crime” of adultery with Xiao; she is also revealed to have unwittingly inspired Xiao’s drug conspiracy (247). Lin denounces Qian as a “traitor to China” [*Hanjian*], tarring her with a harsh epithet that explicitly links her adulterous behaviour with the fate of the nation (246). The other member of the love triangle, the “bewitching” Yi, concubine of the company owner, aspires to elope with Xiao (242). Yi is dumbfounded to discover that Xiao is actually in love with Qian, who rejects his final advances. Qian rebukes Xiao, swearing that “to destroy other people is to destroy yourself” (277). At the end of *Xue ren tu*, Qian’s self-fulfilling prophecy is realised as Xiao kills Qian and her husband, before committing suicide. In this morality tale, all of the main characters are tainted by opium and betrayal, and die. The fate that attended them augured ill for the state, which was similarly riven by the disparate desires of opiate dealers and those whose lives were shattered by the industry.

More altruistic behaviour is highlighted in two stories that depict young women who are rescued by their male teachers, Jin Yin’s *Muchang shang de xueyuan* [Blood Ties on the Pasture] (1944) and Ye Li’s *San ren* [Three People] (1939). In *Muchang shang de xueyuan*, teacher Ma, who lectures his girl students on how to maintain their “purity,” pressures Wen Jiamin to explain her falling grades.⁸² Wen reveals the tremendous toll opium has taken on her life. Wen’s mother, who grew up in the countryside, had given birth to her out of wedlock and, unable to bear the scorn of neighbours, abandoned her and fled to Harbin where she was forced into prostitution. Within a few years, she was addicted to opium, with a son and skyrocketing debts. After the Japanese invasion in 1931, using stolen money she opened an opium den with a lover in Fengtian, where dens sprung up like “bamboo shoots after a spring rain” (321). Wen recounts how the 1937 Opium Law forbade private sales but enabled dealers to reap a fortune through the sale of contraband heroin. After an accident, Wen’s mother returned to Harbin, where she was reunited with her daughter, who she then tormented to support her habit; Wen’s schoolwork suffered as she stole from her father, and

her brother was eventually expelled from school for stealing. After her mother dies from her addiction, teacher Ma encourages Wen to resume her studies. Wen is thus rescued by a male authority figure who “restored [her life] to its proper place,” returning the young girl to a “proper” pursuit of ideal womanhood (331).

In Ye Li’s *San ren*, the prostitute Ye Fen narrates her tragic life to a man who she eventually discovers was her primary school teacher, Liu Linggen.⁸³ Following a night of drinking, Liu passes out in an unlicensed brothel in the company of his former student. When he regains consciousness, Ye recounts to him how her mother, who resented being married to a poor teacher, began entertaining men and smoking opium. In short order, her mother spent her days with “opium addicts” [*yan ke*] and “morphine ghosts” [*maphei gui*].⁸⁴ Ye reveals how her father divorced her mother after she burgled the family home for money to buy morphine. Ye and her mother then lived with a woman who sold Ye into prostitution to support their morphine habits. Ye is depicted as a victim of “patriarchal society” [*zongfa shehui*] who suffered from restricted rights as a young woman in Manchukuo; Ye had no recourse to her father disowning her or her mother selling her into prostitution (264). Unable to comprehend the addiction that tore her family apart, Ye asks teacher Liu, “in the past, wasn’t Lin Zexu’s [the Chinese official whose anti-opium stance antagonised the British in the 1830s] refusal of narcotics... entirely for the nation, for the people, for our later generations? But the people don’t know their sad history...” (261). Yet links the disintegration of her family with the “sad history” of China’s engagement with narcotics, stressing their foreign (especially British) genesis. Moved by his former student’s predicament, Liu resolves to rescue Ye from her “evil environment” (263). In both *San Ren* and *Muchang shang de xueyuan*, young women are victimised by opiate addictions, which devastated the lives of their mothers, but they are rescued by male teachers who aspire to restore their “purity.” These men emancipate the young women from opium addictions, to re-inscribe patriarchal ideals in their lives.

This men's literature highlights an "evil environment" fostered by opium in Manchukuo. In all of these works opium is associated with social decline, to the detriment of Chinese communities. The elite indulged in opiates as a diversion or sold them for profit just as more altruistic behaviour was demanded by the unfortunate state of the nation. The lower classes are shown to be doubly oppressed by addiction and local elites, who compounded the burden of foreign occupation. Each of these works bolsters official condemnation of opiate abuse. But while Manchukuo officials increasingly emphasised the economic ramifications of addiction, these writers cautioned of moral decline and the toll it took on the people. Significantly, criticism is focused on Chinese dealers and addicts. Opium is shown to intoxicate the Chinese in Manchukuo, alienating them from a state that appeared incapable of assuaging their suffering. That alienation is marked in this literature by sexist stereotypes, which depict women as utterly reliant on, or undermining, the men who are their supposed saviours: women distract men from their duties, seduce them, or inspire them to deal in drugs even though they are reliant upon men to help them break the cycle of addiction. In Manchukuo's Chinese-language literature, the battle against opiate addiction articulated gendered as well as nationalist discourses.

From the Pens of Women

When men become addicted to opium, they destroy their families and become lascivious; when women become addicted to opium, the belt holding up their trousers slackens [indicating loss of both weight and virtue].

Popular saying, North China.⁸⁵

Stereotypes of lusty, devious women parallel those of abusive men who destroy their families. The latter construct dominates women's literature to expose the dangers of drug addiction. In opiate narratives crafted by women writers, female characters are primarily depicted as victims of male abuse; opiate addiction compounds the

subjugation of women in Manchukuo society. This theme is vividly represented in Lan Ling's (1919-2003) poem *Xiao xiang de chuxi* [New Year in a Small Alley] (1940).⁸⁶ On new year's eve, a starving widow makes a last-ditch effort at prostitution to feed her starving baby, but her only potential client is a "morphine ghost" [*mafei gui*].⁸⁷ His addiction, combined with her poverty and distress, derail her desperate effort to raise money. The woman collapses, presumably to die in the freezing snow with her virtue intact, as a "good wife, wise mother" ought, leaving her child alone in a dark, freezing apartment. As firecrackers explode around her, she slips out of consciousness. Lan Ling's portrait of a desperate woman dying amidst new year celebrations highlights the fatal nexus of women's subjugation and opiate addiction in the colonial, patriarchal society of Manchukuo.

Opiate addiction, subjugation, and poverty are constituent elements of "women's tragedy" [*nüren de beiju*] in Manchukuo.⁸⁸ In Zuo Di's (1920-76) novella *Meiyou guang de xing* [A Lustreless Star] (1943), a fictitious actress, Luoli, recounts her life story to a neighbour. She reveals how her "ruthless" father, a senior official with "three wives," had brought her mother into his house as a concubine and then drove her out after she gave birth to her second daughter, Luoli (442). When he discovers that Luoli received a letter from a boy at school, he demands that his daughter kill herself for "rebellious" against decency (445). Luoli refuses, runs away, and is rescued by an uncle who conspires to sell her into prostitution. Luoli escapes again and finds true love, only to have her uncle later re-emerge with her long-lost mother whose "extremely tragic" life in Manchukuo is manifested by her drug addiction (442). Luoli's mother lives in an opium den with "ghostly" [*youlingban*] men and women, whose casual intermingling on an opium bed shocks Luoli into realising the depth of her mother's addiction (452). Her mother's "shameless and addicted hell" [*wuchi er beini de diyu*] is depicted as a direct result of the loss of her home and her children (452). After Luoli visits her mother, she is abandoned by her lover who is convinced by the uncle that she went to the opium den to

satisfy her own addiction. Luoli is thus left penniless to raise their daughter. In *Meiyou guang de xing*, three generations of women are victimised by the misogynistic expulsion of Luoli's mother from her home, instigating a descent into the hell of addiction that awaited women who were denied the right to family life and the ability to support themselves independently.

In this literature, all levels of society are susceptible to the devastation wrought by opium. Yang Xu's (1918-2004) *Laomazi riji* [Nanny's Diary] (1944) is a fictional nanny's diary that recounts how a "good lady" married a rich man, began to play with opium as a "toy" [*wanyir*], and then wasted her life "seeking death" [*zuosi*].⁸⁹ Eight years of "half death" followed in three or four daily hour-long sessions of smoking opium (37). Much to the hard-working servant's chagrin, the life of her privileged mistress consists of little more than lying on a bed smoking "life-killing opium" [*songming de yan*] (40). With a blend of righteous indignation and jealousy, the nanny curses that while she is forced to scrimp, save, and toil all day, her "opium ghost" [*dayan gui*] mistress wears expensive clothing and accessories but doesn't lift a finger to do housework or care for her son (43). The abuse fostered by her mistress' obsession with opium eventually forces the nanny to resign. The opium addiction that is noted for its genesis as a leisurely diversion actuates the lady's "half-death" and costs the poor nanny her livelihood.

Wu Ying's (1915-61) *Gui* [*Deceit*] (1939) and Lan Ling's *Guxiang de jia* [Native Place Home] (1943) are two short fictional works that also portray elite women who are addicted to opium. In *Gui*, a maid and her husband (the cook) treat their employers, a wealthy man, his wife, and his opium-addicted concubine, as objects of ridicule.⁹⁰ The servants steal opium from them to support their own habits while openly mocking the concubine's attempts to overcome her addiction: "if she can quit opium, the sun can rise from the west" (94). To raise the funds necessary for smoking opium all day, the concubine ingratiates herself with the master of the house by deceiving him that she is pregnant, which makes him lavish money upon her. Eventually, her compulsion for opium and her

barren state undermine her plan. The concubine's erratic behaviour compels the master back into the arms of his wife as her deception turns her into a target of ridicule for the servants. The loss of power and position associated with opiate addiction is a theme common to *Laomazi riji*, *Gui*, and *Guxiang de jia*. The "toy" raised by elite women as a leisurely diversion cost the women their lives of privilege.

In *Guxiang de jia*, a widow loses control over a family business to relatives who deal in opium.⁹¹ Ming returns home to discover that his mother is overwhelmed by opium addiction, reduced to a mere pawn of his scheming aunt and her brother, who obtains illicit opium through his work at the Monopoly. He learns how their drug dealing darkened the family name and cost his sister, Yu, her fiancé because he refused to marry a woman with drug-dealing relatives. Ming's mother is aware of the family's predicament, but contends that she is powerless, she would "rather go without food than give up opium."⁹² Instead of confronting the drug dealers who have devastated his family, Ming resolves to convince Yu to embark on a new life with him, and send for their mother later. Although Ming questions whether his sister has "a man's bravery and courage" to forge a new life elsewhere, Yu proves ready, willing, and able to go; before Ming approaches her, Yu had already quit her job and packed (37). In song, Yu expresses her yearning to escape:

Why can't I be like that white bird above the river,
To spread my healthy wings,
And dash out of this dense fog atmosphere?
Ah! I'm chasing hopes,
I am looking for brightness,
Fly, fly, fly, ah, fly! (35)

Despite her brother's apprehensions, Yu is buoyed by idealism to escape the "dense fog" emitted by her mother's addiction. Yu rejects the passivity ascribed to ideal women, and which is personified by her mother. The two siblings' disavowal of opium re-affirms

their bond and, as exemplified by Luoli in *Meiyou guang de xing*, underlines the potential of young women, on their own volition, to escape the passivity and addiction that plagued their mothers.

The writer who engaged in the most extended analysis of the relationship between opium, imperialism, and patriarchy in Manchukuo is Mei Niang (b. 1920). In her novella *Bang* [Clam] (1939), a wealthy family's heir, Elder Brother, aspires to be rich like his father so that he, too, can purchase opium in large quantities. He complains that the Monopoly is manipulated by the wealthy who flout restrictions on the sale of opium, while being unable to satisfy him; the limited amounts of officially-sanctioned opium that he has access to are more expensive than, yet inferior to, pre-Monopoly products.⁹³ Filling his younger sister Meili's room with the "peculiar smell" of opium, Elder Brother pleads to borrow money from her wages until he receives his allowance (165). He insists that since few adequate employment opportunities exist for men, he is better off staying at home, smoking opium, and being "comfortable" [*shufu*]; Meili retorts that what he perceives to be a comfortable life has left him "not far from death" [*li si bu yuan*] (166). Meili's work ethic contrasts with Elder Brother's drug-centred existence: she works as a secretary for a pittance, which often ends up in his pipe. By the end of *Bang*, despite her hard work, Meili's life is devastated by a presumed love affair, and she loses her job, her fiancé, and her dignity. Meili is destroyed by her ambition to forge a life outside of her home while her brother stays in his room fuelling a ruinous addiction. Life in Manchukuo denies both siblings their potential, but Meili is shown to pay a higher price than her brother, who also contributed to her subjugation.

Mei Niang's short story *Zhui* [The Chase] (1940) further exposes the relationship between the patriarchal exploitation of women and addiction.⁹⁴ A young girl, Guihua, starts working at an opium den/brothel after her father dies, in order to support her drug-addicted mother and her drug-addicted, alcoholic brother. As the only member of the family who is not incapacitated by addiction, she earns money by employing the one skill that her mother taught

her, how to prepare an opium pipe. At work, Guihua becomes an “opium prostitute” [*yan ji*], which ultimately destroys her looks, her ability to earn a living, and her dignity.⁹⁵ On new year’s eve, as she joyfully anticipates telling her mother about a new rich client, her brother returns home demanding her wages. When Guihua refuses, he bellows at her with “morphine eyes” [*mafei yan*] and storms out, to the sound of firecrackers (136). Traumatized, Guihua turns to the mirror and sees “a monkey-shaped face in the mirror, with two cheeks dead-red and lips painted blood-purple...” (135). Transfixed with horror at her deadened, sub-human appearance, Guihua’s eyes fill with tears, which transport her through her memories back to her father’s funeral. In a swell of self-consciousness, she comprehends the family burden that cost her “virgin’s body and heart” (136). Her brother’s outburst, against a celebratory backdrop, finally made her aware of the “life-killing addiction” [*yaoming de yanyin*] that had desecrated her humanity (136).

Guihua’s life was brought to ruin by addiction and patriarchal subjugation. Both women in *Zhui*, Guihua and her mother, are victimized by men and Guihua is further oppressed by her mother’s miserable state. Guihua’s free-spending father had died and left the family with neither adequate savings nor means of support. Her brother’s brutish character is reflected by his appearance, with a “skinny green-white face,” dishevelled hair, rotting teeth, and the odour of a dog (130-31). Neither man has a positive influence on Guihua’s life and her mother compounds Guihua’s misfortune through her own misery. *Zhui* climaxes with Guihua’s return to the brothel, where she is fired. Her male boss verbally abuses her in front of co-workers, cheats her out of her wages, pummels her, and tosses her like garbage into the alley. When she lifts her bloodied face from the curb, her wretched fate is played out in front of her as a dog feasts upon the flesh of a cat before tossing its skeleton aside. Beaten, starving, penniless, and craving a fix, Guihua peers out from the alley to see her brother “walking past accompanied by a young simple girl. Her elder brother’s face looked as if he’d just caught a fish” (144). With Guihua’s use expended, both her brother

and her boss turn to new, unsuspecting young girls to prey upon. In *Zhui*, the female characters are utterly consumed by men; the life-killing addictions that they acquire are attributed to the mental and physical abuse that the women suffer at the hands of men.

Mei Niang explicitly links opiate addiction with the decline of the family and the state of Manchukuo in *Zuihou de qiuzhenzhe* [The Last Patient] (1940).⁹⁶ This short story depicts a young family's visit to a health clinic. The woman ostensibly seeks treatment for anaemia, but it is really the couple's opium addiction for which they seek relief. The doctor suspects from the woman's "pale grey" face that she is addicted to opium.⁹⁷ Dishevelled, dirty, and constantly yawning, the couple appears incapable of looking after themselves or their baby, who is also filthy from neglect. Devoid of social and parental skills, the couple bickers over who really abuses opium and what type of "medicine" they are seeking; they both refuse the doctor's proffered needle as too costly, but the implication is that they are seeking a drug to share later (89). The man convinces the doctor to prescribe laudanum [*le de neng*], an opium-based liquid (89). As the pathetic couple shuffles out of the clinic, a light glints across the national flag badge on the man's cap. With the illumination of the Manchukuo flag, Mei Niang links their bedraggled condition with the colonial state, through the most recognised national symbol.

In Mei Niang's fiction, as in the rest of these women's writings, opiate addiction and the subjugation of women are pervasive, inter-related themes: addiction compounds "women's tragedy" in Manchukuo. The writers all depict opiate-addicted women as vivid manifestations of women's disempowerment in the colonial, patriarchal society of Manchukuo. The opium pipe, raised either in leisure or desperation, is shown to have devastating ramifications for women, regardless of social station. As in official rhetoric and men's literature, the use of opiates is utterly condemned. These women writers share with their male counterparts a proclivity to condemn the addict, to scorn efforts at rehabilitation, and to deride the Monopoly, without explicitly criticising the Japanese.

These women also, and more commonly, crafted opiate narratives to critique what they identified as the misogynistic foundations of Japanese colonial rule, with the ambition of inspiring women's resistance to them.

Conclusion:

The Entanglements of Opiates, Imperialism, and Patriarchy

The near and distant lights are uncountable, and although the levels of their brightness differ in strength and weakness, all of them are exerting themselves to wage a war of resistance [*kangzhan*] against the black night, like some fine young little swords, piercing my eyes.

Xiao Jun, *Zhuxin*.⁹⁸

In the Chinese-language literature of Manchukuo, writers engaged in a "war of resistance" against opiate addiction that reinforced official drug policies while undermining Japan's imperial ambitions in the region.⁹⁹ Their dark portraits of contemporary life, reflective of the state's failure to realise its anti-opiate program, fostered a negativity that pervaded society, contributing to Manchukuo's abrupt disappearance following Japanese surrender in 1945. In short order, Manchukuo and its Monopoly were consigned to history. The Chinese civil war that ensued was marked by an intensification of opiate usage throughout the region as it was stripped of regulatory controls, stock from the defunct Monopoly issued into the markets, and desperate farmers sought a high-value crop with which to sustain themselves.¹⁰⁰ Ironically, the turmoil that followed the collapse of Japan's empire underscored the relative stability of Japanese rule. But it was Communist Party (CCP) victories, through the late 1940s, that spelt the end of widespread opiate addiction in Manchuria. What successive regimes had professed to seek for decades was achieved under early socialist rule: cultivation was strictly prohibited and addiction was eradicated. Strict enforcement policies were complemented by cohesive rehabilitation projects, which

contributed to the legitimisation of CCP rule. After decades of dominance in Manchuria, the reign of opium was over.

In Manchuria, opium had flourished during the late Qing, Republican, and Manchukuo periods. Opium became a mainstay of the regional economy, enticing waves of Han migration that enabled successive governments of China to claim the Manchu homelands for their own. Opium was a major factor in Han settlement of the region, pre-empting Japanese and Russian territorial ambitions. Opium produced vast amounts of revenue for economic and military development; it funded Zhang Zuolin's national aspirations. It also provided a leisurely diversion to combat the rigours of life in the frontier region. In the early 1920s, despite the region's "pioneering" reputation, opium was a key element of Manchuria's robust economy, which was the envy of other parts of China. But the benefits derived from opium were countered by the social damage of widespread addiction, the eradication of which the Manchukuo regime identified as key to its modernisation strategy. The Monopoly's failure fuelled Chinese alienation. That alienation is one of opium's most significant contributions to the history of the region.

Opium hobbled Japan's imperial ambitions in Manchuria. The inability of the state to enforce its own well-publicised eradication policies hindered the legitimisation of Manchukuo. Under Japanese dominion, the opiate industry expanded, producing cheaper, more potent, and increasingly plentiful supplies that filled tax coffers. But while colonial dominion over opiates could bring wealth and prestige to those Japanese who conspired to control the industry, it bled the Chinese masses and disheartened reformists who were ideologically committed to constructing a "paradise land." Manchukuo's Opium Law was undermined by Japanese dealers and their Korean and Chinese partners who experienced few real restrictions in the production and distribution of opiates. Further, the Janus-faced Monopoly deprived the state of goodwill that might have pertained from Japanese promises to modernise the region. Rehabilitation programs also failed to win popular support because even the most well-intentioned reforms were defeated by officials who wearied

of consigning resources to an endeavour that didn't directly contribute to their own enrichment, economic development, or Sacred War. Healthy Life Institutes fomented greater fear for the populace than their addictions did. The failings of the Monopoly made it appear as a façade for Japanese drug dealing, which made the colonial regime appear not only ruthlessly parasitic but also impotent to effect the social change advocated by officials and critics alike.

Opium held as prominent a position in the Chinese-language literature of Manchukuo as it did in official rhetoric. The popularity of social realism and the desire of Chinese writers to awaken the masses made literature an ideal vehicle for denouncing opiate addiction. The opiate narratives outlined in this study bolstered Manchukuo's anti-opiate program and heightened awareness of the dangers of drugs to the exclusion of any positive reference to the recreational use of opiates. Popular literature promoted the state's prohibition of opiates and enabled critical reflection on the nature of Japanese colonial rule. Since the Japanese were officially prohibited from using opiates, Chinese criticism of opiate addiction was not perceived by officials to be critical of the Japanese *per se*, but rather of Chinese weakness and wilful disobedience of the law, discourses they also promoted. Chinese writers decried elite indulgence in, or profit from, opium while the lower classes groaned under the weight of addiction, poverty, and subjugation.

In Manchukuo's Chinese-language literature, little sympathy is extended to addicts, or "ghosts," a term that accentuates the "half-death" nature of opiate addiction in these portraits. Opium may have been considered a requirement of polite society before foreign occupation but under Japanese rule it assumed a sinister nature that was denounced throughout popular culture. In the opiate narratives that emerge from this literature, a critical disjuncture attests to contemporary gender constructs. Men and women both condemned opiate addiction for its destructive nature, but men tended to more explicitly link that destruction with society or the nation while women associated it with the family, and especially its patriarchal foundations. These opiate narratives not only underline tra-

ditional Confucian maxims that consigned women to the domestic sphere, but also reflect deep-seated anxieties over the health, status, and self-identities of the Chinese in Manchukuo—not the economic obsessions that came to dominate official rhetoric.

The subjects of this study echoed Manchukuo's anti-opiate agenda because it appealed to them as well as to colonial officials, many of whom treated opium and Chinese popular culture with a similar disdain: they acknowledged that both required supervision, and laws were drafted to control them, but Manchukuo officialdom never mustered the willpower or the resources necessary to bring either fully to heel. All of these Chinese works were produced in Japanese-owned publications or published with the support of Japanese sponsors. In the 1940s, when most of the material in this study was published, Manchukuo censorship became increasingly heavy-handed but was not applied to this material, with the noticeable exception of Yang Xu's *Wo de riji*, which was banned for its sexual content.¹⁰¹ The writers' support for official drug policies gained the sympathy of anti-opiate reformists, while blinding others to the transgressive nature of their work. This literature does not simply parrot official policies, it also delegitimises Manchukuo. While the Japanese are *never* explicitly criticised, the dark portraits of opiate addiction, poverty, and individual subjugation are implicitly critical of their rule.

In the Chinese-language literary world of Manchukuo, an "enemy/lover" bond was forged between the colonisers and the colonised that enabled the construction of critical cultural commentary. In a final note of irony, the "truly terrifying" costs of the enemy/lover relationship decried by Li Xianglan and the writers of this study also wrecked havoc in their own lives. In post-occupation society, each of them suffered the burden of their ties not with opium, but with Japan. Li Xianglan went into self-imposed exile after 1945, but these Chinese writers stayed within China to endure decades of persecution for their presumed traitorous relations with the colonising power; each of the writers was silenced by the political movements that swept China in the Maoist era. The reign of opium in Manchu-

ria was terminated along with decades of Japanese dominance in the region and the careers of those Chinese who were most outspoken in the war of resistance against opiates in Manchukuo.

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NOTES

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1. This song is also known as the *Quit Smoking Song*. Words by Li Juanqing, music by Liang Leyin. *Li Xianglan Collection* (Taipei: Zhonghua Records, 1999).
2. *Yuanjia* has the meaning of enemy or foe, but is a term that was also commonly used in traditional opera and folk songs in reference to a destined love or sweetheart.
3. Lo Cheng-Pang, "The Fight Against Opium," *Pan Pacific* 3.4 (1939): 71.
4. The term Manchuria is the subject of growing controversy. The reasons for this are succinctly outlined in Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "Introduction," in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko Asano Tamanoi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 2-3.
5. Li is also known as Shirley/Yoshiko Yamaguchi and, since remarriage, Yoshiko Otake. Her Japanese-language autobiography was translated into Chinese in 1988. See Li Xianglan, *Zai Zhongguo de rizi: Wo de ban sheng* [Days in China: My Half-Life] (Hong Kong: Baixing wenhua shirong youxian gongshi, 1988).
6. Contemporary writer Mei Niang argues that Li's Japanese nationality was an "open secret" [*gongkai de mimi*]. Mei Niang, interview by author, Vancouver, Canada, 14 February 2004. The extent to which Li "fooled" Chinese audiences

is also questioned in Shelley Stephenson, “‘Her Traces Are Found Everywhere’: Shanghai, Li Xianglan, and the ‘Greater East Asia Film Sphere’” in *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, ed. Yingjin Zhang, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 222-48.

7. These include: “*He ri jun zai lai*” [When Will My Love Return?], “*Mai tang ge*” [The Candy Selling Song], and “*Ye lai xiang*” [Night Fragrance]. Although these songs may have been considered politically incorrect at the time, they remain popular to date.

8. Li subsequently starred in several Hollywood movies, appeared on Broadway, and became a television reporter, covering stories in Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Middle East. In 1974, she was elected a Liberal Democratic Party member of the Japanese parliament (a position in which she served for eighteen years). She is currently Vice-President of the Asian Women’s Fund, an organization dedicated to securing relief for the “comfort women” of World War Two.

9. Vespa Amleto, *Secret Agent of Japan: A handbook to Japanese imperialism* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938), 99.

10. Cited in John M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese imperialism and drug trafficking in Asia, 1895-1945* (London: Praeger, 1997), 107.

11. Cited in Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, “Introduction: Opium’s History in China” in *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*, eds. Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 17.

12. An Longzhen et al., eds., *Modai de huanghou Wanrong* [The Last Empress Wanrong] (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1994), 156.

13. A recent example of work solely critical of Japan is Li Enhan, “*Chiu yi pa shipian chianhou Jiben tui Tungpei (Wei Manchoukuo) te tuhua cheng-ts’e*” [The Poison Policies of Japan Towards the Northeast (Bogus Manchukuo) Before and After the September 18 Incident], *Chungyang yanchiu yuan chin tai shi yanchiu suochi kan* [Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica] 25 (1996): 286-87.

14. South Manchurian Railway Company, *Contemporary Manchuria* 3.1 (Dairen: South Manchurian Railway Company, 1939): 25-26.

15. The soil around Antung and Fengtian was seen to be far superior to Korean soil. Kathryn Meyer, "Japan and the World Narcotics Traffic" in *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*, eds. Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy, and Andrew Sherratt (London: Routledge: 1995), 197.
16. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 78.
17. Yang Chaohui and An Linhai, "Wei Man shiqi de Rehe yapian" [Rehe Opium During the Bogus Manchukuo Period], vol. 7 of *Wei Man wenhua* [Bogus Manchukuo Culture], *Wei Man shiliao congshu* [Collection of Historical Materials on Bogus Manchukuo], ed. Sun Bang (Jilin: Jilin renmin chubanshe 1993), 425.
18. Yang and An, "Wei Man shiqi," 427.
19. In Rehe province, for example, gambling, eating, and drinking establishments, hotels, storytelling artists, theatrical troupes, film theatres, and brothels could double population levels during harvest times. Yang and An, "Wei Man shiqi," 425-26.
20. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 78.
21. These were given a wide range of names: for opium: *ahpian* [opium], *dayan* [big smoke], *hei jinzi* [black gold], *yapian*, [opium] *yashuang yan* [frosty tobacco]; for heroin *baimian/baimian'er* [white flour], *hailuoyin* [heroin], *hailuoying* [heroin]; and for morphine, *mafei* [morphine].
22. Meyer highlights the work of Nitanosa Otozō and Hoshi Hajime. Meyer, "Japan and the World Narcotics Traffic," 190-91.
23. Ronald Suleski, *Civil Government in Warlord China: Tradition, Modernization, and Manchuria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 207.
24. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 79. Responses varied from Zhu Jinglan, under whose jurisdiction opium was forbidden and not cultivated, to Zhang Zongchang, who actively encouraged it. *Contemporary Manchuria*, 26.
25. "Offices" often entailed just a desk in a corner of a business. Suleski, *Civil Government*, 171.
26. See Lu Shouxin, "Ha'erbin de yapian yandu" [Harbin's Poisonous Opium Smoke], vol 7 of *Wei Man wenhua*, ed. Sun Bang, 445.

27. Meyer, "Japan and the World Narcotics Traffic," 189.
28. Gotō's estimate proved prophetic, but only because of the collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945. Opiate addiction was eradicated after liberation.
29. Meyer, "Japan and the World Narcotics Traffic," 188.
30. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 83.
31. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941* (Hsinking: Manchoukuo Yearbook Company, 1942), 731.
32. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 728.
33. Levels of addiction actually necessitated expanded imports from Korea and Persia. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 729.
34. The Opium Law allowed for sales only by officially-designated agents, government control over cultivation zones, and the licensing and sale of medicinal-use opium. The Opium Law only applied to opium, leaving no restrictions on other drugs. The full text of the Opium Law (with 1934, 1935, and 1937 revisions) can be found in *Contemporary Manchuria*, 38-44.
35. Prasenjit Duara has provided an important reminder of the contemporary significance of Japan's modernity project in Manchukuo. See Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 75.
36. Ah Ling, "Yinzhe de xin" [An Addict's Letter]; Yue Ai, "Jin yan lun" [Discussion of the [Opium] Smoking Prohibition], *Shengjing Shibao* [Shengjing Times], 3 October 1941, 5.
37. Meyer, *The Opium Empire*, 197.
38. Meyer, *The Opium Empire*, 197.
39. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 722.
40. Meyer, *The Opium Empire*, 187.
41. Clandestine operations of the South Manchuria Pharmaceutical Company produced 100 kgs. of heroin per night. Meyer, *The Opium Empire*, 194, 197.

42. Rates for morphine use ranged from 27-44 kg. per million population. Motohiro Kobayashi, transl. by Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "Drug Operations by Resident Japanese in Tianjin," in *Opium Regimes*, eds. Brook and Wakabayashi, 154.
43. Qu Bingshan, "Yapian," 688.
44. Mukden is the Manchu name for present-day Shenyang. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 85.
45. Edgar Snow, "Japan Builds a New Colony," *Saturday Evening Post* 206:35 (1934): 84.
46. Snow, "Japan Builds a New Colony," 81. The decline of Harbin is also discussed in Li Enhan, "Chiu," 286-87.
47. Vespa notes that in 1936, Harbin had 56 opium dens and 194 licensed narcotics shops. Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 102. Lu Shouxin argues that in 1937 there were 77 licensed narcotics shops in Harbin. Lu, "Ha'erbin," 445. "Shops" could be just a hole in the wall: heroin addicts could knock at a door, whereupon a "small peep-hole opens, through which he thrusts his bare arm and hand with 20 cents in it. The owner of the joint takes the money and gives the victim a shot in the arm." Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 96-97.
48. Cited in Amleto Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 101. This text is also cited in Mark Gayn, *Journey From the East* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), 418.
49. Alexandre Pernikoff, *Bushido: The Anatomy of Terror* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1943), 105.
50. Pernikoff, *Bushido*, 173.
51. Pernikoff, *Bushido*, 106.
52. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 77, 89.
53. Losses cited included not only lost work hours and reduced levels of workers' skills, but also land lost to opium that could be used to grow food, mine, etc. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 87.

54. Nine million yuan is cited for the fiscal year 1938-39. *Contemporary Manchuria*, 36. Jennings argues that opium revenue was approximately 30 million yuan. Jennings, *The Opium Empire*, 87. One hundred and eighty million yuan was a considerable sum, equal to investment in private enterprises in the colony in 1938. See Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 241.

55. *Contemporary Manchuria*, 20; *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 727, 730.

56. It was estimated that only 2-3% of addicts could withstand sustained labour, an intolerable statistic for colonial officials actively engaged in Sacred War. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 727.

57. Jacques Derrida argues various deployments of anti-drug narratives, including "protection of the social bond," in Jacques Derrida, "The Rhetoric of Drugs," trans. Michal Israel in *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity*, eds. Anna Alexander and Mark Roberts (New York: State University of New York, 2003), 32.

58. The Opium Law of 1937 applied to cocaine, heroin, and morphine, in addition to opium.

59. Two hundred and seventy-two private firms remained in operation. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 722.

60. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 722.

61. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 722. In 1939, 46 institutes (each with a capacity of 2,672 patients) were established, with a planned 156 more to be constructed before 1942. In 1942, there were still only 46 institutes. For details of the 1939 plans, see *Contemporary Manchuria*, 33-36.

62. Lo, "The Fight Against Opium," 72.

63. *Manchoukuo Yearbook: 1941*, 725.

64. *Datong bao* [Great Unity Herald], 6 December 1941, p. 4.

65. For details, see Norman Smith, "Disrupting Narratives: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Cultural Agenda in Manchuria, 1936-1945," *Modern China*, 30.3 (2004): 295-325.

66. Wang Xianwei, “*Jin yan zhengce de qipian xing*” [The Fraudulent Nature of the Smoking Prohibition], vol. 4 of *Jingji lüeduo*, ed. Sun Bang, 709.
67. Wang Xianwei, 713.
68. Wang Xianwei, 711.
69. Mou Jianping, “*Wei Man de dupin zhengce*” [The Narcotic Policies of Bogus Manzhouguo], vol. 4 of *Jingji lüeduo*, ed. Sun Bang, 723.
70. For example, see Han Yu, “*Zong du zhengce xia de Benxi*” [Benxi Village Under the Narcotics Policies], in *Wei Man wenhua*, ed. Sun Bang, 449.
71. Literally, “To hang up a sheep’s head and sell dogmeat.” Wang Xianwei, 712.
72. Pernikoff, *Bushido*, 104.
73. Wang Guiqin, “*Wei Man shiqi de ‘yapian duanjin’ zhengce*” [The Bogus Manchukuo ‘Opium Prohibition’ Policy] in *Jingji lüeduo*, ed. Sun Bang, 707.
74. For a more comprehensive discussion of the contemporary literary world, see Smith, “Disrupting Narratives,” 297-317.
75. Developments in literary regulations are documented in Yu Lei, “*Ziliao*” [Data], *Dongbei wenxue yanjiu shiliao* [Historical Research Materials of Northeastern Literature] 6 (1987): 181.
76. Xiao Jun, *Zhuxin* [Candlewick] in San Lang and Qiao Yin, *Bashe* [Trek] (Harbin: Wuri huakan yinshua she, 1933); reprint in *Zhuxin ji* [Candlewick Collection], ed. Liang Shanding (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1989), 18. San Lang and Qiao Yin are pen names of Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong, respectively.
77. Xiao, *Zhuxin*, 17.
78. This novel was originally published in 1941, under the pen name Qiu Ying. Qiu Ying, *He liu de diceng* [The Bottom of the River] (Dalian: Shiye yanghang chubanshe, 1941); reprint in *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue buyi shuxi* [Addendum of Modern Chinese Literature Series], ed. Kong Fanjin (Jinan, Shandong: Mingtian chubanshe, 1990).
79. Wang Qiuying, *He*, 834. Subsequent page references are in the text.

80. Wang Qiuying, *Lou xiang* [Vulgar Alley], *Chuangzuo liancong* [Creative Crowd] 2 (1944); reprint in *Zhuxin ji* [Candlewick Collection], ed. Liang Shanding, 111. Subsequent page references are in text.

81. Li Qiao is considered Manchukuo's foremost Chinese playwright. Li Qiao, *Xue ren tu* [Bloody Knife Scheme], *Wensuan* [Literary Collective] (1940); reprint in *Dongbei xiandai wenxue daxi, 1919-1949: Sanwen juan* [Compendium of Modern Northeastern Literature, 1919-1949: Volume of Essays], ed. Zhang Yumao (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996). Subsequent page references are in text.

82. Jin Yin, *Muchang shang de xueyuan* [Blood Ties on the Pasture] in *Manzhou zuojia xiaoshuoji* [Collected Novels of Manchukuo Writers], ed. Jin Yin (Xinjing: Wuxing shulin, 1944); reprint in *Zhuxin ji* [Candlewick Collection], ed. Liang Shanding, 307. Subsequent page references are in text.

83. This story was written in 1939, and published in 1944. Ye Li, *San Ren* [Three People] in Ye Li, *Hua zhong* [Flower Tomb] (Xinjing: Zhushi huishe dadi tushu gongsi, 1944); reprint in *Zhuxin ji* [Candlewick Collection], ed. Liang Shanding.

84. Ye, *San Ren*, 261. Subsequent page references are in text.

85. Cited in Edward R. Slack Jr, *Opium, State, and Society: China's Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 47. Women turning to prostitution to support drug addiction is also discussed in Yang and An, "Wei Man shiqi," 428.

86. Lan Ling, "Xiao xiang de chuxi" [New Year in a Small Alley], *Xin shige* [New Poetry] 1 (1940); reprint in *Dongbei xiandai wenxue daxi, 1919-1949: Shige juan* [Compendium of Modern Northeastern Literature, 1919-1949: Volume of Poetry], ed. Zhang Yumao (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996).

87. Lan, "Xiao," 810.

88. Zuo Di, *Meiyou guang de xing* [A Lustreless Star], *Funü shenghuo* [Women's Life] (1943); reprint in *Changye yinghuo* [Fireflies of the Long Night], ed. Liang Shanding (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1986), 446. Subsequent page references are in text.

89. Yang Xu, *Laomazi riji* [Nanny's Diary] in Yang Xu, *Wo de riji* [My Diary] (Xinjing: Kaiming tushu gongsi, 1944), 37. Subsequent page references are in text.

90. Wu Ying, *Gui* [Deceit] in Wu Ying, *Liang Ji* [Two Extremes] (Xinjing: Wenyi conghan hanxinghui, 1939), 94-96. Subsequent page references are in text.

91. Lan Ling, "Guxiang de jia" [Native Place Home], *Daban Huawen meiri* [Chinese Osaka Daily] 10.1 (1943): 34-38.

92. Lan, "Guxiang," 36. Subsequent page references are in text.

93. He aspires to buy 30 to 40 ounces at a time. Mei Niang, *Bang* [Clam] in Mei Niang, *Yu* [Fish] (Beijing: Xinmin yinshuguan, 1943); reprint in *Changye yinghuo*, ed. Liang Shanding, 165. Subsequent page numbers in text.

94. Mei, *Zhui* [The Chase] in Mei Niang, *Di'er dai* [The Second Generation] (Xinjing: Wencong han xinghui, 1940).

95. Mei, *Zhui*, 136. Subsequent page numbers in text.

96. Ironically, the word "patient" is a compound of two characters, *qiu* [to seek] and *zhen* [needle]. The couple, however, is not seeking a needle, but rather drugs that they can more easily share. Mei, *Zuihou de qiuzhenzhe* [The Last Patient] in Mei, *Di'er dai*.

97. Mei, *Zui*, 88. Subsequent page numbers in text.

98. Xiao, *Zhuxin*, 17-18.

99. *Kangzhan* is the term applied to the Chinese anti-Japanese Resistance of the 1930s and 1940s.

100. For example, see Lu, "Ha'erbin," 446.

101. For details, see Norman Smith, "Regulating Chinese Women's Sexuality During the Japanese Occupation of Manchuria: Between the Lines of Wu Ying's "Yu" [Lust] and Yang Xu's *Wo de Riji* [My Diary]," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13.1 (2004): 49-70.